

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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* Prestwich, Manchester, 27 April 1995: Valentina Bold interviews residents of Heathlands Residential Home

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Jamie Terrill

* TA=Tessa Amelan/ RT=Rachel Tarsky / NF=Nat Frieling/ SF=Sam Flamholtz/ GA=Gabrielle Adam/ NCM= Non-core male/ VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: First of one group interview with Tessa Amelan, Rachel Tarsky, and Nat Frieling; Sound Quality: Good; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner; the original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection - please contact Lancaster University Library for details.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

[rustling; inaudible; multiple speakers at once]

TA: Long running films--

NF: The first talkies, as far as I remember them.

TA: [inaudible]

RT: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

VB: Right.

[inaudible - multiple speakers at once]

VB: I'm just going to sort this out.

[inaudible - multiple speakers at once]

NF: Exactly. [inaudible] You're probably right. I thought you meant films in general terms. I thought you were referring to talkies then. I got it wrong.

TA: Did you see that film *Gone with the Wind*?

NF: Yes, yes, yes.

TA: I saw it four times.

RT: I've seen it twice. I seen it twice and then on the TV, third time. [laughs] I cried my eyes out when the baby died.

[inaudible - multiple speakers at once]

NF: Apart from historical--

TA: Very good. Good [guest?].

[pause two seconds]

VB: I mean maybe actually while we're waiting for the other lady, I was wondering if I could maybe ask you a couple of questions about yourselves?

NF: Yes, you could do that, regards as to about what we want to say probably?

VB: Yes, aye, it's just really so I can get a wee bit of an idea about your backgrounds, so--

NF: Yes.

VB: You know, because obviously that's--

RT: We're all working people! [laughs] Never been ladies of leisure, I don't think! [laughs]

VB: I want to make sure, as well, that I get everyone's name right, for one thing. Eh, so could I ask you what your full name is, what your--

TA: Tessa Amelan.

VB: Right. How do you spell your second name?

TA: A-m-e-l-a-n.

VB: A-n. And can I--

TA: Amelan.

VB: Amelan. That's lovely actually. That's nice. Erm, and can I ask what year you were born in?

TA: Yeah, 1918.

VB: 1918. And was it Manchester you were born in?

TA: Manchester

VB: Right. And can I ask what your father did?

TA: He was in the waterproof coat, er, industry.

VB: Right. And did your mother work?

TA: Yes, up to when she got married... She was a milliner.

VB: Right. And can I ask how many were in your family? How many sisters and brothers?

TA: Two of each, mother and father [made] six.

VB: And, can I ask, as well, how old you were when you left school?

TA: Fourteen.

VB: Fourteen. And, did you start work, when you left school, or?

TA: Yes. I finished school on Friday and I went to work on Monday. [laughs] Oh, I hated that; I missed a month holiday!

VB: Oh dear.

TA: [laughs]

VB: So, what, what was your first job then?

TA: In the millinery trade, like mother. But I couldn't, I didn't like it, so I left and got my own job.

VB: Right. So, can I ask what you did after that then?

TA: Made raincoats. [pause 2 seconds] Didn't like that either, but it was better than the other job.

VB: Right. And have you always lived in Manchester?

TA: No, we moved to Prestwich in '69.

VB: Right.

TA: Er--

NF: Have you got the time to listen, 'cause you find it very interesting? If you wish to, of course?

VB: Apart from that you've mainly...

TA: In that house, I was in that house twenty-two years, then came here.

VB: Right.

Staff member: The other lady had a fall yesterday, she was going to try and come down, but it might take her twenty minutes to get dressed.

RT: How about Jeanette? She's supposed to be coming here.

Staff member: Has she gone into OT do you think?

RT: She might have... [inaudible]

Staff member: I'll go and see if she's there.

VB: We'll just get started then. Great. [overtalking for four seconds] And, can I ask if you've been married at all?

NF: Some unlucky fellow there.

VB: Yes, I know. The only other thing I wanted to ask was if you had any strong political--

TA: No, I've never been politically minded.

VB: Right, that's great then. As I say, it's just so I get an idea of, erm, sort of work you've done that sort of thing. Can I ask the same questions of you, [to NF] what's your full name?

NF: Will you pose the same questions?

VB: I will do, yes.

NF: Got to think, get them ready, that's why. My name is Nat, Nat Frieling.

VB: Can I ask you to spell your second--

NF: Same questions?

VB: Yeah.

NF: What's the next question?

VB: Well, I wanted to ask how you spell your second name, 'cause I don't want to get that wrong.

RT: Frieling.

NF: It's a German word meaning "spring".

VB: Ah.

NF: I'll tell you a coincidence about that word as I go along.

VB: Okay! Erm, can I ask what year you were born in?

NF: Ninteteen-hundred-and-nine. That shocked everybody. Ninteteen-hundred-and-nine.

VB: That's hard to believe!

NF: I don't mind [who knows these days?] because I'm young at heart on occasion.

VB: Yeah. That's, that's amazing. I wouldn't, I wouldn't have said 1909. Erm, and were you born in Manchester?

NF: No, I was born... I'm a foreigner, I'm Romanian, I was born in a place called Karlatz, which is on the coast of Romania.

VB: Right.

NF: And I think I speak passable English, for a foreigner.

VB: [laughs] Yes, I would say.

NF: I mean, that was a joke, I came here when I was two.

VB: Right. [pause 2 seconds] And, what was it your father did?

NF: Father was a tailor. A clothing tailor, you know.

VB: Right. And did your mother work?

NF: Er, not to my own knowledge.

VB: Right.

NF: I was an orphan before I was six years old, so I can't remember all that much about my parents.

VB: Ah, I see, yes. Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. So, were you raised by relatives or...?

NF: Err, my... there was three of us who were adopted by uncles and aunts of my own parents.

VB: Right, I see. Erm, and how old were you when you left school?

NF: Er, I left school at thirteen. The answer to that is such is poverty. I never went in for nowt [anything], I never went in for the eleven-plus [exam] in case I may just win it and of course not have won it, by the same rule.

VB: So obviously you went straight into work, then?

NF: I attempted in my little tiny tin-pot way to make up for that by attempting - I'll use the same word again - to educate myself, as far as humanly possible with the resources possible. Er, I managed to get as far as getting a diploma for economics from the national [Council Heyver?] colleges, who were my trade union. Got a diploma for that. Not advanced economics, fairly elementary, but nevertheless, very helpful in various subjects.

VB: Yes. So what kind of work was it that you did?

NF: Pardon?

VB: What did you work at?

NF: Worked at making three-piece suites. Serves me right, doesn't it? [joking]

VB: Right. And apart from... have you always lived in Manchester, most of your life?

NF: Well, in the suburbs yes, at different addresses, of course.

VB: Are you married? Were you married?

NF: Yes, very happily married for fifty-six years.

VB: Do you have children?

NF: No, unfortunately.

VB: Did your wife work?

NF: Er, she worked until we got married, yes. She was a short-hand typist and secretary.

VB: Right, the last question is if you had any-- [loud noise]

NF: My case [perhaps referring to glasses case]. I am sometimes a bit of a case but we'll [laughs]...

VB: Have you ever been a member of a political party or--

NF: Yes, very interested and very active in the labour movement, and trade union movement. I had a bit of a position in the trade union branch, as [sector?] general secretary, leading the committee, local committee, factory committee, subs [subscriptions] collector, er, various activities in the trade union and labour movement.

VB: Right, right. That's interesting--

NF: Which I've got, er, different awards for. A gold, I've got a gold brooch for how many member subs [subscriptions] I got.

VB: Yeah. Sounds, sounds like you've had a very interesting...

NF: Well er, it depends on other peoples' ideas that are not my own, how one views it.

VB: Yes, yes.

NF: By the way, if I interrupt myself, if I over-talk--

VB: No, no.

NF: 'Cause I get wound up sometimes.

VB: I'd rather, that's that's not a problem.

RT: [to someone who has entered] Don't let him in, he's too young.

SF: They only came for the free tea.

RT: Well you can't get it, it's too late now.

NF: If ten more people would have known, we'd have had ten more people.

VB: Yeah.

RT: Too young for this one.

VB: Too young, yeah.

RT: Only twenty-one that one. [joking]

VB: Yeah.

NF: You were up to employment.

VB: Yes.

NF: May I remind you where you was up to? Right, carry on then.

VB: Right. That's it actually. That was the last one I wanted to ask.

NF: Eh, I was hoping you'd ask me about my wages, to show you how things have changed.

VB: Well, if you'd like to tell me that that'd be great.

NF: Only you asked, eh, Tessa.

VB: Yeah.

NF: To my own knowledge, knowing something about industry and my own trade.

VB: Yeah.

NF: There was only two men or two boys that were indentured to my particular profession. That was me and a fellow named Sid Diamond, he was indentured for three years, I was indentured for four years, the wages were five shillings every six months to increase to a pound after four years. The last year, the firm, being greedy for more value, and more money for themselves, decided to give me a

bonus if I produced the same amount of furniture which I did, because I picked it up fairly quickly, considering the circumstances of how I was living before, I got a bonus, I sometimes ended up, actually, with thirty shillings after four years.

VB: Right.

NF: I was eighteen then. I started at fourteen. From thirteen to fourteen I was an errand boy at the grocery shop.

VB: It's erm, hard, I'm trying to work out the, the sort of--

NF: I'm giving you these figures to show you how things have changed.

VB: Oh, very much so.

NF: Over such a very long while.

RT: Yes, but that's not what she came for!

VB: Yeah.

RT: She came for about the cinema, not about the wages! [laugh] I'm sorry Nat.

NF: She's asking about personal biographies at the moment.

RT: I'm sorry, Nat! She's not talking about autobiographies, she's talking about the cinema!

NF: I've not got back to the subject yet! You don't mind me telling you, do you? [asking VB]

VB: No, not at all!

RT: She's talking about the cinema!

VB: Yeah.

RT: [laughs]

NF: Just tell her what you're doing now, please, if you don't mind.

RT: [continues laughing]

VB: Right.

NF: Do guide her.

VB: Can I ask you what your full name is, what your second name is?

RT: T-a-r-s-k-y.

VB: T-a-r-s-k-y. And--

RT: The middle, the middle has been cut out.

VB: Right, right.

RT: [laughs]

VB: And can I ask what year you were born in?

RT: Er

VB: What year you were born in? 19--

RT: Employment?

VB: Your year of birth, your date of birth. Er, what, what year were you born in?

RT: 1906.

VB: 1906. That's great. And was it Manchester?

RT: Yes.

VB: Er, can I ask what your father did?

RT: Er, shoemaker.

VB: Right. Did your mother work?

RT: Er, well, when we were, er, at first she, she... when they come from Russia, and in Russia, she, she didn't like at all. She had three babies instead and they came here with three children and opened a grocery shop because her husband got thirteen-and-six a week [thirteen shillings and sixpence] for three children, that's what my father got, thirteen-and-six a week. So my mother opened a shop, she couldn't speak English, she couldn't write or read, but she opened a shop [and was warm?]. She had three shops going but she couldn't read and she couldn't write.

VB: That's amazing, she must have, she must have been a very determined woman.

RT: She was. Fantastic woman. Fantastic.

VB: So, was it, was it just the three of you then, or did she have any more children?

RT: Oh, yeah, she had another three. I'm, I'm the last.

VB: Right. [laughs]

RT: [laughing] I'm the last.

VB: Goodness me, doing all that work and having six children. That's amazing.

RT: Yes. She had three with the shop and she had three children.

VB: Goodness me.

RT: What do you want to know?

VB: How old were you when you left school?

RT: Six-- er fourteen.

VB: Fourteen. And did you work?

RT: No, we worked in our own shop.

VB: Of course, yes.

RT: I was born on top of a shop. [laughs]

VB: Erm, and have you always lived in Manchester?

RT: Yes.

VB: Erm, and, have you been married or are you married?

RT: I'm a widow.

VB: Widow.

RT: One husband, sixty years almost.

VB: What sort of work did your husband do?

RT: Who?

VB: Your, your husband?

RT: Oh, my husband, originally was a cabinet maker.

VB: Right.

RT: But he does everything else besides. [laughs]

VB: And do you have a family yourself?

RT: I have four children.

VB: Yeah. [pause 2 seconds] How many boys and girls is that? Just out of interest.

RT: Three boys and one girl.

VB: Three boys and one--

RT: Er, no, the other way round.

VB: Right.

RT: One boy, three girls.

VB: That's great. Erm, and--

RT: All been to university, the children.

VB: You were saying, you were talking about your—

RT: My children.

VB: And have you ever been involved in a political party or?

RT: Er, not political, but I belonged to a lot of [inaudible] working a lot for Israel, most of the time.

VB: Right, right, right. That's interesting.

RT: But we've always been Labour, always voted for Labour.

VB: Right. That's, that's great, I mean--

RT: The four children were different, one was Conservative, one was Labour, one was the one from Russia--

SF: Communist.

RT: And one was a Liberal. They had four different ideas, the four children.

NF: Ask her about her husband's paintings.

VB: That's amazing.

RT: Oh yes, there is a lot of things--

SF: Her husband was an artist.

VB: Really?

SF: You see his paintings all around--

NF: Marvellous, building, very many paintings. Hope I'm not interrupting, but I would like you to know--

VB: No, not at all.

NF: Because it's so unusual.

VB: Yeah, I'll need to have a look when I'm, when I'm going out and see if I can spot any.

RT: Now what else do you want to know?

SF: They're on the first and second floors.

RT: Anything else do you want to know?

VB: That was all I really wanted to ask--

RT: Are you ready now?

VB: I'm ready now to go onto the cinemas. [laughs]

NF: He painted the Pope and the Pope accepted it.

VB: Really?

NF: Yes.

VB: He must, he must've been very talented.

NF: In itself is very unusual.

VB: Yeah, yes.

NF: Particularly when he's a Jewish man.

VB: Yes, yes. I'll look forward to having a look at some of these on the way--

NF: Well worth the effort. I mean, keep the word "amateur" in mind.

VB: Yes. That's interesting--

NF: Very professional as an amateur. I know it sounds a contradiction, but he was professional.

VB: I know exactly what you mean, it's wasn't his main income but he was--

NF: Exactly. I don't know whether he went to art school or not, she might tell you.

RT: I can't hear very well.

VB: We were just talking about your husband's paintings.

RT: Oh, my husband, did everything... very very... wonderful he was. A painter, a singer, a cook, whatever you mentioned. The only thing he didn't do was have babies, otherwise he did the rest.

VB: Well that's understandable.

RT: A cabinetmaker, a shop-fitter--

NF: That's where WHSmith's got the slogan "do it all"

VB: Yeah. [laughs]

RT: Anything and everything my husband. Amazing that man, just like my mother. My mother's brain was amazing too. That's it.

VB: Goodness me. Well, thanks for answering all these questions, 'cause as I say, I just wanted to get an idea about everyone before we started.

NF: There are people here who didn't know my private life, they got to know it today.

VB: That's right. Well I think that's us ready to get on to the Cinema then! So!

RT: Jeanette MacDonald!

NF: I hope you didn't bore you with it.

VB: Not at all. Actually, it's interesting you said Jeanette MacDonald. [looking through stimulant photographs]

RT: You think of Shirley Temple. You think all of Shirley Temple.

TA: Not only her, other films!

VB: I thought I had a, I brought some pictures along that I thought you might like to see, [looking through] I don't think I actually have one of Jeanette MacDonald. Eh, but it's interesting, just before we put the tape on and before you came in, as well, we were talking about some of the stars, like as you say, Jeanette MacDonald and Shirley Temple and--

NF: They've been recent [inaudible; overtalking] Ginger Rogers [inaudible] last couple of days.

SF: They're comparatively new, I mean they're not the old stars. They're the new ones, comparatively, Jeanette MacDonald, Shirley Temple then, then you go back a bit further.

VB: Yeah, yeah.

NF: Not forgetting Lassie.

VB: Yeah, not forgetting Lassie.

[inaudible: many voices overtalking]

RT: [inaudible] The siren. [laughs] She was a siren.

NF: [inaudible] the Australian, erm, that thing that jumps, can't think of the--

SF: Harold Lloyd.

VB: Skippy?

NF: Skippy, yes.

SF: Trigger the horse.

NF: Yes, very good, wild west ones, yes.

VB: **The first thing that I was really wanting to ask actually--**

RT: *The Lone Ranger.*

VB: **--was how often you went to the cinema in the--**

[inaudible: overtalking]

NF: Hate to use the word... that was how much you could afford, in terms of asking how many times we went.

RT: We used to go for tuppence Saturday morning, Saturday morning.

NF: 'Cause how much could we afford to go?

TA: Well, when it was only tuppence a time, I went once or two, in a day, twice, and I came back with a roaring [headache?].

SF: We used to pay a penny, it was one-penny.

NF: Saturday matinee was one-penny, and you got a comic with it, if you went to the right cinema.

SF: We used to pay a penny, and we got a comic when we went in, and we used to get an apple or an orange or a pear.

NF: That's right.

SF: Coming out.

VB: Yeah.

SF: So that was for a penny.

RT: I've had a good [pick-up?].

SF: And if you payed a tuppence, you sat in a proper seat, you know, a thea... cinema seat. But for a penny we were all on forms. [referring to benches or lower quality seating]

NF: They were very tiny cinemas, they were called bug huts.

SF: With the gas lights.

VB: Right.

[inaudible; overtalking]

RT: How about the Tin hut in Hightown? The tin hut.

TA: Do you remember going to the, erm, Derby Street. There was an ice rink in Derby Street.

NF: Every night a different programme. Two or three films every night. At the Ice Palace.

TA: I don't know about every night. I only went twice a week.

[inaudible: overtalking]

RT: For tuppence!

[inaudible: overtalking]

RT: They turned the Ice Palace into a cinema.

NF: The Ice Palace converted in the summer. In the summer. In the summer. And eh, people really had marvellous enjoyment, for two-pence all for two-pence. Eh, I've no idea what other people want to say but, because I want to give other people a chance, I've condensed mine in a very very short resumé of my opinions on different things. [takes paper out of pocket]

VB: That'd be great, yeah.

NF: First of all, most of, we remember, by our ages, 1920 films, by our ages, average, of course, some of them are very, a very lot younger than myself.

[banging noises]

NF: What I wanted to speak about were the different types of films, and our reactions to them together with our families. Eh, I'll start off with dramas as an instance. The drama that I remember, very well, although only a child, was, because I went to see it twice, to be able to go twice, afford-wise, cash-wise, was something rather nice, [as remarked?]. She went twice once and thought it was just great. Erm, the drama in particular, I'm only going to mention one because--

RT: How about *The Sheik*? I saw *The Sheik* twice. [laughs]

NF: Although I was very young, that left an impression on me, because it was a drama, silent, subtitles, black-and-white. It was called *Over the Hill* [referring to *Over the Hill to the Poorhouse*], and I put here on my paper [indicates] "a weepie", you actually seen people crying watching it, such was sentiment. I'll go onto comedies now, and tell you one or two of the comedies I used to enjoy.

SF: Excuse me, Nat, who was in that film?

NF: I cannot remember, I was too young.

TA: What was it called? [pause 2 seconds] The weepie.

NF: I can't remember, oh, it was called *Over the Hill*, a family picture.

RT: I don't remember that at all--

NF: Something very bad happening, like a child dying young or something like that.

SF: A silent?

VB: Yeah.

NF: Yes, a silent, black-and-white silent. In the 1920s.

RT: I don't remember that, I remember seeing—

TA: I was too young.

NF: [inaudible; overtalking] ...very, very well before your time.

VB: Did your parents ever take you to the cinema?

TA: 1920s.

SF: I was born 1922.

[overtalking]

TA: Yeah, my mother and father took me.

SF: [inaudible; overtalking]

RT: [inaudible]

NF: No, no. May I be allowed to mention one or two comedies?

VB: Sure, yeah.

NF: *Keystone Cops* was very very good, black-and-white, it was about a gang of policemen like you see, detective pictures now, police pictures now, very similar, but on the comedy style, they did some very silly, what I would call silly today but very comical things which everybody was roaring and laughing at. It was all actions, no talking, remember.

VB: Yeah.

NF: So, you had to be a very good actor to make people laugh continually during the whole programme.

VB: Right.

NF: It wanted doing.

RT: The best one was Charlie Chaplin! [laughs]

NF: Now, I wouldn't mention too much about the *Keystone Cops*, I'll go on to serials. Serials were the order of the day. It kept you going regular because it was-- the average was in thirteen to fifteen parts.

TA: I'd better go. I can't get a word in.

NF: And I remember one particular serial--

VB: [to TA] Well, you should just--

NF: Am I interrupting anything?

VB: Well, I think--

TA: Well, first of all, she's not, ever.

NF: I'll be another five minutes, that's all.

TA: [I'm sick of it. I get it all the time?]

VB: Well maybe, I think, you know--

NF: Now I want these people to mark if they've seen these and their reactions to it.

VB: Yeh, I mean, it was interesting when you were saying that just now about, about Charlie Chaplin, was he a--

NF: Well I'm coming into that. [inaudible]

[inaudible; overtalking]

RT: Well he was the most amusing one.

NF: I've got Charlie Chaplin here.

VB: Yeah, yeah. Maybe we could have a wee chat about him?

TA: He's not--

RT: I fairly remember the first one he imitated, the Kaiser and they thought he was the Kaiser! [likely referring to *Shoulder Arms*]

VB: Right.

RT: And they treated him although he was the Kaiser.

[TA is still preparing to leave, VB tries to placate TA]

RT: But I can't remember much about it.

VB: Right.

RT: And you just laughed all the time. And they thought he was the Kaiser when he wasn't. And that was a very very long time ago, in the First World War.

NF: I now, I now go on to serials.

RT: About 1920s.

NF: Silent film, black-and-white.

VB: Right.

NF: I particularly remember at a very early age the main actress in a serial of thirteen parts was Pearl White. And they always left each part.

RT: Pearl White, I just said that didn't I?

VB: Yes.

NF: When she was on the railway tracks [referring to *The Perils of Pauline*].

RT: [laughs] Yes.

NF: She was on the railway tracks and the train was coming.

TA: It's annoying.

RT: And then it stopped.

NF: To be continued.

RT: And then it stopped.

SF: She didn't get killed though, you know.

VB: Right.

NF: Everybody was cheering away.

RT: I mean--

VB: Right.

NF: And you made it your business to try and come to each part.

VB: Yeah.

NF: To see the reactions.

VB: I mean, I'd be interested to hear if, if Pearl White was someone that other people remembered as well?

NF: Anybody else know about, remember Pearl White?

RT: [laughs]

TA: Vaguely.

VB: We'd just started talking about, I think--

SF: Pearl White Scandals.

[inaudible; overtalking]

TA: We were talking about the adventures of Pearl White.

NF: Do you remember Pearl White?

TA: Vaguely.

NF: Vaguely, yes.

VB: Right [to SF] Do you remember seeing Pearl White?

NF: However, she was mostly in serials, mostly.

TA: Do you remember something more up to date that happened here, in this room, when they came in?

NCM: Go on, tell us! [laughs]

TA: My train of thought's been disturbed.

VB: Erm, it sounds... I mean, we're talking a bit about some of the older films just now that, eh, do you remember seeing people like Pearl White and...?

TA: Eh, no. I wasn't really interested in that sort of film.

VB: Right. What sort of films was it that you liked yourself?

RT: Well, we saw anything that came.

TA: See what I mean. Can't get a word in.

RT: I'm sorry. [laughs]

VB: Eh, well maybe you could tell us what films you liked?

TA: My train of thought's been disturbed now.

VB: 'Cause you mentioned Shirley Temple.

TA: Ah! She wasn't the only one I went to see, although I was very eh, very entertained by her.

SF: There was one actually before Shirley Temple.

VB: Yeah.

SF: That was very good but that made, not Judy Garland.

TA: No.

SF: Jane Withers!

TA: That's right.

VB: Yeah.

SF: But she didn't--

TA: But I'll tell you another one.

SF: But she didn't make a lot of films.

TA: Bonita Granville, now she trains eh, she trained the dogs for the *Lassie* programmes, Bonita Granville.

SF: Oh, she made a film in 1939, a drama that took a young girl about the concentration camps [referring to *Escape*] and she acted and she won an Oscar for it, she was only about sixteen, seventeen. [Bonita Granville did not win an Oscar for *Escape*]. I can't remember the name of it.

RT: How could she in 1939? How could she make it in 1939?

SF: Pardon

TA: Oh crumbs, here we go again.

RT: The concentration camps, in 1939?

SF: They started in 1933.

VB: I brought, I brought, I did bring some pictures of some of the stars of the thirties to see if they were--

TA: Aw right.

VB: People that you--

NF: Great, great.

VB: That you, you enjoyed yourself. Erm, [takes out photographs] here's one, for instance, of Deanna Durbin, I don't know if she's someone--

SF: Oh yes, her.

TA: Oh, I loved her.

NF: Sweet voice.

[overtalking]

TA: She lives in France now, married to a Frenchman. [referring to Charles Henri David]

SF: A count.

VB: Was she one of your favourites then?

TA: Oh yes, oh she had a lovely voice.

VB: Yeah. Erm--

TA: Oh she was the one I liked the most.

VB: I'll see who else I've got. Erm [looking through photographs]

SF: I see George Formby at the back of there.

VB: Yes, George Formby!

SF: George Formby there.

TA: Oh yes! Oh, I saw his films as well.

SF: I used to like him.

TA: Yeah, I did.

SF: I mean today they're corny, in those days they were actors, but today they're corny.

TA: In those days it was entertainment, and everybody liked him, well I think so.

VB: Here's one as well of Janet Gaynor, I don't know if she was.

SF: Janet Gaynor.

TA: Oh yes, I liked her. She was very--

SF: She was a musical comedy star.

TA: And she was in that programme *Anne Of Green Gables* I think, was it *Anne of Green Gables*?
[possibly confusing with Anne Shirley]

RT: Oh excuse me, I'll be back.

VB: Right. [passes round more photographs]

TA: Who's at the back? Who's at the back?

SF: Robert Taylor? Is it? I don't know.

TA: No, I don't think so. No, it isn't.

NF: Very popular with the ladies, very popular with the ladies.

SF: Robert Montgomery, erm.

TA: And I'll tell you another couple, they weren't married in real life, William Powell and Myrna Loy, in *The Thin Man*.

SF: Oh yes.

NF: Yes.

SF: They were an excellent team.

TA: Oh yes.

SF: *The Thin Man* series.

VB: Yeah.

TA: Yeah, that's right.

VB: Yes.

NF: Janet Gaynor, yes.

TA: We've seen that one.

SF: And the other one was Irene Dunne, that was very good, a musical comedy star that turned out to be eh, eh, a dramatic actress. Remember Irene Dunne?

NF: Irene Dunne, yes.

TA: Also a good singing voice.

NF: Dramas, dramas, weepies.

SF: But she started out as a musical comedy actress. [all agree]

NF: But she went into the weepies... and dramas.

TA: Oh, Gracie Fields, I liked her.

SF: George Raft started out as a musical comedy dancer.

VB: Yeah, yes.

SF: And turned out to be, erm, a dramatic actor.

TA: He was--

SF: Anthony Quinn started out as a dancer, became a--

TA: An actor.

SF: A dramatic actor. Erm.

TA: Wasn't Raft, George Raft, eh, connected with the eh, criminal element?

SF: Yes, yes, he used to be erm...

NF: James Cagney, the gangster.

SF: James Cagney, he was a song and dance man.

TA: Yes, in that film *I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy* [referring to: *Yankee Doodle Dandy*]

NF: Yes. [inaudible] Marvellous film that. [pause] [She was good in that?] Gracie Fields.

[new woman enters room]

VB: Before you came in, I was saying, it's part of a project that we're doing at Glasgow University to find out about people's memories of going to the cinema in the thirties. So, erm... As I was saying, I've very pleased that you've allowed me to come and--

NF: I'm in the middle of... if it's all the same, ask other people, as I say, I don't want to, overtalk--

VB: I think we'll maybe have to—

[inaudible; speaking at once]

GA: That would make sense.

VB: It's just because you came in a bit later, so.

NF: I'm up to the little bit I know about comedies.

VB: Yeah.

[TA talking in background]

NF: See, what's going to make a difference to other people here, I'm probably the oldest, with regards to filmgoing, you know. People I remember in comedy was Harold Lloyd, Harry Langdon and Charlie Chaplin.

VB: Right.

NF: And, eh, the speciality of Harold Lloyd was to go on very high buildings, very, marvellous faked up, and he'd be dropping off the edge.

VB: Right.

NF: You know, he'd keep moving and all that, everyone would be bursting laughing. To them he was marvellous.

VB: Yeah.

NF: And then as he said, it was very corny today, you wouldn't even laugh probably.

VB: Yeah.

NF: Whereas then, with it being silent films.

VB: Yes.

NF: You created laughter.

VB: Yes.

NF: Erm, Charlie Chaplin would be, in my own opinion, the greatest. He was the daddy of them all, and the reason why I say that is, one of his last films was a talkie, eh, it was called *Modern Times*. I'll tell you a little bit about that when I've finished telling you about Charlie Chaplin's other films. The beauty of Charlie Chaplin was his accent, his mimicry, it was so marvellous that it was amusing entertainment in every possible way.

VB: Yeah.

NF: In one particular comedy he was in, eh, a place like Alaska where he was very cold and very hungry, hungry and thirsty. And you saw him eating his boots. [referring to *The Gold Rush*]

VB: Yeah. [laughs]

NF: If you saw that today you'd probably not raise a smile even.

VB: Yeah.

NF: But then it was something, especially when poverty was so rife, in particular.

TA: That wasn't really leather he was eating, it was liquorice allsorts!

SF: The very last film, a talkie, that he made was *Limelight*.

TA: *Limelight*, yeah.

NF: *Limelight*, correct.

SF: And the one that was in it was somebody Bloom, the Yiddish... [referring to Claire Bloom]

TA: That's correct, that's right.

SF: Claire Bloom, she took the limelight--

VB: Was Charlie Chaplin generally quite popular?

SF: Oh yes.

TA: Oh yes, oh aye.

SF: He was the top man.

NF: He was, for comedy.

SF: Yeah, he was comedy drama.

TA: Yeah.

SF: Yeah, 'cause he could make you cry as well as make you laugh.

VB: Yeah.

NF: The only--

SF: Do you remember the other one that was very good--

NF: *Modern Times*.

SF: Better than that even.

NF: Better than *Modern Times*?

SF: *Monsieur Verdoux*.

NF: Oh, I never saw that.

TA: Oh yes, I saw that one.

SF: He's sat there, working in a bank and he's got three thousand pounds in front of him. [referring to *The Bank*]

NF: Correct. Yeah, yeah.

VB: Yeah.

NF: As I said, he was the daddy of them all--

SF: And you had to laugh, the way he was counting that money.

NF: Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

NF: In *Modern Times*--

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: Thanks.

NF: Eh, to finish up on this, and I seem to have spoken quite a bit, I hope I haven't over-talked, was, when I was very young, people will remember this, I hope, you went to the pictures and there were silent films, and there were subtitles, and if you went with your parents, or a neighbour, it was a marvellous treat to go to the pictures, but you had to work for it, what I mean by that is you had to read it out to them and people, behind you who could read, got very annoyed. And many a time when I was saying, "He's going over there" or whatever, they'd say "Shut up!", you know?

VB: Right!

NF: And this happened very often. But I didn't mind, 'cause I was going to the pictures!

VB: Yeh! [laughs]

NF: That concludes my little bit.

VB: Yeah. Thanks very much, I mean, 'cause it's interesting to get that sort of detail on, erm, going to the films. I mean, it sounds like from what everyone's been saying that it was really quite a big part of your life in the thirties. Is that, did, did you [to GA] go to the cinema a lot yourself?

GA: Not a great lot but I always enjoyed it.

VB: Yeah.

GA: More than now.

VB: What sort of films did you like?

GA: Pardon?

VB: What sort of films do you like yourself?

GA: Erm... nature.

VB: Yes.

GA: Very much. And a good drama.

VB: Drama.

GA: Drama with meaning.

VB: Yeah, yeah. Erm, I mean, what sort of erm, I can ask the same question, what sort of films did you like yourself in the thirties? Did you have any real favourite stars or...?

[inaudible: overtalking]

TA: Er, I don't think I went in for all that.

NF: You're talking musicals, myself.

SF: But there wasn't many in those days.

NF: No, not in those days, no.

TA: When I did have the money, it was... adventure, er--

NCM: You're talking about a long time ago.

TA: Musicals, eh... musicals.

SF: Charles Laughton, in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*!

TA: Oh yes! I watched that! Oh yes.

[talking at once]

NF: You would like animal pictures... Skippy...

TA: I said nature--

SF: Those were the types of films that I used to enjoy. Drama, but I can't think of the girl.

NF: Tom Mix on his horse, Tricky.

GA: I think a good drama above all.

NCM: [name?], you mean.

VB: Yeah, it's interesting--

NCM: Trigger, I can't think of his horse, Trigger.

SF: Did any of you go to see a lot of erm, him that died very young, what was he called, the lover in the films?

TA: Who?

SF: Rudolph Valentino.

NF: Oh yes, oh yes.

RT: *The Sheik* and eh--

SF: *The Sheik* and *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse*.

NF: All the ladies' idols. The idols, idols.

TA: I wasn't all that gone [interested] really, on his films.

NF: Helen Montgomery.

VB: Right.

SF: Who?

SF: Robert Montgomery.

NCM: Robert Montgomery, no.

TA: I wasn't all that gone [interested] on Rudolph Valentino.

VB: What about people like Ronald Colman and...?

TA: Oh yes.

NF: Oh yes!

VB: Robert Donat.

TA: I saw that film when he, what was it called?

NF: *Gone with the Wind*, wasn't it?

SF: No.

NF: You mentioned, earlier on.

TA: No, Ronald Colman in that film where he kind of goes--

SF: Shangri La. [probably referring to *Lost Horizon*]

RT: That's right.

NF: Shangri La.

VB: Shangri La. Yeah. What was that like?

SF: Very good, in its day.

VB: Yeah.

TA: Black-and-white.

VB: That's a sort of adventure?

SF: That was a drama.

TA: Yeah, well, that's right. It was a drama.

SF: That was a drama, Shangri La, about a man that's living in a city and he wants to get away from everyday life. And he goes on a pilgrimage to, not China, what's the other one, the very poor, up in the Himalayas.

TA: Could be Tibet, they're very poor.

NF: Tibet.

SF: Tibet.

NF: Tibet, yeah.

SF: Tibet, and it's a totally different world. It's like heaven, he was living in hell and went to heaven. And it's a totally different world.

NF: The quality changed.

SF: And he meets a girl there.

VB: Yeah.

SF: Nobody got old.

VB: Yeh.

SF: Nobody was old. They were all in their twenties.

TA: That was Shangri La.

VB: Yes. Yeah.

SF: And then he marries this girl and brings her back to reality. To what we call the--

NF: Down to earth.

SF: --the human race.

TA: Civilise the girl.

SF: And when she comes down to civilisation.

TA: Yeah.

SF: She becomes a woman of a hundred-and-three, because that's how old she was.

VB: Right. Right.

SF: If that was the type, the gist of the story.

VB: Right.

TA: Very good that one.

VB: Yeh, mhm. I mean actually, I don't want to change the subject.

SF: Yeah, go on.

VB: But I, I just found this one which I thought might interest Rachel because you were talking about Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy.

RS: Oh yes!

VB: Here's a, some of the shots from *Rose Marie*!

RS: [starts singing] "Oh Rose Marie" – Oh, I've seen so many...

NF: Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire would be in the news already.

SF: She died yesterday--

RS: Serenade! [inaudible] That was a donkey. [probably referring to the song 'Donkey Serenade' from *The Firefly*]

SF: She died two days ago. Eh. Ginger Rogers.

TA: Ginger Rogers though.

RT: That was the donkey.

SF: Next week they'll [their films] be on.

RT: It's terrible.

NF: No doubt.

TA: They were marvellous.

NF: No doubt about it, there'll be a run of their films in the near future.

VB: Yeah.

TA: Yeah. They were both marvellous.

VB: Yeah. Did you like Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy?

TA: Yeah. Yes.

RT: Oh, he was lovely. They were lovely. Beautiful.

TA: Shall I tell you something? They were bitter enemies off, off the sc--.

SF: Off the screen.

TA: Off the screen.

VB: Really?

RT: Oh yes.

NF: Who wouldn't enjoy seeing *The Sound of Music* more than once?

VB: Yeah, yeah.

SF: I saw that film fourteen times, believe it or not.

NF: I believe it, you could enjoy it every single time.

SF: Not for the acting but just for the music.

NF: Exactly.

TA: Yes, yeh, I can believe that.

RT: Beautiful stories, lovely music.

VB: Yeah.

RT: They were all beautiful, each one. Marietta! [referring to *Naughty Marietta*] Oh, there was quite a lot.

NF: I mean you went out singing Bally Ha'i! [laughs]

VB: It's amazing when you say that.

NF: And with a voice like mine it was Bally Lo!

VB: Yeah.

SF: There was a silent film made many years ago of *The Mikado*. [different silent versions were released in 1906, 1907 and 1926]

NCM: [inaudible; talking at once]

NF: Similar.

SF: Tessa, did you ever see the silent version of *The Mikado* as a film?

NF: No, never seen it.

TA: Don't think so.

VB: [looking through photographs] I'll see what other ones I've got here. I've got one of, erm, Jessie Matthews, I don't know if--

SF: Oh [yes?].

NCM: Oh yes.

NF: She was very good.

RT: I didn't see her very often.

TA: Oh, do you know she was offered a contract with the, eh, the American film industry? She refused it.

VB: Is that right?

TA: Yes.

SF: And she, she died a pauper. In a nursing home.

TA: She was a marvellous singer and dancer.

NF: Tell you what, that is terrible.

TA: I never saw anyone in English films who such a good dancer as Jessie Matthews, her.

NF: That was a great picture, *Rose Marie*.

VB: Yeah.

NF: Very colourful.

RT: She was once in a show on the TV, on the radio.

SF: In those days there was Norma Shearer.

NF: Yeah.

RT: In the cinema she was a--

SF: What was her name, Young, somebody Young or other?

TA: I know which one you mean.

RT: Jessie Matthews.

VB: Yeah.

NF: Not Robert Young?

SF: No, a woman, no.

TA: And she was a very naughty girl she was, she stole somebody else's husband!

SF: Loretta Young.

NF: Loretta Young.

TA: Sonnie Hale, he was married to somebody else.

VB: Is that right? Yeah.

TA: And, eh, she eh, she got him.

VB: So, so, I didn't realise Jessie Matthews, she took Sonnie Hale from another--

NF: What about the *Lucy* films? [referring to Lucille Ball]

TA: Sonnie Hale, yes, yes.

SF: Desi Arnaz.

NF: Desi Arnaz yes. *Lucy* films, Desi Arnaz.

SF: Oh they were good, they were good.

NF: There was a series of it. [referring to the 'I Love Lucy' US TV Series] They were all very very good.

RT: Oh, Flora Robson.

VB: Flora Robson.

RT: Oh dear.

SF: I used to like Raymond Massey believe it or not! He was a character actor.

TA: I liked her all right, it was just she was a bit of a husband stealer.

VB: As you said, I've got one of George Formby on the other side of one of these, was he someone that was popular?

SF: Oh.

TA: Yeah. Oh yes. A comedian.

SF: A comedian-cum-ukulele-singer.

TA: Oh we couldn't stand, he couldn't sing?

SF: He was more popular during the war rather than before the war.

TA: Yeah.

VB: Ah, I see. Yeah.

NF: My most popular dramatic actor was eh, Bette Davis.

TA: Oh, she was good.

NF: For drama. Bette Davis

VB: Yeah.

NF: Just great.

SF: Joan Crawford, Bette Davis

NF: Just great.

SF: Ida Lupino.

NF: Ida Lupino.

VB: Have you got any favourite erm, Bette Davis films?

SF: Yes! *Now, Voyager!*

VB: Right! [laughs]

NF: Just great. Her films were marvellous.

TA: Oh yes, I loved that one. Oh, did I cry! [laughs]

SF: *Mrs Skeffington*, [referring to *Mr. Skeffington*]. Now, *Voyager*.

NF: I used to look forward to every film if Bette Davis was in it, I didn't want to know more.

TA: That one! [laughs]

VB: **That's interesting.**

SF: I mean, they had a run of them not that long ago.

NF: I think we all did have our idols, you know.

VB: **Yes, yeah, yeah.**

TA: Bette Davis, who else was there?

VB: **What about people like Anna Neagle was she?**

NF: Anna Neagle, very good.

TA: Yes, yes.

SF: She was very good, she was very very competent actress.

NF: Yes, very good.

TA: And then there was Anne Sheridan.

SF: A very good actress. Yes, Anne Sheridan.

TA: And eh--

SF: The redhead.

TA: And eh, yeh.

SF: Very vivacious.

TA: Yeh, and somebody else was a redhead. Who was it?

NF: Well she made a marvellous prison picture that we were thinking of, I just forget the name of it.

TA: Eh.

NF: She was in prison. What was her name?

TA: Diana Dors. She was, she was executed. [referring to *Yield to the Night*]

NF: That was a blonde head.

TA: She was executed for murder.

VB: Oh, yeah. [pause: 1 second] What about the male stars, I mean, people like Errol Flynn and--

TA: He was alright. He was very good in *Captain Blood*.

SF: Really, they weren't really on long enough 'cause he died quite a comparatively young man.

TA: Only in his forties.

SF: Did Errol Flynn.

VB: Yeah.

TA: Only in his forties, he was forty-four.

SF: He wasn't sort of long-going.

NF: Three Musketeers. [possibly referring to *The Adventures of Robin Hood*]

RT: Oh, it's a long time ago!

TA: 'Tis that.

RT: Oh, how about *The Four Feathers*.

NF: [*The*] *Four Feathers*. A great drama, a great drama, *The Four Feathers*.

VB: Yeah.

SF: That was with Howard, what was his name? Leslie Howard.

NF: Leslie Howard.

TA: Oh, he was good.

SF: That was in *Intermezzo* with Ingrid Bergman.

TA: He was wonderful, yeah. That was a good film.

VB: Yeah.

TA: I enjoyed that.

VB: Actually, one thing that I want to ask because we've --

NF: Collectively?

VB: Well collectively. If I could ask what your names are because I, because you came in slightly later I didn't catch that. Erm, could I ask what your name is?

SF: Samuel, Sam, F-l-a-m

VB: F-l-a-m

SF: A-m. H-o-l-t-z

VB: T-z. Can I ask what year you were born in as well?

SF: 1922

VB: 1922.

RT: Twenty-what?

SF: I'm the baby.

VB: Right. [laughs] And are you from Manchester?

SF: No, I'm from a town called Brzeziny, in Poland.

VB: Right

NCM: They wouldn't have him there.

GA: What, what is the town called?

SF: Brzeziny.

VB: Right.

RT: Oh.

SF: Near Lodz.

VB: Can I ask when you came to live in Manchester then?

SF: I've only... I'm a newcomer to Manchester.

VB: Right.

SF: I've not been here long, forty-five years.

VB: Only forty-five years. [laughs]

SF: Prior to that, I lived in eh, Blackpool, Leeds, Liverpool.

VB: Right. And can I ask how old you were when you left school?

SF: Er, fourteen.

VB: Fourteen.

TA: Seems to the average.

SF: It was in those days.

NCM: You've only got his word for that.

VB: Yes. [laughs]

SF: We weren't in the position to go on to, er, higher education in those days as they are now. Because in those days, you had to pay for it.

VB: Yes, that's right.

SF: You had to pay for it in those days.

VB: Can I ask what sort of work you've done?

SF: I was in a bakery.

VB: Right.

RT: That's not true because my brother--

NF: He needed the dough. He was a baker so he needed the dough. [joking]

NCM: Not bad for you.

RT: Went to higher education. To er, high school, without any payment, my brother. That was seventy years ago.

SF: But it depended on whether the parents needed the income--

RT: No--

SF: --of the children to go to, if the parents didn't need the money then--

RT: No, no.

SF: That's it. In ninety-nine-point-nine cases.

[overtalking]

NF: I went into the economics, so—

RT: You didn't have to pay--

VB: Well, that's that's great, because I just wanted to get a wee bit of an idea about your background, because obviously everyone's been talking. Can I ask you [to GA] the same questions of yourself?

[overtalking; different conversations going on at the same time]

VB: What, what's your full name?

GA: What's my name? Er, Gabrielle Adam.

VB: How do you spell your second name?

[talking at once]

GA: Pardon?

VB: How do you spell your second name?

GA: [inaudible]

VB: And can I ask what year you were born?

GA: Pardon?

VB: What year you were born in?

GA: 1907

VB: 1907.

[overtalking; different conversations going on at the same time]

VB: And was it Manchester you were born in?

GA: No.

NCM: I can't remember the detail.

TA: No, I really don't know, we lived on different planets.

VB: Right, I see. Was it London you were born in?

GA: No, I was born in Russia.

VB: Right.

TA: [inaudible]

RT: He went about two years. Then he left school.

VB: That's great, I just wanted to have that information, if that's ok. So we've talked about some of the stars, we've talked about, eh, I mean what were the cinemas like in Manchester in the thirties?

TA: Eh.

SF: Have you heard of a fleapit?

NF: Are you talking about the architecture or what?

VB: Sorry?

NF: Are you talking about what type of buildings?

VB: Yes, well, I'm interested to know what it was like to actually go to the cinema.

TA: I went to the cinema...

NF: Most, most of them were deliberately built. They weren't converted from anything else.

TA: It was called the bug hut!

VB: The bug hut! [laughs]

TA: I never found any.

SF: I remember my wife once said, we went to a cinema called The Globe in Manchester.

TA: Oh yes!

SF: And she turned around and said, "I came in, I went in with a blouse and I came out with a jumper!"

VB: [laughs]

NF: With fleas, the fleas.

SF: Those were the days! [laughs] We never went any more!

VB: [laughs] Yeah.

NF: That's why they called them the bug hut!

VB: Yeah, I mean can I ask? Maybe I should ask everyone 'cause obviously you've maybe come from different areas.

NF: You get a varied, you'd get a varied consensus.

VB: I mean, what were the cinemas like where you grew up, you said there was one that was like a bug hut, eh, what were the names of the cinemas that you went to?

TA: No idea. There was no name on the outside, oh no.

NCM: Well I can tell you a few. There was the Premier.

TA: Oh Yeah! Absolutely.

NCM: The Temple, Greenhill.

SF: The Temple.

TM: Greenhill. The Shakespeare, yeah.

SF: The Globe, the Shakespeare

[inaudible; overtalking]

TM: The Riviera,

SF: On Cheetham Hill Road, it's now a warehouse.

TM: That's correct, yes.

TA: It's true.

VB: Did people go to the cinema mainly round about where you stayed [lived], or did you go into town.

NF: It was our main entertainment. The poor man's entertainment. Couldn't go to theatres.

SF: I think we went to local cinemas because it didn't involve, well not buses, it didn't involve tram fares.

NF: Distance.

TA: There were no travelling.

SF: Yeah, no travelling, and I mean almost every corner there was cinemas in those days.

VB: Yeah.

SF: Not like now.

VB: Yeah, erm.

SF: I mean it's a totally different, eh--

NF: Setup.

SF: Setup.

VB: Yeah.

SF: I mean today.

NCM: Totally different.

SF: What's happening today in sixty years' time today will be what it was sixty years ago for us.

VB: Yeah, yeah.

SF: If there's any cinemas left. I mean television's taken over.

VB: Yeah.

SF: But there'll be something different to television next.

VB: Yeah.

SF: Because they've already started it. And that is, there's television now where you can watch television in your own home but watch a film being made, produced and directed in the studios, which comes right through to your own television where you will watch it and that will do away with cinemas.

VB: Yeah.

SF: That's already on the way now.

VB: Yeah.

NF: And yet 3D didn't catch on.

VB: Yeah.

TA: What didn't catch on?

NF: 3D, you know, you used to get a pair of coloured spectacles.

TA: Oh yes. Three-dimensional.

SF: Well you got it. It's a big screen, a big screen. [likely referring to IMAX]

NF: Well, you got that used to it now.

SF: It's a big screen where you don't need the spectacles.

VB: I mean it's interesting. Before you arrived [looks at GA] we were talking about, I mean Rachel was talking about the first colour films you remembered.

RT: The first one? *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. [probably referring to 1927 version]

VB: Yeah.

RT: And that was seventy odd years ago.

VB: Yeah

RT: And that was in Oxford Street, the Oxford, eh the Oxford cinema.

VB: Right. What was the Oxford cinema like?

NF: Well it was very good the Oxford.

RT: [inaudible]

NCM: That was one of the better ones.

NF: If there were very good, they had them for more than one week--

RT: It was cheap, if you were near the screen it was cheaper, if you were at the back it was dearer.
You had to be on top of it.

TA: Was that one and two?

RT: Futher back was cheaper.

NF: Where?

TA: On Oxford street, one and two?

NF: There was one and two in it.

SF: Not now, it's closed down.

TA: I know.

NF: Yes.

TA: And there was a Gaumont.

SF: Yes, there was a Gaumont.

TA: It went down with the Regal.

NF: And the Paramount.

SF: The Theatre Royal.

[all: yes]

SF: It was a cinema, the one opposite, the Gaiety.

TA: The Gaiety, I said that.

RT: What was the one, it was [inaudible] the [Rose?]

NF: It showed *Gone with the Wind*.

RT: The Gaiety.

SF: Yes. The Regent.

RT: It was the one right down on the way to All Saints.

SF: Yes, I don't know the name of that one. [pause 2 seconds]

RT: The Regal something was it's name, down there.

SF: Yes, the Regal, the Regal.

RT: It was bigger [inaudible].

NF: It's a billiard place now, it's billiards now.

RT: Yes it's, All Saints.

NF: Opposite All Saints church, yes.

RT: The, the, the Grosvenor.

NF: The Grosvenor, that's the name, the Grosvenor.

RT: [laughs] I've been there once.

VB: I mean, I found this book that's got some pictures in it of places like the Paramount in Oxford Road.

NF: What about a biblical film, *The Ten Commandments*.

VB: Right, right.

RT: Yeah, yes.

VB: There're some wonderful epics like that.

RT: That was a terrific film

TA: *Ben-Hur*.

NF: *Ben-Hur*, marvellous, chariots, you know.

TA: Charlton Heston.

SF: You're already going, you're already going into the talkie era here.

VB: Yes.

NF: Do you remember--

TA: There was one made before that with, what's his name, Ramon Novarro.

NF: Ramon Novarro?

SF: Ramon Novarro, he was a silent actor.

[all: yes]

SF: You see in those days--

NF: *Ben-Hur*.

SF: There used to be a lot of silent film stars and actresses that were excellent actors and actresses but the moment talkies came on.

TA: Yes, no voice.

VB: **Is that right?**

SF: Because the speech was diabolical.

TA: The voices were not that good.

VB: **Is that right?**

TA: Yeah.

SF: Couldn't speak so they—

NF: That's quite right.

VB: **Well, 'cause Ronald Colman was a silent star as well?**

SF: Yeah, but his speech was immaculate.

TA: Oh yes, he had a lovely speaking voice, he did.

SF: One of the, one of the ones that they took off was, oh crikey I can't remember...

NF: I enjoyed *Gandhi*, a historical picture.

SF: A female one.

VB: Yeah.

SF: Erm.

TA: Erm...

SF: The blonde, she died very very young, she only made one or two films. Very slinky and blonde, blonde hair, she was a silent actress but when the, the moment the talkies came.

TA: Was it Clara Bow?

SF: No.

TA: No.

NF: She was good.

TA: Lillian Gish?

SF: No, she's still on the go actually. Erm, who was she? Not Joan Blondell.

RT: Oh, Mabel something?

SF: No.

RT: Mabel something, 'cause I--.

NF: Ramon Novarro

SF: She only made a couple of films but they had to do away with her. Of the couple films she did, the voices were dubbed.

RT: Mabel Norman? Whatever--

TA: Was she—

[talking at once]

SF: She died very young, she was only, before thirty.

TA: Jean Harlow?

SF: Jean Harlow, you got it! She had a diabolical speaking voice!

TA: Oh yes, I know!

VB: [laughs]

SF: Diabolical!

TA: She did a film with Clark Gable called *Red Dust* and I thought her voice was awful!

SF: Yes, yes, so they dubbed them afterwards.

VB: Did you like Jean Harlow?

NF: Who was the one that did "I want to be alone?"

SF: Mae West.

TA: Yeah, I did in a way. She was a brassy blonde and she was not bad. I liked him better! [laughs]

SF: Who?

VB: [laughs] Clark Gable I think!

TA: Yeah!

VB: Yeah.

SF: Well those were the days when actors were actors.

RT: Those were the days!

SF: But the difference of today and yesterday was, yesterday they used to act.

RT: They acted!

SF: Today they are natural and there's a very, very big difference.

VB: Do you think, do you think there is a difference--

SF: Yes!

TA: Oh!

VB: In the sort of--

TA: Oh yes.

VB: Say the sort of stories that they had in--

GA: Yes, yes.

VB: Thirties films to--

TA: Well, you must remember this today the films are more sexy than in our day.

VB: Right, right.

SF: Yeah, but they're very natural. I mean--

RT: Oh yes.

SF: As though we're sat here now talking. That's how the stars are.

TA: Yeah.

SF: Years ago, they were haughty and ooh! You know, they sort of, it was action acting. Not speaking acting, wasn't it?

[general agreement]

SF: I'll tell you one exception to that.

RT: They were acting!

TA: Is Clint Eastwood. Yeh, he's what I call real adaptable.

NF: The thing is they've got connections, which are very useful today. Such as videos, for instance, they made a video of this building, and what it does for people, it was most interesting. Now without the film industry starting videos, you wouldn't have been able to do that.

TA: Well these gunmen have got somebody held hostage in this shop. So, eh, he can't do anything with a gun because this gunman has got a gun holding this hostage. You know, eh, and he wants certain things. So, he decides he can't do it the normal way. He gets in his car and goes [holds up hand] bang into the shop! [laughs]

NF: That's [inaudible]. Another good thing about films, if you go to the stores now, or a bank, and you see these, taking pictures of you.

TA: Yeah, er, those--

NF: That's all part and parcel of picturemaking.

VB: Right.

NF: Really.

VB: Yeah... Yes, it's interesting--

SF: Now you spoke about stars and actresses, how about directors and producers? Because they are the ones that make the film.

NF: Oh yes.

TA: Yes.

SF: Without them--

NF: The brains of it, the brains of it.

SF: [inaudible; overtalking].

TA: Yeh, yes, and have you noticed when they're putting all the credits down that it goes [makes swooshing noise]!

SF: It goes so fast you can't even read it.

TA: They're the ones that're responsible for the film.

NCM: Yeah, but it's compulsory. They've got to show that.

TA: Yeah, they have to do it but eh. Doesn't mean to say...

SF: I mean, Harold Lloyd, he was a silent star.

NCM: Yeah.

SF: A comedy star, but he produced and directed his own films.

VB: Yeah.

RT: Who?

NF: Harold Lloyd. I started off with Harold Lloyd, if you remember.

SF: So he was a very brilliant man.

VB: Yes.

[inaudible: overtalking]

SF: He was a very very brilliant man.

TA: Yes.

SF: Charles Chaplin. An excellent actor in, in his silent days--

NF: In, in mimicry--

SF: And yet he produced and directed his own films.

VB: Mmm.

SF: Fatty Arbuckle was it or?

RT: Fatty Arbuckle.

SF: He was a great comedian.

RT: Yeah.

SF: Produced and directed his own films.

RT: And how about the two, the big one and the little one.

NF: Laurel and Hardy, they were very good.

RT: Laurel and Hardy. [laughs]

SF: You see they're all what you call classics.

NF: What about Paul Robeson.

TA: Oh, I liked him. He was in that, erm, film.

SF: 'Ol' Man River'. [referring to *Show Boat*]

RT: Well he was a singer.

NF: 'Ol' Man River' The only one who can sing as well as he does is himself. 'Ol' Man River'. The *Volga Boatman*, another good picture

SF: You see there's some fantastic continental films were made as well. French films, Italian films.

NF: French, in particular, yes.

VB: Yeah.

SF: Which were very very good.

VB: Yeah, did you have, I mean in the thirties was there much access to--

SF: Yes--

VB: Right, right.

SF: Yes, we could see them, French, Italian films.

VB: Yeah.

SF: Not like today.

VB: Was there?

SF: But, they were still there, with English subtitles.

VB: Yeah, was there a particular place that you went? Because I know like in Glasgow there's, erm, there was the Cosmo, was the one to go to.

SF: Yeah.

NF: Yeah. The Cosmo, deliberately had foreign films, deliberately, yeah.

VB: Right.

SF: Well, there is today but years ago, just whatever came along.

VB: Right, I see, so there wasn't somewhere that you--

SF: No, no, no.

VB: That you would particularly go to.

SF: No.

VB: Yeah, that's interesting, ah.

TA: I'll tell you what I don't like are those, erm, films with erm... Arnie Schwarzenegger in.

SF: Oh you mean the erm outer-space things and erm--

TA: The Exterminator [referring to *The Terminator* franchise] and things like that.

SF: But those are children's films.

TA: Yeh, I know.

VB: Yeah.

TA: 10 minutes and it's off.

SF: Well that's where, you see, you get your violence.

NF: I enjoy cartoons.

VB: Yeah.

NF: The Walt Disney ones, you know.

VB: Did you like cartoons as a child?

SF: Yes.

VB: Because I think a lot of films we've been talking about are sort of--

NF: *Looney Tunes*.

SF: Those are still today very popular--

NF: Very, very entertaining.

SF: Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, they're still very popular with children.

RT: [laughs]

TA: Did you see that one called, eh, *Who Killed Roger Rabbit?* [referring to *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*]. I liked that.

[lots of sounds of agreement]

SF: I have.

GA: I don't like them.

SF: I mean years ago I would say I was older than a child but I thoroughly enjoyed *Pinocchio*.

TA: *Pinocchio*. Oh yes, I've seen that.

RT: [inaudible; overtalking]

SF: I thought it was a great film.

RT: [Felix?] [possibly referring to 'Felix the Cat' cartoons] Ooh, that was about seventy years ago. Felix kept on walking--

NF: [inaudible] Snow White--

SF: And they're still running today.

NCM: I can't hear three people at once, it's impossible.

[many voices speaking at once]

RT: Felix kept on walking--

VB: Because we haven't mentioned *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, I mean that's--

TA: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*...

SF: It's still popular today.

RT: Seventy years ago.

SF: *Pinocchio's* still popular today.

TA: What about the erm--

NF: Some films you go out [inaudible; overtalking] you go out--

SF: And 'Tweety Bird'--

TA: What was that one about the Princess and eh?

NF: I mean, how many people here sing 'Hi ho, hi ho'?

SF: Rip Van Winkle. [possibly referring to the 1934 cartoon short]

TA: Oh yes, yeah.

RT: [inaudible]

VB: Well the one thing that I wanted to ask as well, was there a particular time, when you were a child, that you went to the cinema? Was it always, say, the evening or--

NF: It was the best entertainment that we ever had, when we were young.

VB: Yeah.

NF: Ever!

SF: No, she means, what particular, did you go any particular day, like the--

NF: Saturday matinee. Saturday matinee was the picture day.

NCM: Yes.

NF: And for adults it was the best night for going to pictures, for adults. Saturday night was the picture night.

VB: Yeah, right.

NF: It was almost a habit.

NCM: Saturday afternoon was for youngsters.

VB: I see, yeah. 'Cause I was wondering--

NF: That's why they're called the matinee.

VB: Yeah, so that was when all the kids went and--

NF: Yeah, about two o'clock, you know?

TA: Don't have to worry about work weekend.

VB: Yeah, that's really interesting. Erm, I'm thinking actually, you've been saying such a lot of interesting stuff and we obviously haven't had time to, erm, go into a lot of detail--

NF: Could have done with somebody taking shorthand, couldn't you?

VB: Yeah. [laughs] I know.

TA: What about your, I thought you were going to--

VB: Well, I've got it on the tape, I mean I was wondering if erm--

SF: Oh you're taping what's been said--

NF: Is it all on tape?

VB: Yeah, it's all on tape, but I mean, I was wondering, because you've been saying a lot of things and I haven't had time to, you know, follow them all up. If you were minding if,

RT: [laughs]

NF: To broaden out on it—

VB: I was wondering if you would mind if I, if, you know, if it's okay if I maybe came another time and talked again?

[general agreement]

TA: I wouldn't mind.

VB: 'Cause I know that I'm going to go away and listen to this and think "Oh, I wish I'd asked about that". Would that, would that be alright?

GA: Yeah, sure.

NCM: I don't see why not.

NF: We, we have all the time in the world.

SF: [inaudible; overtalking] [community?] You can even put your name down to be a resident!

VB: It probably wouldn't be for a few weeks, but--

TA: [to NCM?] Cinema in the thirties.

VB: Erm, but that would be great. I mean, I'm going to have to go away now so--

NF: Maybe you can write an article in the home magazine about your project.

VB: Oh, that would be great, yes, if you... Do you have a magazine?

SF: Yeah.

NCM: Yeah.

SF: It comes out twice a year, doesn't it? Easter and Christmas.

VB: That would be great, yes.

SF: We only have two a year.

NF: It then becomes of public interest. A wider field.

VB: I'll have a word with Carol and see what she says about that, erm, but, erm, yeah, that's a good idea.

TA: Don't forget your pen!

VB: I won't, I won't. So I mean I just want to thank you again for letting me come--

RT: You're very welcome.

VB: 'Cause it's been, it's been great and you've given me a lot of, a lot of ideas, I'm going to have to think about a bit, aye.

NF: [inaudible] [as long as you keep our age secret?]

VB: I'll keep your age secret. [laughs]

[End of Side B]

[End of Interview]