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* Bolton, Greater Manchester, 1 June 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Kath (Kathleen) Browne

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Annette Kuhn

* KB=Kath Browne/ VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: Solo interview with Kath Browne; Kath Browne was previously interviewed with friends Dorris Braithwaite and Vera Entwistle on 11 May 1995; Sound Quality: Fair; fault on first tape; This interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner; the original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection; please contact Lancaster University Library for more details.

[audio starts midway through sentence; tape squeaking in background]

KB: And the Grand Theatre. Well I didn't used to go there. That was my brother's prerogative.

[crackling; inaudible]

VB: Ah, I see.

KB: [laughs]

VB: So was that one that wasn't considered--

KB: Well, no. It didn't appeal to me [inaudible]. So I think the only time I went to the Grand was [inaudible; tape crackly].

VB: Ah, I see.

KB: Saw erm, [pause 2 seconds] George Formby there, in eh. He played Simple Simon. That would be some time, 19 eh, it'd probably be in the twenties actually. Come to think about it. I'm not sure exactly when.

VB: Yeah.

KB: And then later on the Lido that opened in 1935, they had Laurel and Hardy there.

VB: Oh I see.

KB: But that was later on. I think it was after the war. You know, they were on the downward track, Laurel and Hardy.

VB: Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure when they were at their peak they wouldn't have bothered with live performances.

KB: No. Oh no. Now, you see, the Hippodrome, that later became, it became live theatre. And there was a repertory theatre and that lasted there for about 20 years. But it would be a later period.

VB: Ah, I see.

KB: It was during, after the war.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Because people used to book their seats. You know, and go to the same seat every week.

VB: Right.

KB: And have tea in the afternoon on Wednesday afternoon. I didn't. 'Cause of course I was working. Erm, anyway, I don't think I've seen any of these. 'Course they've got the Broadway singer. That doesn't sound bad, does it? "Mae West, *I'm No Angel*. Next week. The film you have all been waiting for." I wasn't waiting for that.

VB: [laughs] Did you not think much of Mae West?

KB: I don't think I ever saw her. I probably enjoyed her quips afterwards. But I don't think I yet knew the meaning at all at that age.

VB: Yeah.

KB: I was very innocent, really, you know. Oh Bing Crosby. Oh I think I must've gone to see that. 'Cause I used to go to nearly all his. And then we had him, listening to him on the radio.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Oh and *A Cuckoo in the Nest*. Yes. I might have gone to see that.

VB: So was Bing Crosby one of your favourites?

KB: Oh Bing Crosby was the favourite. It was a case of, I think I said. I went to eh, *Romeo and Juliet* and they showed a trailer and it was for *We're Not Dressing*. Which afterwards I discovered it was based on 'The Admirable Crichton'. And it was Carole Lombard. And they had this bear on roller skates. That's what tickled me as much as anything. And I liked erm Bing's voice. And I said, I started going to his films as they came along. And erm it developed. I didn't buy any of his records. Not till very much later.

VB: Mhm.

KB: But my friend did. *Voltaire*! George Arliss.

VB: I was going to say... [tape cuts out] I don't know what it's doing. It's never done this before, has it?

KB: Eh, put it on a, under a book. Put the book underneath. No, underneath and then--

VB: Right.

KB: No.

VB: It's really strange. It's like there's a mouse inside it or something.

KB: Oh, it's still squeaking. I got a tale I could set on you about John Cooper [interviewee JC-95-045]. The one where [we did that project?] Did he tell you?

VB: No.

KB: [laughs] Well he decided to, it was erm, people's ideas of playing this chap that taught them how best to leave school.

VB: Right.

KB: And so he went to his, his brother's, who incidentally spoke quite a lot like John did.

VB: Right.

KB: You know, the same sort of thing. Well he played this. And he got the bird going. [makes clicking noise] So he had to go back again and record it so that was a few of our first ones. [laughs]

VB: Oh. Oh, I'm going to... [tape cuts out again]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

VB: That's it. That's a lot better.

KB: Yes.

VB: We'll just eh, ditch this one. [laughs] 'Cause I think that's going to be very irritating after ten minutes of listening to that in the background.

KB: Oh yes. It is.

VB: Yeah. But you were saying about erm, Bing Crosby and eh--

KB: Yes.

VB: Carole Lombard. 'Cause I remember you saying that you liked Carole Lombard.

KB: Yes. I did like Carole Lombard. Yes. And she was in one with or two with eh, William Powell. And eh, I think I saw some things that were not really suitable for my age. But I must say, we didn't get in under the shade of like somebody else like they did later on.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Might have been before the Hays Office started. I don't know when it did. Can you? The censorship.

VB: '36, '37. Something like that.

KB: Ah, well it might've been. Yes. It could've been. Well I was going in at 1935. 1933 when I started at the Grammar School. So it was probably 1933, four, that I started going to the pictures as such.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Now my friend then who was my age, and I met her at school, we got friendly early in September of 1933 when I started. But we didn't actually start, like it was next year when we had some weeks holiday. And she came back here in the September of 1934. And I remember she said to me she'd been to the pictures every day! And I thought, "My goodness." Well, I didn't go as much as that. Eh, but we hadn't seen one another in seven weeks. So, the following year we met in the seven weeks holidays. So she didn't go quite as much. But eh, we did used to go, as I say, twice a week. And many times she'd come to one, she was mad on erm Bette Davis, you see. And I used to say, "I suppose you want to go and see Bette Davis." You see. "Well, yes." Then after we'd been she'd rather, sheep, sheepishly "Well I've seen it before." She'd been earlier in the week but she didn't like to tell me so, you see, till afterwards. [bursts out laughing] Oh dear me! But looking back we saw some marvellous Bette Davis. Because no doubt about it, she'd carry a picture. And another person, you know, if you're talking about looking at things in afterwards. I wasn't conscious of seeing as many James Cagney pictures as I have. You know, when they had a festival on the TV. And he's a marvellous actor, really. Well I thought, I didn't think, I just went along if--

VB: Uhuh.

KB: You know. I mean, I suppose, I've always liked musicals. And I went to all the Nelson Eddys and erm, Jeanette MacDonald. But I'm not prejudiced against Jeanette MacDonald. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

KB: And eh, I also used to go to all the erm, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

VB: It's interesting. When you were saying that, I was wondering, what do you think were the qualities that you liked in a star? 'Cause you say, you know, looking back you say Cagney was a good actor but at the time, it was something different.

KB: Yes. Well I think we went because of the stars. You know. And eh, now eh, as regards thrillers for instance. I didn't used to go to thrillers all that much. But my friend who was a nervous type used to want to go to those. You know. *The House of Wax* and something else. But eh, and as I say, she had a phobia, through her mother, about she was frightened of statues! I can never understand that. And eh, I used to walk her across town and see that she got on the tram that she needed to get on. And she was always, she used to pick, there was two buses she could get and one was a bit longer walk than the other one, you know. But it was a case of she had to pass a mill, well, not a, a deserted mill at nine o'clock at night. 'Cause she had to be home well before ten o'clock. Now I hadn't any restrictions. [laughs] Not really. As long as my mum knew where I was. "Oh, that's all right", sort of thing. But eh, 'cause I was at the shorthand class till about 11 o'clock.

VB: Ah, I see.

KB: [laughs]

VB: Well, I don't suppose there would be much that could happen to you there so. [laughs] Sounds fairly safe. So your friend was quite--

KB: Quite nervous.

VB: Nervous.

KB: Yeah.

VB: But she still liked thrillers?

KB: Oh she liked thrillers. Yes. And another thing was, she learned to drive when she was about seventeen. You know, so she hadn't got any nerves like. You know, so it's quite strange really.

VB: Did you like the thrillers yourself?

KB: No, not all that particularly. I mean I went to see 'Jekyll and Hyde' [referring to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*]. But that's 'cause of Spencer Tracy. And eh, Fredric March was in the previous one, wasn't he?

VB: Yeah.

KB: I don't think I saw the Fredric March one. It was the Spencer Tracy.

VB: 'Cause I remember you saying that you liked Spencer Tracy.

KB: Yes.

VB: What was it about him that eh, made you enjoy his films?

KB: Erm, I think he reminded me of my father somewhat.

VB: A-ah!

KB: I think so. Looking back.

VB: That's interesting. 'Cause he has got that sort of quality of being, as you say. I'm sure a lot of people identified with that.

KB: Yes. I lost my father when I was eh, eight.

VB: I see.

KB: You know, so it could've been, could've been like that.

VB: Right.

KB: But eh--

VB: 'Cause he is quite a sort of comforting--

KB: Yes.

VB: Person.

KB: Yes. And he gives the impression of being shorter, doesn't he? Yeah.

VB: Mhm.

KB: But eh, I think it might have been that. Now I liked erm, James Stewart too. Well he didn't really, I mean he didn't remind me of my father.

VB: [laughs]

KB: But I mean, look, you don't know what appeals, what appeals, do you?

VB: Mhm.

KB: I mean later on you think of somebody like eh, Burt Lancaster. Now that! I could put that down to the way he looked. You know. That was, that was that much older so--

VB: Yeah.

KB: But eh, William Powell I used to like. But I don't think I fancied really in him. But it was just he was funny.

VB: Yeah.

KB: The things that he played in was funny.

VB: Yeah.

KB: And I think I used to like sophisticated comedy. Well I did used to like that with Myrna Loy, you know. And Jean Harlow. Now Jean Harlow used to play some really putrid parts. But she had something. Definitely.

VB: Mhm. I was just talking about *Red Dust* yesterday.

KB: Were you?

VB: Yes.

KB: Yes I saw that. But the funniest one that I ever saw was with the four of them was *Libeled Lady*.

VB: I don't know that one. What was that?

KB: No. Well it was eh, Myrna Loy and William Powell. And eh, Jean Harlow and Spencer Tracy. Well they, sort of they paired off like that, you see. And eh, d'you remember? Well, you don't. D'you know the name Eugene Palette? Big man.

VB: Rings a bell.

KB: Yes. You'd probably know him if you see him. Ah he took Myrna Loy's father, you see. And William Powell is anxious to get in, you know, the good books. And they go on a fishing trip. It was this fishing trip that really appealed to me. So that was one of the funniest things I ever saw. It appealed to me.

VB: Yeah.

KB: And another thing which is later, doesn't come in your period is *Mon Oncle* with eh, [Jacques] Tati.

VB: Aw.

KB: That one with the sort of scientist in the kitchen where everything goes wrong. It's absolutely! I nearly killed myself with laughing. And mother didn't used to go to the pictures very much but she did come on one occasion and that was just after, that was after the war. And it was one with eh, I think it was Eddie Albert in. It was either Eddie Albert or Eddie Rankine. He was trying to explain something to somebody, and you know when you were listening with bated breath to what was coming. Well, I started laughing. And it wasn't funny, you see. Really. It wasn't funny. I started laughing, giggling, and mother started giggling. And we were both laughing at the same thing. And we knew what we were laughing at. We were visualising me brother telling us the tale. And we're both waiting for the point of the thing, you see. And it just struck us as being so much like Fred. And [laughing] we were roaring our heads off.

VB: I'm sure everyone else around you sort of... [laughs]

KB: Yes they probably did, you know.

VB: [laughs] Ah, I know what you mean. Just the sort of moment in a film that's sort of personal.

KB: Yes, it is totally personal. And it wasn't, as I say, it wasn't funny. Not particularly funny, anyway. But we found it tremendously so.

VB: Ah dear. Did you like the, when you're talking about these comedies. Did you like the Ernst Lubitsch ones? You know the sort of--

KB: Oh those were a bit before me.

VB: Yeah, sort of early thirties. Yeah.

KB: Bit too early. As I say, I didn't start, I mean, I had a sheltered life. I didn't even know where the Grammar School was till my mother took me the day, the weekend before--

VB: Yes.

KB: To show me where the school was that I'd won the scholarship to. I hadn't a clue where it was. Whereas mother, the only times we went into town was to buy clothes. And we didn't go into the town itself. We went to the outskirts.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Very often we used to walk in and walk back. So we didn't actually go, just to the outskirts you see. And eh, if we were going through, going through on our holidays.

VB: Ah yes.

KB: We used to have a holiday. But that was when my father was alive, you know. But eh, no. You see she didn't come from, from Bolton. She was a Lond, well she wasn't a Londoner but she lived in London.

VB: 'Cause I remember you mentioning your grandmother and it sounds like she had a, must have had quite an exciting girlhood herself.

KB: Oh I think so. Yes, I think she did.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Yes. Yeah. Because when she first came and lived in, up here, the question was there was nothing doing. You know, nothing going on. But she used to, I suppose she got, used to go to see the Sunday School things with me, you know. And then we got a gramophone eventually. So that, well that was my father with his music. He liked the music. And my father's side were eh, had good voices and they used to entertain. And eh, one of them in particular used to take the main contralto roles in the Gilbert and Sullivan. And I think I told you already about eh, arriving erm, on the, the weekend before I arrived on the Tuesday my brother came home. And mother hadn't gone. She'd gone, and

he'd gone to watch the rehearsal and he came in said, "Oh mum. [inaudible] They sang 'Roses Red and Roses White'", you see. [laughs] [inaudible] 'Roses Red and Roses White'.

VB: [laughs]

KB: Oh! Well that's in 'The Gondoliers'.

VB: Ah.

KB: It's the opening chorus. Yes. So, we used to go to all the Gondola, Gilbert and Sullivan. And the same thing happened when we got the radio. We used to listen to the people from, on the radio. Like Sir Henry Lytton who was the, one of the originals of the Savoy operas. And Martyn Green. He was more or less killed off in the thirties. Eh, he was trapped in a lift or something in New York, somewhere like that. He never really worked afterwards, I don't think. Must've been a very severe accident.

VB: Mhm.

KB: But he always used to take the Jack Point sort of roles. You know, there's always a funny one.

VB: Right.

KB: Yes. Yes. I presume you go to the Gilbert and Sullivans.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Mhm.

VB: It's interesting 'cause I was just thinking when you were saying that about the sort of humour. Do you think that your experience of the sort of Gilbert and Sullivan sense of humour affected what you liked in the films?

KB: Oh I think, well it could've done.

VB: Yeah.

KB: 'Cause I used to like them. Well, as I say, I used to like them. I used to jog to them.

VB: Yeah. 'Cause I remember you were talking about *Naughty Marietta*.

KB: Yes. I liked *Naughty Marietta*. I liked the best of the, I think so.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Though I quite liked 'On Through The Hill', you know with erm, the Mounties. That's *Rose Marie* of course.

VB: Yes.

KB: And erm, well of course, James Stewart was in that.

VB: I remember that, do you remember I was trying to think of a film with James Stewart when we were talking in the library and I couldn't think of the title. It was *Destry Rides Again*.

KB: Oh yes. Well that was one of is, sort of, he'd progressed quite a bit by that time.

VB: Yes. Yes.

KB: Yes with Marlene Dietrich.

VB: That's right. Yeah, yeah. I just couldn't remember the title.

KB: Well I used to get occasionally the chance of these American magazines.

VB: Mhm.

KB: 'Photoplay'. And they used to tell us all about Hank Fonda. Henry Fonda. Now he was another one. Now his voice used to fascinate me. Don't know what the accent is. I don't manage to fathom it.

But eh, I used to like his accent. And another American accent that I used to like was, on the radio, James [Drinkforth?]. I think it's a southern, a southern accent.

VB: Mhm.

KB: But eh, I used to love that.

VB: 'Cause I like James Stewart's voice as well. You know, that sort of throaty--

KB: Drawly, yes. Yes. I think he used to do these socially, eh, Frank Capra stories. And I used to like those too. And Paul Muni. Well it was Edna that liked eh, erm, she liked the whole series, in some ways she liked the more serious types. Her father was a local councillor. He became mayor later on. But eh, in some ways she missed out. But he was very, they were very strict. He was a product of a mixed marriage. Their last name was Flanagan. So you would think they were wily Irish Catholics, you see. Well, I mean, that sounds wrong [inaudible] [laughs].

VB: I know what you mean. With a name like Flanagan.

KB: Well his mother must've been, well she was a Quaker. So there was a sort of eh, you know, a pulling between. And he must've settled for the Quaker side of his character. 'Cause he used to go to the Mosley Street which in those days. I think it was sort of what you'd call erm, United Reform. They had a brotherhood and they used to play every Sunday. They had an orchestra that played there.

VB: Mhm.

KB: And Edna told me that it was her mother that was politically interested and got interested in the Union side and sort of quite pushed him, you know, when they were in their, presumably in their early twenties. Perhaps even before they got married. I don't know. And then he worked erm for a sort of charitable institution. And then he, he was erm he put in for this, he used to go round collecting for the Union. And then he got erm, [jacked in?] basically as secretary and he erm got the job. And eh Edna told me that during the war, her father was in the black book and I didn't know why he was but it was because he was a Trade Union secretary, you see.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Local Trade Union secretary for the, it's not a very militant one. Well it wasn't in those days. I think it's gone out, Transport and General Municipal Workers. So, I mean, it wasn't a particularly what you might call, militant union. Because when I was in the forces in the forties, we were all, that was quite fashionable then.

VB: Mhm.

KB: They were communists, you see, they were supporting eh, Stalin's regime, you know.

VB: Yeah, yeah.

KB: Well you had Mrs, Mrs Churchill's efforts. Nobody suggested she was a Communist, did they? You know. [laughs]

VB: [laughs] Oh dear. But that's interesting. So she had that sort of politicised background that drew her more to the serious--

KB: Yes, I would say so. And eh, oh she was much more interested in that sort of thing, you know. I mean, whereas mother wasn't in the least bit politically inclined. But my father was. But, I mean, I didn't, I mean I was too young when he died.

VB: Yeah. You were saying that you both enjoyed the Bette Davis films?

KB: Yes we did.

VB: What was it about her?

KB: Erm, well I think it was the strong woman.

VB: Yeah.

KB: I think it was, you see. Because Edna's mother was a strong woman, really. I would think.

VB: So she was someone that you could look up to or...?

KB: Eh, well perhaps, you know. But she couldn't cook.

VB: [laughs]

KB: [laughs] I mean to say. Well I mean I used to go sometimes and I used to think to myself, you know. And then they used to come here. "What did your mother do with that?," you see. Especially with the dried egg business--

VB: Yeah.

KB: During the war. Oh she worked a dab hand with this erm, this dried egg. She was really very good, mother, with that dried egg business. I was listening to something on the radio and somebody said they'd still got a tin. Though I don't know what it would be like. [laughs]

VB: Maybe not that much different. [laughs] I don't know.

KB: I don't know. But it was. And I know somebody came home about four doors away from erm, and there wasn't anything much else, you see. And she knew he'd come up from South, from Southampton. So she said [something about coming over]. A few days later the lady who's, who's, the mother said to her, "Excuse me, Mrs Browne, but what did you give our Norman?," she said. [laughs] So she said, "Oh, Dried egg," you see. "Oh," she said, "I don't know what it was but ooh, it was delicious!" [laughs] "I don't know what it was but ooh, it was delicious."

VB: Aw dear.

KB: It was really funny. 'Cause it made me laugh when, you know when I asked you where you were staying and you said Woolton Hall.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Well Woolton, Lord Woolton was Minister of Food during the war.

VB: Ah I see.

KB: That's why I [persisted?], you see. And it was Woolton pie that he had. And, 'course there was no meat in it, you know.

VB: Yeah.

KB: It was a sort of vegetable mixture, you know. Like a potato pie with carrots in it.

VB: I don't think I'll be able to sit down to a meal again there now without laughing now you've said that.

KB: No-o! And I think he was the one that instigated erm--

VB: [coughing]

KB: Whale meat. But that wasn't a success.

VB: Ah.

KB: They didn't have that very long. But I think they tried. Quite funny.

VB: [coughs] Ah dear.

KB: Anyway, get back to the eh thirties.

VB: Right.

KB: It will be the thirties particularly, won't it?

VB: Yes.

KB: Yes.

VB: I mean the other thing that I brought along that I thought you might to have a look at was--

KB: Oh Kay Francis was somebody, I just looked at this. Was somebody I used to think was really good looking. That I admired in a, you know, from a woman's point of view. And erm, oh dear. The other one like her too. Gail some, oh I've just stood on a nail. Gail. She's tall and dark. Wore her hair parted in the middle and down in a sort of long page boy. Yes. [pause 2 seconds]. Slim too. I wasn't slim at school. Frances Day. I never saw her. Have you come across anybody, has anybody ever mentioned Phyllis Konstam?

VB: No.

KB: No. Well she was a sort of starlet in the erm, late twenties, early thirties. And the family mentioned off record, the one, the grandma of the ones that have been floating about all over the world. Erm, actually, when she left school she went as a nursemaid to this Phyllis Konstam. And eh, Phyllis Konstam was married to Bunny Austin, who was a tennis player who was a contemporary of eh, Terry. So I just wondered, if you'd ever come across her.

VB: I haven't, no.

KB: She was a British starlet.

VB: Yeah.

KB: At least, I don't think after she got married, she was. But previous to her getting married she was.

VB: I'll have to keep an eye out to see if I do come across her now. 'Cause it's interesting having that sort of connection.

KB: Connection. Yes. Well, the one I mentioned, she left her and they, she went to Canada for a period. And she came back again 'cause she was homesick after about two years she came back.

VB: Did she have any stories about Phyllis Konstam, or?

KB: No, I don't think so. Not really.

VB: No.

KB: No.

VB: She was quite discreet about her--

KB: Oh yes.

VB: That's a shame. [laughs]

KB: [laughs]

VB: I was hoping for some scandal.

KB: Actually I have the impression, I don't know, but I think they were Jewish.

VB: Mhm.

KB: And where they lived eh, in London, eh was Cricklewood. Not, I don't mean Phyllis Konstam.

VB: Mhm.

KB: I mean erm, the family.

VB: Yeah.

KB: And that was a Jewish community.

VB: Oh right.

KB: In the thirties.

VB: Yeah.

KB: For quite a lot of--

VB: That's interesting.

KB: Yeah. It's Welsh now, I believe. [laughs]

VB: [laughs] Ah.

KB: But they do get congregations, don't you?

VB: Yeah. I brought along this book from, I think it's a 'Daily Express' one. From '38.

KB: 1938.

VB: I thought you might like--

KB: Mhm. Anna Neagle. I wouldn't have thought she was going much in 1938.

VB: No.

KB: 'Cause she got to stardom after she married [Herbert] Wilcox, didn't she?

VB: Mhm.

KB: Well, there you are, I can see it says Vivien Leigh. Well, I mean eh, let's see. Erm, Elizabeth Allan. Well my recollections of Isabel, eh, is the book. A.J. Cronin's. I read that. And I tended to do that sort of thing. Eh, and go and see a book that I fancied--

VB: Yeah.

KB: You know, as a film. But I nearly always got disappointed. I preferred, if I read the book previous to seeing the film, I was disappointed in the film. But I could, you know, enjoy it the other way. I don't know whether that's just me or whether it's, [looking at book], Clark Gable. Well you see he was thirty-seven there. That's quite old, isn't it? You see, if you're a teenager--

VB: Mhm.

KB: You wouldn't eh--

VB: That's interesting. So did he seem too old to--

KB: Well he, eh--

VB: You're right. I mean it is old when you're about sort of sixteen, seventeen.

KB: Well this is it, you see.

VB: An old man. [laughs]

KB: Now *The Good Earth*. I didn't go to see that but it was, I saw in the 'Film Weekly' there was quite a big spread on that. Eh, Spencer Tracy's *Captains Courageous*. Yes I saw that. That was the one that I didn't really care for very much.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Too sentimental sort of thing.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Paul Muni. Eh, that was, I don't think I saw that. *The Life of Emile Zola*. I saw the French films later and I don't think I saw that. Greta Garbo. No, I didn't particularly care for Greta Garbo. Deanna Durbin. Yes, I saw that. Yes. Now Deanna Durbin was eh, very much, my friend Edna that I mentioned was very much like her. Well, I should say Edna was much like her. And she had her hair

done in exactly the same way. With the curls and all this round here.

VB: Was she a big fan of Deanna Durbin then?

KB: Not really. She liked her. She liked her.

VB: Yeah.

KB: But we both liked Deanna Durbin better than eh, Judy Garland really.

VB: Mhm! What was it about her that made her that bit more special?

KB: Well she was Canadian. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

KB: That was the reason why. She was a Canadian, you see. So, we knew that. Now I don't recognise this one, John Clements. In *Knight Without Armor*. I saw John Clements afterwards and I quite liked him afterwards. *Night Must Fall* with eh, Robert Montgomery. Oh I think it got such good reviews that I decided I didn't want to see it.

VB: [laughs]

KB: I quite liked him but, eh, if they were too serious I don't think I wanted to go and see it. *Winterset*. Well there again. That was one I didn't see. Quite positive I didn't. *The Plainsman*. Yes, yes, with eh Jean Arthur and Cary Grant [sic]. I saw that. *Dead End*. Yes, I did see at least one. I think it was probably that. Now then *The Edge of the World* with Belle Chrystall and Niall McGinnis. I'm sure I didn't. Irene Dunne. *Theodora Goes Wild*. Yes. I used to like Irene Dunne. And eh, *Storm in a Teacup*. I definitely saw that. In fact I bought it as a paperback.

VB: Mhm.

KB: *A Star Is Born*. No, I didn't see that one. That was again a bit before. Janet Gaynor was very popular but she was just that little bit too early for me.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Johnny Mack Brown. No. [pause 3 seconds] David Niven, yes. I quite liked David Niven when eh, [pause 5 seconds] he first started.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Robert Taylor I quite liked.

VB: What was it?

KB: Eh?

VB: What did you like about Robert Taylor?

KB: Well I think he was just eh, handsome, you know. Just eh, yeah, "Robert Taylor Comes Across." Spangler Arlington Brugh his name was, wasn't it?

VB: Did you talk about the films much with your friend after you'd seen them?

KB: Didn't have time! Had to get back.

VB: Ah. [laughs]

KB: [laughs] We did, yes, yes. [pause 3 seconds] Maureen O'Hara. No! Not Maureen O'Hara, no. O'Sullivan, sorry. But eh, there is Maureen O'Hara. I remember... Sonja Henie, I used to see most of hers.

VB: Ah. The ice skating.

KB: Eh?

VB: The skating star.

KB: Yes.

VB: Yes.

KB: And Gracie Fields. Well, as I say we went into all that when--

VB: Yes.

KB: Yes. But if you mention anybody, anybody in Bolton will probably tell you the same sort of story.

VB: I'm sure. It must've been quite an exciting event.

KB: Yes, it was only just down the road really.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Anna Neagle. 1937. Oh, that's when she made *Victoria the Great*. Yes, I saw that. Definitely. And *Sixty Glorious Years*, yes.

VB: Mhm.

KB: [pause 3 seconds; looking at book] She's quite unrecognisable in some of these.

VB: I know. I was amazed looking at that book 'cause I always associate her with... [tape ends]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

[tape starts mid-conversation]

KB: [Anton] Walbrook was marvellous. Yes, he was very good in that. Well it was a series, wasn't it? Joan Blondell was another one here that I used to like. She was always used to take the part of the cheeky blonde.

VB: [laughs]

KB: She was married to Dick Powell. Who again I quite liked. He was in musicals.

VB: Mhm.

KB: He had a high light tenor. And eh, that was quite good. Now there's one here, one from Vienna. If I ever saw her, she's not very recognisable to me. Danielle Darrieux. Yes, I remember her. But I don't think it was in the thirties.

VB: Mhm.

KB: And Isa Miranda. She made quite a debut. Just one film, I think.

VB: Yeah.

KB: It didn't get much eh, eh. Now Vera Zorina was a ballerina. And eh, eh, she was very good. *On Your Toes*, she played, I'm sure. Eh, another one here, Franciska Gaal from Hungary. [reading from book] "Chance of a lifetime in *The Buccaneer*." I think that was Yul Brynner, wasn't it? [turns pages] "Seeing Stars." [pause 3 seconds] Merle Oberon.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Now she, yes, she was quite good in comedy. But I think she got where she got because she married Alexander Korda.

VB: That's quite a good career move, I'm sure. [laughs]

KB: Eh, but she was quite good in eh, on there's Charles Laughton! Henry the Eighth, you know [referring to *The Private Life of Henry VIII*]. And I, of course, enjoyed that.

VB: Yeah.

KB: He's sat there with his chicken, plucking, eating his chicken. In later life, 'course, it turns out he's eh, homosexual, you see. And his wife was eh, [looks at book] now Edna Best with eh... [turns page] There's something about Edna Best, I think. She was erm quite well-known on the London stage [and others will have heard of her?]. I didn't really. "On Location." *The Vessel of Wrath*. I didn't see that. Elsa Lanchester. That was Charles Laughton's wife. [inaudible] You know, when you, 'course, it makes you wonder when you read these things now. They're just blowing the gaff, aren't they, altogether? As I say, we certainly, 'course they didn't let you know, did they? It wasn't the done thing then, I suppose.

VB: What were they, I was wondering when you were talking about eh, getting these American fan magazines.

KB: Yeah.

VB: Were they quite different from the 'Picturegoer' and...?

KB: Yes, well it was the people that used to write in those were erm, erm Louella. Louella Parsons. Well I think she used to make three-quarters of it up, what she used to write. And same with Hedda Hopper. You know. But I used to quite like those. Yes. You got to know. And they'd take people like Henry Fonda and eh, James Stewart. Apparently they lived together. Eh! You know, shared rooms. She put it that way. But they certainly weren't eh, pansies, as at the time we referred to them.

VB: Yeah.

KB: There were a lot of pansies supposedly. But, it was the, it was only the ballet stars that were regarded as pansies. As a done thing.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Though, there are other... I was, I was doing a bit of research on Ivor Novello and I've always had that thing, impression that he was probably homosexual. We didn't know whether he was or whether he wasn't. But it doesn't sound as though he was. Mind you that was probably soon after his death so, you know. But he's supposed to be such a sweet man, you see. But he certainly had circles of, plenty of circles of feminine friends.

VB: Mhm.

KB: But they were mostly older than him, I would have thought, you know.

VB: Yes.

KB: That's a bit suspect. [laughs]

VB: So did the American have more sort of--

KB: Scandal.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Yes, I think so. Definitely.

VB: Yes

KB: You got to know more from the eh, who would be married. And if they'd been married seven years like they would, you know. Ray Milland and his wife had been together quite a long time. 'Course, you see, strictly-speaking, he wasn't an American, was he? He was Welsh originally, so.

VB: Mhm.

KB: No his accent and Gary Coop, Gary eh, Cary Grant's weren't. They were more well, mid American, weren't they?

VB: Very much so.

KB: I don't think I was conscious that Cary Grant was English. Well, there again, I think he was Welsh, wasn't he?

VB: Mhm.

KB: You see. I used to like him in the, with Irene Dunne. Yes, he was with Irene Dunne. Flora Robson. Yes. Aye, I liked Flora Robson. I thought she was very good. I went to see her at erm, at erm, at the Opera House in Manchester and there was only about twenty-five there. And it was Saturday afternoon but it was a great pity that a great actress like her... [there would have been thousands in the past?].

VB: What was she like as a stage performer?

KB: She was very good! She was very good! And I can't remember what it was I saw her in. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

KB: But she was good. I saw eh, Rex Harrison and Lilli Palmer there too.

VB: Mhm.

KB: That was in the one that they made as a film of the witches. In *Bell Book and Candle*.

VB: Oh yes.

KB: Yes. Yeah. Well that was later, of course.

VB: Yeah.

KB: I was conscious of the bald spot in eh--

VB: [laughs]

KB: The back of his head. [laughs]

VB: Oh dear. [laughs]

KB: It's one of those things, isn't it?

VB: Yeah.

KB: I know I never find that sort of, it puts me off if I see a bald spot. Like Prince Charles, you know. Something like that.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Victor McLaglen. Now he was quite popular. And eh, but I didn't really see a great... I saw more of his with John Wayne which would be a later period. And Wallace Beery. I only saw Wallace Beery once, the same with Marie Dressler.

VB: Muhu.

KB: Now they were a popular team. I think I only saw them once. Eh, okay, it wasn't too bad. Now John Beal, I remember the name. But it mentions his actress wife, Helen Craig. I don't remember her at all. [laughs] Fred MacMurray. I remember Fred MacMurray in the first one that he did which was with eh, Donald O'Connor and Bing Crosby [probably referring to *Sing You Sinners*]. And they were sort of eh, playing the saxophone, playing the saxophone and they were singing. I can't remember what else.

VB: Was it Bing's voice that you liked mainly?

KB: Yeah. And his personality, I think. 'Cause it was sort of easygoing. And eh, yes, quite easygoing. "Beauty at Elstree." Gertrude Michael. Now, you see, that's eh, Sally Gray I do remember Sally Gray. But again, that's a later period in the erm, erm wartime period.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Errol Flynn. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Well I liked Richard, erm, Rafael Sabatini's historical romances. And, of course, *Captain Blood* was eh [my soul heart?]. Loretta Young. I don't seem to have, I saw her once or twice but I don't think we were ever, [looking at book] Now then. George Cukor. There's the one here. I take it that's Marie Dressler. *David Copperfield*. I saw that. And eh, apart from Freddie Bartholomew. [laughs] They were too, that's what I used to think, they were too terribly sickly sentimental.

VB: Mhm.

KB: I mean later on when you get the, you know, the upper-class Englishman fighting the battles, you know. I mean that's a caricature as well, isn't it?

VB: Mhm.

KB: But eh, I mentioned the point of these blonde, you know. People like Cary Grant, no Gary Cooper.

VB: Mhm.

KB: You know that you thought the American hero--

VB: Yeah.

KB: When you met them in eh, later on they tended to be about five foot seven or eight.

VB: [laughs]

KB: [laughs] With a rather mucky express-, eh complexion.

VB: [laughs]

KB: You know. You don't talk about men's complexions but you know what I mean.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Sallow.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Billie Burke. Eh, yes, well she was quite good. She was married to erm, eh Florenz Ziegfeld. But she didn't seem to do very much in pictures. I mean she did one or two. Ray Milland. Well now, you see, I can't remember him looking like that, that much. Mhm. And Deanna again. Yes.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Yes, yes, yes. Yeah, definitely we liked, "awkward age". [reading from book] Of course, she had a beautiful voice though.

VB: I was interested when you were saying that about the Canadian appeal to you.

KB: Ah there's a difference. There's a definite difference.

VB: Mhm.

KB: And there is. When I went over later on, [laughing] I could tell there's a definite difference. There's a definite difference in the accent, isn't there?

VB: Was it the voice that you? Did you like her speaking voice as well?

KB: Oh I do tend to be attracted by attractive speaking voices. Yes. I mean like Laurence Olivier. And that's eh, of course the classic one, and eh John Gielgud. But I've never actually, yes! I have. I've seen him once. On the stage. And bit of a disappointment. Though it's coming, being revived a bit now. It was that one about the schooldays that Alan Bennett wrote about early 1950s and I think they've revived it again.

VB: Mhm.

KB: But I wasn't keen on that when I saw it. But I mean I admired erm, his diction.

VB: Yes.

KB: Yes. [pause 2 seconds] Erm, Gary Cooper.

VB: What about erm, Ronald Colman? 'Cause he's another star I think--

KB: Yes. Ronald Colman. Well I saw him in one or two. But eh, there again I didn't eh, I didn't see a lot of him.

VB: Mhm.

KB: I think a lot of it you know probably, [looks at book] Barry K. Barnes. Yes. That's the new Korda star. Yes, I saw him. But I didn't think he was as good as Scarlet, in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* as eh, erm--

VB: Leslie--

KB: Leslie Howard. Here she is. Bette Davis. Those cigarettes too.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Not that eh, smoked that much, then they didn't smoke, but erm—

VB: Did she seem very sophisticated when you were that sort of age?

KB: Oh yes. Yes, definitely. [pause 3 seconds] John Ford. Now, you see that photograph there, erm, he came *The Informer* and *The Hurricane*. Eh, John Ford was later on, I would, you know, that he came into prominence.

VB: Yes.

KB: *Trader Horn*. Now erm, Vee, eh not Vee. Dorris! Saw, that was one of the first ones she saw. *Trader Horn*, so she tells me. I didn't see it. Though she and I are the same age practically. I think there's a fortnight between us.

VB: [laughs]

KB: *The Love Parade* by Ernst Lubitsch. Oh I didn't see that. *Mutiny on the Bounty*. I saw that one. Yes. [pause 2 seconds]. *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*. [laughs] Yes, I saw that.

VB: Was it a Paul Muni one?

KB: Mhm. *A Tale of Two Cities*. Eh, and *A Yank at Oxford*. Now, the *Tale of Two Cities*, that's about, I saw that eh, and quite liked it. Though I don't like Charles Dickens. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

KB: No, that's eh Charles Dickens. I don't care for it. Far too sentimental.

VB: Mhm.

KB: At least in my view. Maybe you rely on him for history [inaudible]. 'Cause he's writing, like Bill Naughton, our local fella. I mean, he's very popular and I quite enjoy, but if you were going on local history, don't rely on him. 'Cause he's writing like twenty years in the past.

VB: Yes.

KB: You know. He's good for his time. 'One Small Boy' is quite good. Have you read that?

VB: I haven't no.

KB: No. But eh, have you found anything on erm, what you call it, Halliwell? He wrote a book [referring to Leslie Halliwell].

VB: Well erm, Arthur Orrell actually gave me a cutting from when his book came out.

KB: Yes. There was a whole series of them.

VB: Yes, yes. So that was quite useful.

KB: Yeah. Well I think I cut them out but I think I've thrown them out.

VB: Yeah.

KB: You know, one of those things. But eh--

VB: That was really useful 'cause it's very. Although I think he's slightly younger. The thirties and sort of forties, fifties he was talking about.

KB: Oh yes, he's definitely younger than me. That's right. He's younger than me. So he'd probably be in his erm, 'cause I was surprised when he said he'd been to Bolton School.

VB: Yes.

KB: 'Cause I... [laughs] That's one of the [with emphasis] schools. The only school. You know, the boys in that particular period. I mean if you went to the same one that I went to it wasn't, wasn't considered particularly erm. Well, yes, it was a good school--

VB: Yeah.

KB: But not the same, it didn't have, you know, the same social connections.

VB: Yes.

KB: Shall we put it that way.

VB: Yeah. 'Cause it's interesting 'cause eh, Wendy Pye's husband [referring to Denis Pye]--

KB: Wendy. Yes.

VB: Was saying that he'd been a couple of years below Halliwell at the schools.

KB: Yes. Yeah.

VB: [inaudible; overtalking] It's a wonderful book that. It's really--

KB: Which?

VB: The Film Guide book that you have there [referring to 'Halliwell's Film Guide']. I mean it's--

KB: Yeah, I've got two.

VB: Ah right. Have you got the--

KB: The 'Companion'.

VB: The 'Companion' as well [referring to 'Halliwell's Filmgoers' Companion'].

KB: That's the one underneath. Under that 'Evergreen'.

VB: Ah I see, yes. Oh, they're very useful. Do you use them a lot or?

KB: I, well, I don't these days, because... though I suppose I do to some degree. I look them up in the, you know, I get the 'Radio Times' every week—

VB: Yes.

KB: So that eh, you know--

VB: Mind you, half the time the 'Radio Times' are just more or less copying out of there! [laughs]

KB: Yes.

VB: I think. Yeah. They're very good.

KB: Are we doing all right with this?

VB: Very much so.

KB: Oh, that's all right then. [pause 3 seconds] Now there's another one here I've never heard of. I can't eh... [pause 2 seconds] Walter Wanger. Oh, I know, I was going to stop and say something. About we might have been influenced eh, by certain things. And it's the distributors. Ah, because, it depended, you know, who showed what at the local cinema. You know, they had chains--

VB: Uhuh.

KB: You know. And what developed into the ABC chain which was our Capitol.

VB: Uhuh.

KB: And then there was the Lido. And the Odeon, of course. That was, you know, there's those three. They tended, and then the smaller ones on the outskirts erm followed in that sort of, so it depends, really, what they showed.

VB: Yeah.

KB: You see, it wasn't entirely your choice. Was it?

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

KB: And eh, have you come across anybody that knows anything about the local fella that... I mentioned him before. And, later on he started with these. [inaudible] Definitely B pictures, probably even C if there was such a thing as a C picture. But there was a Lancashire comedian called Frank Randle. And eh, he used to have eh, he was really revolting.

VB: [laughs]

KB: [laughs] It was eh, what he's in that, 'I'm Happy when I'm Hiking', he used to do. And Rob Wilton was better than he was. Rob Wilton. Of that type. Eh, Will Hay was another one.

VB: Yes.

KB: But then Will Hay was I think London-based. But there was this series. And George Formby of course. He, you know, was also a comic. British. That book underneath there, the bottom one.

VB: Uhuh.

KB: That's very good from the British side. Have you seen that?

VB: I haven't, no. This is George Perry, 'The Great British Picture Show'.

KB: Well, if you want to look at that.

VB: I'll have a quick look at it. That looks very good. Yes.

KB: Because Dorris mentioned, she said, "We didn't mention any British ones, did we?" And I said, "Well, we didn't do much," you know. But eh, Mischa Auer. Now he was the good character. We used to watch him. Mostly in the eh, Fred Astaire one.

VB: Ah.

KB: Here's Carole Lombard. Spencer Tracy.

VB: What was it about Carole Lombard that appealed to you?

KB: Erm, well I think it was physical. Eh, you see, she was blonde, blue-eyed. And eh, I mean if you, you know, sort of said what you would like. You know, your typical heroine, you know. Or what appealed to you in man's looks. Well, they were always blonde as far as I was concerned, you know. I

found blonde looked clean.

VB: Mhm.

KB: 'Cause that-- [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

KB: If they were swarthy, you know, with a five o'clock shadow, they'd put me off, you know.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Though I quite liked moustaches. That got me into trouble sometimes.

VB: [laughs]

KB: I quite liked, quite liked moustaches. But eh, my father had a moustache, you see.

VB: Ah.

KB: So I suppose that was again part of the attraction. 'Cause I used to scream when he, 'cause he used to, when he kissed me because he had, he used to put, military type, you know, used to put pomade on his 'tache, and it used to be in points. I know it sounds revolting. But it used, and he used to prick you, you see. [inaudible] when he used to kiss you and pin like [laughs]. That was erm--

VB: [laughs] 'Cause quite a few of the stars, like Errol Flynn and--

KB: Oh yes they had a moustache. Oh yes they did. Well course they called him Ronald Coalbarge. That was what they used to say, Ronald Colman. And Errol Flynn, yes. But eh, [looking at book] Jean Arthur. She had erm, now her voice appealed to me. That was her husky voice that appealed to me.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Dorothy Lamour, yes. I liked Dorothy Lamour when she came in with *The Jungle Princess*. She was really quite attractive. This is before she made the 'Road' pictures. Gene Raymond. Well, eh, well he just, you know, didn't make much. He married Jeanette MacDonald. But apart from that, I don't think there's anything of great note.

VB: Mhm.

KB: I think he sort of would take the feather of the hat, the hero, you know, not much really. Virginia Bruce. It says she was an "unusual beauty". Well, she's blonde. Vivien Leigh. Oh, Fredric March. Myrna Loy. Now she's not really good looking, is she? Eh--

VB: Not classically what you would associate. No.

KB: No, not really.

VB: But she is. There's something about her that's attractive.

KB: Well I think she took Eastern vamps for a long time.

VB: A-ah!

KB: You know, as a, yeah.

VB: Is that right? 'Cause I always think of her in these, you know, the detective,

KB: Oh yes! Well I mean, oh yes, I know, that's where she was noted. But I think when she was making her way, I don't know if it tells you in here. Eh, [looks at book] don't think so. I'm sure she took eh--

VB: That's interesting.

KB: Eastern, Eastern erm, things. You'd find out if you open that 'Companion', I think.

VB: Yeah. 'Cause I could see her in that sort of role when you say it. 'Cause she is quite dark and I could imagine her--

KB: Yeah.

VB: Sort of made up to look Eastern.

KB: Yeah, she's got eh, [looking at book] Paul Muni. Oh he wasn't good looking. He was a good actor. But he was noted like, eh, Alec Guinness was later, for sort of picking his roles and they were, what you might call showy roles, you know. Annabella, is in there, she made that, *The Wings of the Morning*. That's a beautiful picture. One of the first beautiful colour, Technicolors, you were looking at. And it was Tyrone Power in that. Now he was good. He acted with his eyes. Yes, yes, definitely.

VB: What was it like seeing the first colour films? Was it--

KB: Oh! It was a great experience! Yes it was a great experience. Yes. 'Cause the only other thing you'd see, that I'd seen, was eh, eh, the sort of thing that you'd eh. Well they'd be coloured, coloured slides, in a way. You know, that type of thing.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Rochelle Hudson. Now, the name is familiar but I don't think I ever saw her.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Don Ameche. Yes, I used to like Don Ameche with Tyrone Power, in the Fox musicals. [pause 2 seconds] Katharine Hepburn. Now I've always liked Katharine Hepburn. Eh, mostly as Jo in *Little Women*. That was a very good picture.

VB: Mhm.

KB: I liked that. [turns pages] "Favourite of the North". Well it does mention eh, George Formby.

VB: Had you read 'Little Women' before you went to see that?

KB: Oh yes!

VB: Was that one--

KB: And 'Jo's Boys'.

VB: Aw.

KB: Yes, and eh, later on, even when I went over to America--

VB: Uhuh.

KB: I chased over a book that I'd read in my teens and it was by eh, [Louise May] Alcott. Called 'Rose in Bloom'. And eh, my hostess, when I went over, eh, she was all packed up ready to leave Rochester. That's where we were staying. And to go down to erm, Florida. And she said she'd got this book when I said I wanted it. Well I'd been trying to get it to reread it again. And eh, she said, "Well, I can't let you have it now. It's all packed up," sort of thing.

VB: Mhm.

KB: She was waiting to go. But she sent it later on. And eh, it's erm, it's a romance. Like a teenage romance.

VB: Mhm.

KB: And it's eh, I still quite enjoyed it. You know, the sort of thing that 'Anne of Green Gables' was. That's like a sort of teenage romance. I used to like those.

VB: Mhm.

KB: And erm, the other that erm, well 'Anne of Green Gables' of course was, it was written by erm, a Canadian, wasn't it?

VB: Yes. Yes, I forget her name.

KB: Mazo de la Roche [sic].

VB: Yes, yes.

KB: No! No, it wasn't. Mazo de la Roche was Americ, was Canadian. Eh, she wrote the Renny [referring to 'The Young Renny'], the erm, oh dear, [inaudible] genre.

VB: Right, right. That's it, yes. Yes, I enjoyed that sort of thing when I was a child as well. And I remember sort of, you know, crying over bits in 'Little Women' and [laughs] the sort of sad bits.

KB: Oh yes, yes.

VB: And when the sister dies and everything.

KB: Yes, yes. Well, I know my mother, she, she told me about 'Peep Behind the Scenes'. Have you ever read that?

VB: No.

KB: I mean that was [based on film?]. I borrowed the book. I borrowed the book from the library. Well it left me absolutely cold but she thought it was marvellous, you know. She read it as a, as a, erm, teenager.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Because she didn't used to, didn't used to read books. That sounds bad, but she didn't. She'd read the newspapers. And the other one, [laughs heartily] the one I remember reading. I came back here, and said something about it, eh, I said eh, she said, "Oh, I've just read it, are you looking at it." And I said "I have." Do you know what it was? 'How to'... 'How to Succeed' by Dale Carnegie. And I thought to myself, "What's she going to do reading that?" You know. [looks at book] John

Barrymore. Yes. Well, of course, he had a reputation, doesn't he, for his drinking. But I don't think that came across on the eh...

VB: Mhm.

KB: Robert Montgomery. I used to quite like Robert Montgomery, without getting, quite like him, you know. Simone Simon. Yes. I quite like her too. She played Diane in *Seventh Heaven* with erm, James Stewart. Yeah, yes, James Stewart. Andrea Leeds. There again that's another name that's familiar.

VB: Mhm.

KB: *The Goldwyn Follies*. Now then. There's a man here that looks vaguely familiar. It's not a man, it's a woman. Miss Arzner [referring to Dorothy Arzner]. No, she's a director. Well looking at it I thought it looked a bit like Ivor Novello. He looks a bit feminine. June Lang. Cagney. [pause 3 seconds] *Something to Sing About*. I might have seen him in that.

VB: Was that a musical or... was that a musical that one?

KB: Apparently. Yeah.

VB: Yeah. Things like *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, I didn't realise he'd made.

KB: No well that's old, isn't it?

VB: Many years ago.

KB: And eh, of course, Gary Cooper. They showed him with his wife. Leif Erickson. Well eh, he's erm, erm, [pause 2 seconds] later on in TV. That was a western, he always took the parts in the western. And at that time, eh, Myrna Loy was married to Arthur Hornblower. But I think, she married, I think she married, she married about four times.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Ray Milland. Oh it gives his wife's maiden name there. [pause 3 seconds] Fred MacMurray. [tape cuts out]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape Two]

[Start of Tape Three]

[Start of Side A]

KB: Open on Sundays and we all, I think you had to be twenty-one to vote on this.

VB: Yes.

KB: And of course I wasn't, [laughing] over twenty-one by that time. And eh, so we voted. It would be, I think, in the late forties. Eh, it was certainly before 1951 because I remember Edna voted and she died in 1951 so I remember that.

VB: So was that quite a controversial subject then, Sunday opening?

KB: Oh yes, oh yes. People should have their Sunday off, you see. You know. That's Calvinistic, isn't it? Mhm. [laughs] I don't know.

VB: Did you ever have? 'Cause there was something the same in Glasgow but I know that sometimes they had eh, charity shows on a Sunday.

KB: Yes.

VB: Did they do that here as well?

KB: Yes. They did it, well especially during the war, they did. Eh, you know, they'd have people like eh, Wilfred Pickles--

VB: Mhm.

KB: Who was just about making his name in those days. And he came to the eh, erm, came to the Grand [Theatre]. And it was local celebrities. Girl I knew who being in the Dinky Dots--

VB: Yes. I read your piece on that. It's interesting.

KB: Erm, she'd been in the Dinky Dots. She was in the Fire Brigade with me--

VB: Yeah.

KB: She played the xylophone very well. But she was a sort of, you know, local celebrity.

VB: Yes.

KB: She was on the bill with Wilfred Pickles. And that was early in the war because in 1944, while I was down in the south visiting my aunt regularly, eh she said, "Ooh! It's that dreadful man on the, reading the news." She couldn't understand what he was talking, she called him "That dreadful man!"

VB: [laughs]

KB: I said, "Ooh," I said, "he's quite well known." But she used to say she couldn't understand what I said if I got excited and stoke, spoke. But she, "Slowly, slowly," you know.

VB: [laughs]

KB: 'Cause if I got excited I'd go... [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

KB: But eh, you'd probably find that interesting. I'm interested in eh, sort of where people come in their accents. And eh, you know, as I said, you, erm, seem to me to talk like Mr Smith. And he did come from erm, Glasgow.

VB: Yes. Yeah.

KB: Yes. But I mean eh, there's an accent, difference again in between eh, of course, Canadians are different to erm, Americans.

VB: Very much so, yes.

KB: Yes. Yeah. But that's more attractive to me. The Canadians who--

VB: I think I'm inclined to agree with you. Having lived in Canada I, [laughs] can't say much else. But I think you're right. Yes. It's a much erm, they've got much softer voices I think--

KB: Mhm.

VB: Than the Americans. They're quite--

KB: I often say, I find that's the sort of erm, I don't know why--

VB: Except for the Southerners, I suppose. They have quite a--

KB: Yes, yes.

VB: Melodious.

KB: You tend to. Yes. Well when I first went down, I was in Surrey, and the other people that come down, not with me, but they came from Birmingham. Well they sing there, don't they? You know. And erm, 'course they, funny thing was, when I was in Essex, erm, we'd gone out for the night and met some people, some Merchant Navy blokes from eh, Jarrow, which of course is, I found them very hard to understand.

VB: Mhm.

KB: I'd got to listen very hard to understand. But when I came back some other fireman said to me, "Ooh erm, British people, English people not good enough for you, are they not?" So I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "'Those people, those blokes you've come back with." He said, he said "Were they Norwegians?" You see. Very Norwegian. "Very Norwegian!" [imitates Birmingham accent] So I said, "They're not Norwegian. They're English!"

VB: [laughs]

KB: You see. So they wouldn't believe me! So, I mean, you get this prejudice, don't you? In all parts. And presumably you do in different parts of Scotland.

VB: Mhm.

KB: I wouldn't know. But eh, you know, I know there's a difference in the accent between the Edinburgh--

VB: Yes.

KB: Yes. And isn't the eh, Inverness, supposed to be the most perfect English? That's what I--

VB: It could well be. Yes, yes.

KB: Yes.

VB: Though I think the west of the, the Hebrideans think that theirs is, [laughs] too. So-- [laughs]

KB: [laughs]

VB: I don't know.

KB: No. Well they wouldn't see much, in the southern, they wouldn't see much, would they? In the thirties. Up there.

VB: Oh no, no.

KB: No, no.

VB: I know they had erm, in the Highlands, they had the travelling cinemas.

KB: Yes, but they only come, they didn't come very often, did they?

VB: Erm, certainly not to the extent you could see a different film or a couple of films every week. No.

KB: No.

VB: Nothing like that.

KB: No. Is that why they send you down to the more urban population.

VB: Erm, I guess. Well I mean Glasgow of course was, you know, huge numbers of cinemas so--

KB: Mhm.

VB: And the Central Belt was very--

KB: Yeah.

VB: Eh.

KB: [looks at book] Oh, we've got Ann Todd. Now I should've said she was after the war, you see. When she did her, you know, the erm, what was it? What was it called? She got the 'Daily Mail Film Award' when James Mason played the part of the pig that was... [laughs] The pig that hit her across the knuckles, the knuckles [possibly referring to *The Seventh Veil*].

VB: [coughs]

KB: Very dramatic.

VB: Yeah very.

KB: Did you not see that one? Ann Todd, yes. In the heyday of erm British--

VB: [coughs]

KB: Just after the war.

VB: [coughs] 'Scuse me.

KB: And erm. Now Joan Fontaine. She's eh, very attractive. I used to find her very attractive but eh, 'course she's eh, Olivia de Havilland's sister, isn't she?

VB: Mhm. They're quite alike too, aren't they?

KB: Yes.

VB: Apart from the difference in colouring.

KB: Yes they are. Barbara Stanwyck. Oh, I think I... She married Robert Taylor, didn't she?

VB: Mhm.

KB: Bit jealous of her, I think.

VB: [laughs]

KB: [laughs] Charles Boyer left me completely [pause 2 seconds] blank, you know. I couldn't have cared less about him. [looks at book; 4 seconds] *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. Well I saw that. I saw that. Yes. But eh, as, as I say, recollection of it was, you know, rather vague. Probably the erm--

VB: Yeah.

KB: [looks at book] Dennis O'Keefe. Well, he's not too bad. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Oh, my goodness. [turns pages] That was so [inaudible], *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Tovarich*. Yes, I saw that. And that was also one of the first films as such that I saw as a play on TV when we got our TV.

VB: Oh.

KB: Which is 1953 in case you're interested. For the first one we had. We got it in time for the coronation. Being the, you know. So eh, 'cause we had a spate, we had *Tovarich* on, which I've seen. And they had that one with eh, erm, erm, [pause 2 seconds]. Ooh dear. Kenneth More who played the flying officer. It's a Terence Rattigan play [possibly referring to *The Deep Blue Sea*].

VB: Right. I think I know the one you mean but I can't remember--

KB: Yes. Well they had that. They had three or four in one month, you know. And they were really good choices. But I, when I was going to the theatre I used pick by the author more than, more than not, you see. That's what impressed me as regards the theatre. 'Cause I liked Alan Ayckbourn.
[laughs]

VB: Yes. [laughs]

KB: But I've been trying to think what the last one was when you asked me, you know. The first time I saw you. I still can't think what it was. No, it's hopeless. So it can't have been much. I remember thinking, it is a long time since.

VB: Mhm

KB: Because I know, I paid one pound fifty. And I thought to myself, that's a heck of a lot, one pound fifty. Now I think it's about three pounds, isn't it?

VB: Yes. Yes. Easily.

KB: So, I mean, obviously I've not been for a long, long time.

VB: Yes.

KB: [looks at book] *In Old Chicago*. I saw that. Yes. I quite like that. With Tyrone Power and Don Ameche and Alice Faye. I liked Alice Faye too. *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. Now I didn't see that. I quite definitely didn't.

VB: Mhm.

KB: Because eh, I wasn't too keen on, we weren't keen on Shirley Temple.

VB: Really!

KB: No, no. Edna and I weren't. We didn't like it. 'Our Gang', there was of course, wasn't there?

VB: Yeah.

KB: And eh, erm, Andy Hardy. I used to like those. I used to go to see all the Andy Hardy ones, yes.

VB: What was it about Shirley Temple you found?

KB: I think it's the sentimentality. Again, you see. It just struck me as being sick-making!

VB: [laughs]

KB: I mean, you know the one that I started trying to tell you. And they said it was after the war. It was the fella with, hands, he had hooks. In actual fact, he had hooks.

VB: Yes.

KB: *The Best Years of Our Lives* it was. And Edna and I went and halfway through the picture she nudged me like this. And she went [makes face]. And we looked down the line and they'd all got, like sniffing away, you know. And we were sat there. [laughs] And I told somebody. That was when I was a fire worker in the Fire Service. And they said, "Ooh, you mean to say you weren't, you didn't have a sob?" And I said, "No. We just had a quiet little giggle."

VB: [laughs]

KB: Everybody else was being so terribly affected. Well we knew it wasn't real, you see.

VB: Aw dear.

KB: [looks at book] *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*. Yes, I'm sure I saw that too, you know. But what it was. Jessie Matthews, yes. I saw quite a lot of Jessie Matthews.

VB: So did you use what it said about the films in the magazines to decide which ones?

KB: Yes. And then again eh, we used to, I used to read the 'Daily Mail' and eh, as a matter of fact it's still continuing. Not the 'Daily Mail' but eh, I mean, I get a 'Sunday Times' for the reviews. I mean, of course, Dilys Powell used to give the reviews in that. And you still take one out from what she's done. You know what I mean, once a week.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Star, this one that she's done. I used to think she was very good.

VB: Oh she is. Yeah.

KB: Yeah. So it was, erm, you found somebody whose paths crossed your own and you found it was similar.

VB: Yeah.

KB: I mean there was a person in the 'Daily Mail' who used to, actually wrote 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' with erm, Ivor Novello. His name was Colin Knox.

VB: Mhm.

KB: He's been dead for years but he was a well-known writer for radio. And he was very good. And also on television it was Peter Black. Now he's been finished, they've been finished some time. They don't have these reviews in detail on what they've seen, do they? And eh, I always, I go to a current affairs class with the WEA and I said, well I only, I get the erm, I got the... When the 'Sunday Times' stopped publishing--

VB: Mhm.

KB: They were on strike. I tried the 'Observer' but I didn't like them. So I said, oh no! Forget it.

VB: Yeah.

KB: I'll wait till the 'Sunday Times' comes back. So I did and I still keep the 'Sunday Times' going.

VB: Yeah.

KB: So I said to the tutor, I said "I get it for the film reviews and the book reviews". And he said, "Well," he said. "I never heard such a reason for getting a newspaper!" [laughs]

VB: [laughs] It seems sensible, yeah.

KB: It's very important to me.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Very important. [looks at book] *The Buccaneer, Break The News*. I don't know that one. Could it be [inaudible]. Jack Buchanan. I have seen him. Maurice Chevalier. Must have been one of those that he did. Oh it was done by erm, Rene Clair. Well he did *The Ghost Goes West*. I liked that one.

VB: Oh that's great. Yes.

KB: I've seen that within these last five years--

VB: Yes.

KB: On the TV and it was really good--

VB: With erm, Robert Donat is it, that's in that?

KB: Yeah.

VB: Oh that's great.

KB: Yes.

VB: Yeah. He's another star that I particularly like.

KB: Well of course he's got Manchester connections too, hasn't he?

VB: Yes, I think that's right, yeah. Erm, in fact, just when you were saying that, someone was telling me, I think he came from sort of Levenshulme.

KB: Could've done.

VB: That sort of part of the town.

KB: Yes.

VB: Someone was saying.

KB: 'Course he won't have a Lancashire accent.

VB: No. No. [laughs]

KB: They don't. Do you know I used to work in Prestwich which is part of Manchester. And you get people saying, "Well I don't know who it is but it's somebody with a, you know, an accent." They reckon they have no accent in Manchester as such. "Oh," I said, "all of 'Coronation Street' speak..." Actually the person that was telling me, his wife, she used to refer to everybody as "kid". And she was the dead spit of one of them in 'Coronation Street'. You know, her accent.

VB: Yes.

KB: You know. So, well, they don't recognise it, you see. It's not, no. They don't. They haven't got an accent if they come from, from eh... [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

KB: [looks at book] *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Oh yes. Well I liked that one with eh, Errol Flynn.

VB: Oh yes. And Basil Rathbone.

KB: Oh yes.

VB: He was the bad eh, Sheriff, or someone like that. [laughs] He was one of the baddies anyway.

KB: And eh, of course the first eh, 'Prisoner of', well it wasn't the first *The Prisoner of Zenda*. It wasn't the first one but Ronald Colman.

VB: Oh yes.

KB: Yes.

VB: Yes.

KB: And Basil Rathbone.

VB: Yes.

KB: Oh yes. Very good, yeah.

VB: Yeah. I always liked Basil Rathbone.

KB: Sent shivers down your back. [bursts out laughing]

VB: [laughs]

KB: [looks at book] *Rosalie*. Now I didn't like that particularly. I don't know whether, I don't know if I asked eh, Dorris did she like it. She'll have seen it.

VB: Mhm.

KB: I see that she goes onto weekend schools on the subject.

VB: Yeah.

KB: You know. [laughs] Have you seen them again since?

VB: Actually I'm seeing them, I think, next week.

KB: Next week. Yeah.

VB: Yes.

KB: Yeah.

VB: I've been promised a, to see *Maytime* so.

KB: Oh yes. Oh yes. Oh she'll be pleased to show you, yeah.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Yes. [looks at book] *Star of the Circus*.

VB: I could see when you were making the tea, I could see erm, you know, your literary side as well.

KB: [laughs heartily] Oh yes, yes.

VB: Wonderful collection. It really is.

KB: Yes. Oh yes. I've gone mad on those, you know. And I've come to the conclusion that if I have to go into an old folks' home or something like that I'll have to get rid of them, you know.

VB: They'll have to give you, [laughing] three rooms or something. [laughs]

KB: Oh yeah, I mean I've got them, I've got two more suitcases. Suitcases, tch! Eh, bookcases--

VB: Yes.

KB: In the living room. The ones which I'm in and out of. And in the bedrooms, I've got them in the bedrooms as well, so I mean, I really would have to go, you know. So eh--

VB: I like all your art books. That's eh--

KB: Oh, I know.

VB: Rembrandt.

KB: Yes.

VB: Poetry and... [pause 3 seconds] That's one of the... I've been up and down to the City Art Gallery in Manchester to look at the pre-Raphaelites.

KB: Ah yes. They're noted for the pre-Raphaelites, aren't they?

VB: Yeah.

KB: But I thought the Glasgow ones were very good.

VB: Yes. Glasgow galleries are great.

KB: Really great. And we went to the new, well, it's not, it isn't new. Yes. But outside--

VB: The Burrell Collection?

KB: Yes, yes.

VB: Yes, it's wonderful.

KB: Because we went for a week with the WEA and we stayed at eh. Well, it had been part of the University at one time. Baird Hall in Sauchiehall Street.

VB: Oh yes! Yes.

KB: And eh, eh, it was a Saga party, you know. And there was some people joined on to us. One she came from Bristol. She said to me afterwards, "I've had one of the nicest holidays I've been on. And you're all so very jolly. And you're all," you know, "what you were talking about". And all this sort of thing. And we had. There were about thirty-five regulars on these tours. We did it for ten years. As I say, I'm sorry we can't do it now but eh--

VB: Mhm.

KB: I couldn't get, I couldn't walk now. So eh, and I would hate to go anywhere and not eh, eh, you know, not do what I wanted to do, you know. So.

VB: Mhm.

KB: [looks at book] *A Yank at Oxford*. Ah now, here's one, Jane Withers that we used to like. When I said about 'Our Gang', I was thinking, I was thinking now who was that, you know, dark one. *Jezebel*. Now I saw that. I saw that.

VB: Is that the one where she has the red, she wears the red dress at the ball and--

KB: Yes, yes.

VB: That's the end of everything. [laughs]

KB: Yes, of course, it was, you know, definitely eh, another one for Scarlett O'Hara, wasn't it?

VB: Yes, very much so.

KB: Yes.

VB: Yes.

KB: Well I mean she definitely did that because she didn't get Scarlett O'Hara.

VB: Yeah.

KB: Well the number of people that went in for that. But I don't, I think, I still think I've seen eh, I've seen them, you know, about seven or eight times I should think. You know. And I still think it's a good story.

VB: Mhm.

KB: And she only wrote the one, didn't she?

VB: [laughs] I think I might actually--

KB: You'd better go.

VB: I should really make a move, erm.

KB: Yeah. Anyway, if there's anything else?

VB: Well I mean, thanks very much for having me it's been--

KB: Oh that's all right. I'm sorry--

VB: I just I wish I had more time. But as I say--

KB: Yeah.

VB: I'll have to get back into Manchester. Eh, as I say, I mean I've asked you everything I wanted to. You know, you've told me a lot more. It's been great!

KB: Yes. Yeah. Well as I say, if there's anything that you wanted to know definitely I could erm, possibly write it down for you, you know, if you do.

VB: Yes.

KB: If you eh--

VB: Yeah, 'cause I don't think erm, after. I'm down in sort of Manchester for another couple of--

KB: You're coming up to see John, aren't you?

VB: Yes.

KB: Well he's on holiday next week.

VB: Right. Right. That's right, I think I'm seeing him just after he gets back.

KB: Yes.

VB: Yeah. Erm, or just before he goes. We've worked it out round that.

KB: Yes because we've got to have a sub-committee meeting. Has she shown you the eh, the one she had on the, in the 'Evergreen'?

VB: No! She hasn't, no.

KB: I'm not sure which one it is. Eh, erm, [crackling noise]. It's not in this one. Is it in that one?

VB: Erm.

KB: Halfway down the top. Towards the top of this. There should be three of these.

VB: I don't think it's in that one. There's one on the bottom here as well. Erm, oh yes! 'Evergreen Melodies', Dorris Braithwaite. Gosh, you're a modest lot! [laughs] I keep seeing all this.

KB: Yeah.

VB: That's lovely. 'Evergreen Melodies about Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy'. [pause 3 seconds]

KB: 'Course she'll probably show you. I know she's got a copy of it but I didn't know whether you eh. 'Course you could probably get them, you know.

VB: Yes, I'm sure.

KB: If you were interested enough.

VB: That's wonderful. It's quite a long article as well. It's very, illustrations. Erm--

KB: It's quite a nice book, especially if you--

VB: It is. I notice eh, that, erm, Summer '91 erm, the address is Evergreen, PO Box 52, Cheltenham, Gloucester, GL50 1YQ. Just in case I can't get a copy of it. I'll see if I can order one.

KB: Mhm.

VB: So that's Summer '91. Ah, that's great. I haven't seen this before actually. It looks--

KB: No. Well I hadn't seen it before and she, she brought it and then I started getting, well, I don't get it every--

VB: It looks very good.

KB: I don't get it, you know, every time. [tape crackles]

[End of Interview]