

Disclaimer: This interview was conducted in 1994 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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\* Paisley, 22 November 1994: Valentina Bold interviews Lawrence Stirling

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\* LS=Lawrence Stirling / JS=Jean Stirling / VB=Valentina Bold

\* Notes: Only interview with Lawrence Stirling. Wife Jean Stirling joins towards the end; Sound Quality: Good; Restriction on sharing of personal background information.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A; *Note: due to a 50-year restriction on sharing of personal background information, the opening few minutes of this interview have been removed.*]

LS: Okay, lovely. [pause] You have to do this with everyone that you interview?

**VB: Yes. It's one of these things.**

LS: These things, you have to go through with the paperwork.

**VB: You just have to you, yeah, erm--**

LS: Alright, are we down to the nitty-gritty now?

**VB: Yes, down to the nitty-gritty now.**

LS: [laughs]

**VB: Umm I mean I was very interested in--**

LS: Yes

**VB: Seeing your letter to Annette.**

LS: Right, well, I forget quite a bit what I put, well I think I put in as much as I could regards the places I've been to, kind of, films, you know, the scene there at that time, 19-- well I'm talking about

19-- wait a minute [counts; inaudible] 1935, so as a 9 years old, 1937, I'd be going a lot, 1938, 1939 before the war, when the cinema in Glasgow was at its height. You couldn't turn a corner when there wasn't a cinema there somewhere, you know, and it was marvellous. What I find the difference is then to now, apart from the films, which I think were far better than they are now, far better, I mean the best of them, you know, there was a lot of rubbish too. I mean the best of them were better than the best that they call now. Eh let me see, one thing I'll say, that could be quite different, was the variety you got then. You pick up the paper now and the same film is here, there, in all districts. You know it's saturated, you know two or three films, it's all saturated. Before, you couldn't believe the films, the variety you got, I mean you could go to Partick, you could go to Hillhead, you'd get a different one, different one, different one there, Scotstoun, you'd go to another one. Nowadays if you went there, you would find the same one, you know, as often as not. Why we don't go now? I don't go now at all, except [laughs] this is recording? Umm why? I don't like the material, I don't think they have a beginning, a middle, and an ending, they mumble words, my wife and I are straining, 'what was that?', they mumble, background music, you know, that obtrudes at time and-- no, we just don't go, we just don't like. Plus the violence too, sex and violence

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** It's overdone really. It's overdone here of course you know. So, I mean you want more of what, pre-war? Is that what you're interested in?

**VB: Yes. I'm particularly interested in that.**

**LS:** Right eh what do you want to know then? The cinemas or what they showed or what?

**VB: Eh**

**LS:** Just say anything and I'll say it.

**VB: All that sort of information, yes.**

**LS:** Right, well as I say I was based at Partick at that time, as I had to go to the hospital back and forth, so I had a choice of five cinemas in Partick alone. Now I don't know whether you want to know where they are, where they are? Right, aha. The one, which we called umm the fleapit one [laughs] for a want of a better word, was the Standard. You know where the Salvation Army place is now, you go down Church Street, across the road and it's there. You know [Group Force] and the Salvation Army, there was a little one called the Standard there. Now on a Saturday as a boy, and this is the truth, I could go in there with two jam jars and be admitted for the price of a jam jar.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** Mhm.

**VB: So you just--**

**LS:** For the matinee in the morning. No, for the matinee. Not at night obviously. In the morning for the kids, it was a matinee. You could get in with two jam jars. [laughs]

**VB: Is that right?**

**LS:** Yeah, that's right, that's right. Now, you could also, I think it applied to the Western too. You know where the Western was? It stood at the foot of Mansfield, not Mansfield, what's the name? Dowanhill Street, right at the cuff. There's boardings that are there now, just boardings. You know where the Partick umm wait a minute, large store, kind of, och, I think you know where it is?

**VB: I think I know where it is.**

**LS:** Just a cuff, as it turns into Dumbarton Road again.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** It stood there as a ruin for years, that was always there. And I'm sure, I wouldn't be certain here, but I think the same applied there. You could go in with bottles and jars to the Western. The best one I liked was the New Partick, which was on Vine Street.

**VB: What was that like?**

**LS:** Which was demolished. Pardon?

**VB: What was that like?**

**LS:** Erm it was just an old-fashioned place, you know. But a great programme, it was two double pict- I mean there were two pictures, there was news, there was cartoons, there was travel, you could be there for hours, about four hours or something like that or more. And they would have a matinee as well for boys in the morning you see, that was the New Partick. There was one, two, three, there was the Standard, the Western, the New Partick, and there was the Rosevale, which of course has just become a shop, 'cause it's been Bingo for years. The Rosevale was a lovely one, and the Tivoli. I haven't been up Crow Road for years, it's up Crow Road. It may be Bingo now, I don't know, I haven't been up that way for a while, so that was the five in Partick. Then there was the Grosvenor at Hillhead, and the Salon, that's closed now, hasn't it? The Salon has closed. It was a unique kind of place, unusual films.

**VB: Is that right?**

**LS:** Yes, yes. I mean, well I don't know, they seemed to get the odd foreign film at times. Before the Cosmo got them, as it was then, the GFT was the Cosmo. And you'd get some-- they sort of dig into the archives at the Salon, you'd get certain films that you couldn't see anywhere else in Glasgow you see. It was really, it was a great place you know, and the Grosvenor did a good programme too. Then I went into the city of course as I was older. 10/11, well I was going into the city then and umm you know took your tram card. I could do-- I could do Glasgow on, let me see now [inaudibly counting] I

could do it for about one and six, you know, in old money, financially, 7 ½ p [laughs] went to Glasgow and back, you know. Now--

**VB: Sorry, can I just ask you--**

**LS:** Yes.

**VB: I mean did you go with your grandparents on the tube?**

**LS:** I usually went myself. I usually went myself. My grandmother, she was then in her, let's see, she was in her sixties, no, seventies then. So she erm went to the odd one umm you'll not remember this, but Anna Neagle appeared in *Victoria the Great* at the Odeon. Now that was the Paramount in these days, in Renfield Street, the same building of course, called the [Baronet]. And eh and eh what was I on about, the one that was-- *Sixty Glorious Years*, that was it, *Sixty Glorious Years*. And we went up this day, about 2 o'clock and she was so enrapt in the film, that we came out at 11 o'clock at night, having seen it three times, one after the other. All for a shilling.

**VB: That's amazing.**

**LS:** That would have been 1937, when it was out I think, *Victoria the Great*. There was the Kings, you know, Charing Cross, where the Paparazzi place is closed.

**VB: Yes**

**LS:** There's two kind of figures up at the top, stone figures at the top, that was the King's Cinema. You may not know that one.

**VB: Right. I don't know that one.**

**LS:** So that was it. That's been closed for years.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** But you'll see there, you know, you'll see the stone things up there. It was a Paparazzi place. And then there was the Regal, which is still there and the Regent in Renfield Street, that was closed in the last few years. Right, that was near the top of Renfield Street, and the Odeon is still there after the Paramount, and Cranston's, which they closed you see for years. That was Cranston's Deluxe and going down there was the Argyle then in Argyle Street, remember that? No, you wouldn't remember that, no, it's been closed for years. Well it was on the other side, near Lewis' as it was, which is Debenhams now. It was just before you came to that. No, no, wait a minute, I'm not sure, before or after, but it was on that side. Okay, the Argyle and then I used to go out to the Seamore at Maryhill, that was a favourite too, and the Roxy, went out to Riddrie. Went out to the Rex at Riddrie, they had two there, one was the Riddrie, the other was the Rex. Two out there. There was the umm let's see, the Grand at Cowcaddens, that's-- that whole area is gone, gone, where it stood.

**VB: Yes.**

LS: You couldn't say it was there now.

VB: Yes, yes. Actually, just by coincidence, I was just talking to a woman who lived in a flat that was built where the Grand was.

LS: Aha. Just where the Grand was, that's right.

VB: Yes.

LS: The Grand, aha. Some of these were then, there was the George, in St George's Street, that's where you turn up at St George there. Some of these were a bit ropery, you know for a-- [laughs]

VB: Is that right?

LS: Aha, you know I mean the seats were harder, broken, or something you know dreadful, but they were cheap, you know, they were all cheap. And umm I had a friend umm yeah, I had a friend I knew down at Partick, just a boy too who used to go and pick out the Western, we went to the Western for the marshmallows you see. We'll go there for the marshmallows. We'd take our tram cards just to go see one film and it might be a mile or two away, it was only a penny on the tram, you see. So, och you know, it was just endless, the variety was so-- and it was just so cheap. So cheap.

VB: Did you go quite often then?

LS: Oh in these days, I mean in the vacation time, holiday time, I'd be going about three times a week.

VB: Really?

LS: At least, at least three times a week. So umm you see, sometimes with my grandmother. Not my grandfather, he wasn't so keen on that. But my grandmother would go, but quite often it was myself, you know, especially once I'd reached 10/11 years old, and then the war broke out and umm by this time I was going back to my hometown, where I was just up and down in the war years and I was going more to the theatre then. I gradually let-- I still went to the cinema obviously, about once a week anyway, you know, but gradually the theatre took over, and the opera eventually when I was 15. That's been the love of my life, has been opera so umm--

VB: Yeah.

LS: And gradually as the films changed then, I, you know, I didn't like them you know. And these days, they just seem to be a wonderland. *Gone With the Wind*, right, I went with my aunt and uncle, that was about 1939, 1939, 1940 by the time it would show here. Well the queues-- oh yes, I think I forgot to say, the La Scala, which down Sauchiehall Street, it lay there closed as you know for-- Well in its original state, it was marvellous, it was the place, La Scala. Fountains as you went in the foyer and the restaurant, ah, it was something marvellous. And the Gaumont was on the other side, it was called The Picture House at one time. I remember going to *Gone With the Wind* with my aunt and

uncle, so this would be 1940 and the queues that came to the Regal, and the queues would stretch from the Regal away past Cambridge Street, standing in a queue for goodness how long [laughs] it was the event of the year of course, you know. Incredible you know.

**VB: Was there a lot of publicity beforehand?**

**LS:** Oh yes. Oh yes, oh yes. Everybody wanted to go, more or less that erm we didn't book obviously, we just, you know, took our chance. But I think you could book then, you could book for that one, but we took our chance and waited and waited you know. But umm it was worth it obviously for these blockbusters that came once in a while, you know. But umm but as a boy I do remember the, you know, I went to Partick you see, this sort of stands out a lot, because as a boy you liked to have maybe a western, or Laurel and Hardy, or Humphrey Bogart and James Cagney, or Shearer. These two kinds of films plus the serial one, that meant you had an episode every week. You know, kept you on tenterhooks or Buck Rogers or so on, something in outer space, you know, and erm cartoons, travel blogs, news, you were there for hours, even in the morning. You were there for hours, you know. And then you could go at night again for the adult films [laughs] so-called adult films. So I would be quite often there in the morning and back at night again.

**VB: Is that right?**

**LS:** Yeah, on the same day, on the same day. Oh I'd often see two on the same day. I'd say to my pal, right, have you been to the Partick this morning? No, I haven't been, I went to the West End or something. You want to go somewhere at night? Yes, we'll go there. Off to the Grosvenor or somewhere. No-one had any distance at [inaudible] and you knew you'd get a different film there. That's what they lack nowadays, I mean the variety you know. Do you want to stop there?

**VB: Oh no.**

**LS:** I mean I can't think of anymore unless you fire me with questions.

**VB: Yeah, I mean I was wondering--**

**LS:** Aha

**VB: How you behaved during films, like during the children's films?**

**LS:** Mhm.

**VB: Were you quiet?**

**LS:** Perfectly behaved, perfectly.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I was so tense, you know. What was going on on the screen, there was no time for any nonsense. You know you'd get your crisps or your sweets maybe and you'd make a wee noise with your mouth, you could do that at a children's matinee, you couldn't do the same at night. It didn't bother-- what I objected to and of course more with hindsight now than at the time, because it was the accepted thing was the smoking, you see. 'Cause I can remember them doing this, but you wouldn't say, you shouldn't be smoking, you should take this out, put it out, I can't see. You would wipe your eyes and it was an accepted thing. I remember one night at the La Scala, I had to really go out 'cause it was so bad, into the foyer, so I wiped my eyes, go to the cloakroom, wash my face, and I just had to go back into the smoke again. Oh no, I don't remember any trouble from youngsters. Not any trouble at all. Maybe one boy would shout out a wee bit, you know, just excited about the whole thing, you see.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** Never had any trouble and umm--

**VB: What about the usherettes, did they--**

**LS:** I don't remember much about them really. They just showed you to your seat and that was it, you know. But if there was any trouble, if there was a semblance of any kind, all she needed to do was flash her torch and there was silence. Wasn't any of this, [laughs] nowadays you say something to me and you know I'll get my parents or something, you know. No, no, she just said-- I don't remember the manager of a theatre having to come in and get boys thrown out. They were there for the films, they were there for the episodes, or the serial, they were there for the western. I don't remember anything else. And at night, if you loved the film, you just saw it round again. They weren't going to shove you out, you just started again. Err right, any more?

**VB: You mentioned about the café in La Scala.**

**LS:** Mhm.

**VB: Did you ever go to cinemas where you could get food during the film, 'cause I've heard people talking about that?**

**LS:** Yes. I don't so much remember-- oh yes, there was intervals, oh yes, def-- you're right, I think you probably know there was an organ at Regal.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** At the interval. Then you could go out, there was a kiosk. I think in the bigger ones they had the kiosk more than the usherette. Although an usherette would go down to the front when the lights would go on.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** But in the Regal, it was really something 'cause the organ came up from the floor and there's this guy playing the organ [laughs] during the interval, you see. Music, and real music, you know.

**VB: What sort of music would he play?**

**LS:** Well it was the light-hearted stuff of the day. I don't mean good music in the sense of classical, it was erm light-hearted waltzes and all this, and erm swing stuff of the day, you know, swing time and all this, and the pop numbers of the day. It must have been mainly dance music and things they could hum and sing to, you know. That's what you got yourself in twenty minutes. Of course *Gone With the Wind* with the long interval and I mean the organist had a field day then [laughs] And of course the rush then for drinks and ice cream. And it was, it was ice cream, it wasn't the rubbish you get now. It wasn't the rubbish. Real ice cream you know. So umm from what I remember, it's a bit vague, but I can remember them in the La Scala sitting round these tables, that must have been 1938 or something, having their tea served. I'll tell you something else, I mean this is not cinema going, but I'll just mention the fact, that first time I was the opera, at the Royal 1944, I'll not take long on this, but the waitresses, you could order your tea and you got served in your seat.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** In the Theatre Royal at that time, they'd bring the tray to your seat number that you had on. How about that? How about that?

**VB: That's amazing. Was that actually during the performances or?**

**LS:** Well this was at the interval at the opera.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** The interval at the opera. I was only fifteen at the time and was absolutely amazed. Ladies being served with sugar and cream and biscuits and tea, right in their seats. These days, these days, it doesn't last long.

**VB: That's amazing.**

**LS:** I know, I know. That was a fact. That didn't happen in the cinema of course

**VB: No**

**LS:** It was just the Royal I ever saw that, and the Kings in Glasgow, these two.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** But umm around all the theatres too, but that doesn't interest you.

**VB: Oh no, I'm interested in a lot these things.**

**LS:** I could talk for hours on opera, right [laughs]



**VB: 'Cause one of the things I was going to ask you, have you been to Green's Playhouse that had the dancing as well?**

**LS:** Oh yes. But it was just for the cinema there you know.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** You know. You could go there with your girlfriend and get lost for hours you know, it was great. [laughs]

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** It was so massive. The whole place was so massive, that you could just certainly [laughs] snuggle up you know.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** It was, it was too big, the Playhouse. I felt it was just, well you know, it was just an arena to me. Just an area. But umm some good films though, some good films there too.

**VB: Were you a keen dancer yourself?**

**LS:** No. I wasn't interested in dancing at all. I never went to dance halls all my life, much to my wife's disappointment. [laughs] Never was inside the Albert or the Locarno as it was then. But these places were packed pretty much every Saturday. I mean the queues there at Locarno. It was either the cinema or the theatre.

**VB: Right. [pause] I mean I'm interested as well, you know you talking about the organ about music in the cinemas, did you ever go to ones where they had turns or competitions or anything?**

**LS:** Ehh, I can't remember that. You mean as an interval, sort of interval, you know the interval--?

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I can't really remember that as a variety. Though it did take place in the older, I think that's going back a bit, maybe the '20s and the early '30s, it did take place, but I didn't see that. I didn't see variety stuff.

**VB: Right. I mean that's--**

**LS:** That was past my time, yeah. Or rather before my time actually, I should say, before my time.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** And umm but the organ was quite an attraction at the Regal I must say that. I think they had a café too on the first floor if I remember right. What they called the Circle at [inaudible]. They had a

restaurant in fact they had there at the Regal. The Regal was a good place. I don't know what it's like now, 'cause I'm never in it. I believe they have that still there. You know aha. The Cosmo of course was a [worth in], a great wee place too the Cosmo, which became the GFT. Always saying the films under the Cosmo were better than they get nowadays. Well, it's just the general trend

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I think we stopped going when really the film was missing a leader, you know, there weren't a storyline you had. I mean you were gripped before. I think-- I mean I don't know how you feel, but um a sense of direction, I mean a film director he lets it go himself as if it's meandering, you know. It's not-- before, you know, you had a beginning, a middle, and the end.

**VB: Do you think the stories were--**

**LS:** The sound for these times, for the '30s was so clear. You can see that when you watch an old movie on here. The sound you must admit is better than it is nowadays. Now they mumble through things, with the background music.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** If you had background music like in say *Gone With the Wind*, it didn't intrude on the dialogue. You know it didn't intrude on the dialogue. But the serial version of *Gone With the Wind* is not as good as the original. If you-- you won't have seen the original, have you? Now you see you get steel sound as [inaudible] *Gone With the Wind* going with it. I don't like that at all. They spoiled it in that way.

**VB: That's interesting.**

**LS:** The original sound was-- in fact, I've read about that too. In fact this writer said he hoped that the original was still in the vaults in Hollywood, so that they could get back to the original soundtrack, 'cause he too didn't like this one [pause] *Citizen Kane* of course I saw when it came out here too, that was another masterpiece, you know. That was a masterpiece. Of course as you got older you appreciated these films. Suddenly, you don't know when you started to grow away from the westerns and the, you know, these gangster stuff, you know that-- you just suddenly grew away from them, you know, just growing up.

**VB: Do you think that's right, I mean the--**

**LS:** That's it.

**VB: more films as children that you like?**

**LS:** Mhm. That's right.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** And in fact when the Carl Rosa Opera came across when I was at home then, at that time I was fifteen and I had read up about the opera seeing as I was working in the library. That's away from your work

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** But this is an incidental thing, I went to my first one and umm it was just-- it was another world, you see. I think from opera and drama, which was so strong in Glasgow at that time, the drama was very strong here, I gradually went away from the cinema and, you know what I mean, it was there and it was still good films, going to-- but didn't become the number one thing as it was before the war. You know for one thing you wouldn't be going to the theatre by yourself like when you were nine years old or ten years old, but you could go to the cinema, you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Umm right, any more?

**VB: I'll just turn that over actually, 'cause it's a new--**

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**VB: --doesn't break up suddenly.**

**LS:** [laughs]

**VB: Umm one thing I wanted to ask you about is if you had any preference between British or American movies?**

**LS:** No, I can't say I had. No. I think the British got better as the years went on, especially after the First World-- sorry, the Second World War, I should say. Umm I think they got better and better as the years went on. I don't think it was a question of my choice or anyone else's choice, you just got more of the Americans, as it seemed sort of before the war and they all seemed to come then, the cowboys, the Cagney things, the Bogart films and all that. The old Joel McCrea westerns, William Boyd and *Hopalong* all this you know, and the musicals of course, the musicals, we went to everything. But it wasn't by choice. I remember, I do remember sort of going back and erm my uncle was erm ah, 'that's a British film, I don't think we'll bother' you know. But we went and often liked them, you know. But there was that one wee big thing that the British public, I do remember preferred the American films, because I don't think it had really got going at that time.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** You know the British film. But after the war, there was quite a surge and then I think I did prefer the Brits to the Americans. You know as the years went on.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** As you'd get John Mills and all these things, you know. You get Orson Welles, you know it was really great you know. I mean I think you know, I didn't go out and say, oh that's an American programme of a double bill, I must go to that, or a British one.

**VB: Yeah, so it was just going to--**

**LS:** More and more you see. Sometimes what you could afford, you know. [laughs] You couldn't go to the Region or the Regal every week, you know, because even though it was a cheap tram fare and all this, you were always getting just your pocket money.

**VB: Right. Were there any stars that you particularly liked?**

**LS:** Umm well we'd always search out for the Marx Brothers.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** We'd go to the other end of Glasgow, my friend and I for the Marx Brothers. We'd go to Springburn, up to Springburn to Maryhill for a Marx brothers. We'd do the same for a film like umm *Stagecoach*, John Wayne. We'd do it for umm Cagney and Bogart you see, but the first choice were always without-- the Marx Brothers.

**VB: What was it about the Marx Brothers then?**

**LS:** Just, it was-- we would sit and now that I see them, I mean now that I see them, I can laugh in places-- now, still funny scenes, if you know, laugh in places, but there's other bits that are flat. It's forced and flat. But in these days you just sat and roared. If it wasn't Groucho, it was Chico and Harpo. I mean I've seen them rolling in the aisles.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** Rolling in the aisles at the Marx Brothers. Sometimes it was a double bill you see, so I think they were a-- I think they were a first choice, because any cinema I went to with my pal or without him, it was packed. It was queues outside. The same would apply when a Bogart played.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** I remember going to see *The Maltese Falcon* you see for the first time, I've seen it umpteen times of course, but umm I remember going to that you know and that was phew, you could hear a pin drop, so umm--

**VB: You say Cagney as well?**

**LS:** Cagney, oh yeah. And it was Cagney plus Bogart and then it was double, double of good you see. But erm oh I've seen it going from Glasgow to Paisley here even then. Yes, long before I knew my wife, [laughs] going down to see a film and erm I mean, ach we did the same with plays later on, you know, go to the Citizens and go to the Royal and do that.

**VB: Sounds like it was an expensive experience for you?**

**LS:** It was Glasgow, you have no idea. Quite frankly, between you and me, I don't like Glasgow now at all. They just ruined it for me. Glasgow before the war was magic. At every corner there was a cinema or a theatre and if you were a dancer-- it was the all the trams were going and everything, it seemed to be sparkling. It was a magical city before the war. Just when you entered Sauchiehall Street, I mean the trams that went up and down there, oh, it was something else, I never saw anything like it. Never saw anything like it. The worst thing they did was to get rid off the trams.

**VB: Well they are thinking of bringing them back now.**

**LS:** Back, yeah, you think. Well it'll be a wee while yet, aha. So umm what else can I tell you? Went out to the Scotstoun of course, it was the Commodore there, that's in there.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** The Commodore. Went out as far as I say, Riddrie, went out to Shawlands too, to the Embassy. I remember, you know, for one film.

**VB: What was that like?**

**LS:** Oh it was a lovely picture house, the Embassy one, yes. Yes, lovely. And there was um the Tudor at Giffnock, went out there, the Tudor. I could take-- see you just needed to pick up a tram in the centre of town to go out there. But as I was young as I was then, 9 and 10 then, my grandmother would say, well you'd better go in the afternoon, I don't want you going out at night. You see, so I'd have to go out at lunch time, after lunch time, go to the Tudor at Giffnock and come back for tea time, so-- but umm after the war, the most-- there wasn't a big closure, as you probably know after the war, but gradually around 1952-1953 when the TV was just beginning to get going, then closure after closure after closure. Sadly the old places I had known went, you know, largely you know they went. Umm but as I say, in these days you didn't think about the theatre. Your parents would take you, they'd come through from Alloa, take you to the pantomime of course, which was a great thing for starters, but they didn't go to the cinema here, because they had three of them through there in Alloa. Now they've got none, they've got none in Alloa.

**VB: What were the cinemas like in Alloa then?**

**LS:** Oh well, there was one which was excellent and that was the Gaumont of the same group, of the Gaumont Group, you see. And there was one that was fairly good and the other one was a bit of a fleapit [laughs] seats getting bugs and everything, all that, but there was good films and the bad ones at times you know. But the one at erm the one at the Main Street was really-- so now they've got none and it's the biggest town in the country. The county, the county. So eh I enjoyed them

through there too you know. And umm Stirling, I went to those, but as I say I lived in Glasgow more or less you could say from 1940 until 1963, so it was fifteen years, but then by that time the theatre was gradually taking over for me you know.

**VB: Yes. Did your parents go to the cinema or? Themselves.**

**LS:** Oh yes, oh yes, at home they did, yes, aha. Oh in fact even in these days you see, because um during the war especially, well there was no TV obviously and you just had the radio or the cinema. Now I could erm this one that was just the mediocre one, the Central they called it, and the Gaumont too, I mean if you didn't book, there was a good chance you wouldn't get in on Saturday night. You know if you didn't book. So I had to go out on a Saturday morning and get the messages, I mean this was during the war and going to the Central and book four seats, you see, for Saturday. One and nine pence each.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Old money [laughs] seven shillings, that's 35 pence for the four of us [laughs] how about that.

**VB: I mean do you think there was any difference between the films that say your mother would like and your father would like?**

**LS:** Umm not often, I think the very fact that it was the war, you see.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** And, you know, there were blackouts, rations, drab week working, father growing things in the garden, it was a hard, it was a hard time. I was at school of course and umm hard for my father, he was on fire duty and he had served in the First World War and was on Fire Duty in the Second, and it was a drab thing, so that the Saturday night was a highlight at the cinema. Sometimes you would go on the week, during the week too, I've seen them going twice, but you had to watch the pennies in these days you know, in these days. You hadn't a big pay or anything like that as a painter. And umm you'd be very hard to please if you didn't like it, because you'd focus on this, you looked forward to Saturday night from Monday.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** In the war years you see, because it was great. See you went out of this, from the blackout, this drabness about the town, and every town at this time being drab, and went into this new world of the cinema.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** And there were good films and only the occasional ones that wouldn't be good. I mean I can remember, I don't know if you know the film, but you might have seen it on TV, Claudette Colbert and Jennifer Jones in *Since You Went Away*, it was a real weepie, it was a real-- Well, if you're emotional at all, you'll have to get your hankie out for *Since You Went Away* I think. One of these

war things where some come back and some don't come back. Now my sister was so in the story, I don't know how mother had the foresight, but she took a towel with her **[both laugh]** and Irene sobbed and sobbed and sobbed, we had to take her out 'cause it was disturbing the audience. She sobbed at that film I remember. So I mean, it was that kind of time you could enjoy and then there was a Harold Lloyd came, again that was a special week they were doing the Silents' then and there was a Harold Lloyd this night and the audience was in an absolute uproar. It was just as well it was silent 'cause you couldn't have heard the film [laughs] the [inaudible] people went to enjoy it you know, they didn't go, you know, to sort of criticise. It wasn't a critical audience in these days, you know, you accepted it. Nowadays, my wife and I'll say, oh look at that situations, that's crazy, they wouldn't do that, that's daft, absolute nuts, you know. You know what they're doing there.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You didn't criticise. You were uncritical, completely. Unless it was out and out bad.

**VB: Yeah. Anyone-- I mean were there any films, film stars, that you particularly disliked?**

**LS:** Disliked? No, dislike, it's hard to say [laughs] Films I actually, actively disliked, the ones I wouldn't go to you mean?

**VB: Yeah, that sort of thing.**

**LS:** Umm [sighs] if it was over-sentimental and so, you know, well, boys weren't into sort of love stories much then, you know, to sort of see that. I didn't see the sentimental thing too much, you know.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** Some of the musicals, you know, we'd say ach no, with the dancing. We didn't go to--well, I mean Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were good, very good at that time you know, but I couldn't say then I was a [inaudible] well for one thing I wasn't a dancer you know.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** So I'd say I put up with them, but I wouldn't say I disliked them you know. I don't think there was any that I disliked. The cinema was the event, you see, that was the thing, that was the focal thing, you weren't-- this uncritical attitude just pulled you through films you wouldn't look twice at now. See you wouldn't--- you wouldn't look do now, you can turn that off, switch it off now. In these days, Saturday nights it was magic and it would be no more until the next Saturday night.

**VB: Did you talk about the films, say with your friend that you went to?**

**LS:** Err the friend, as a boy you mean?

**VB: Aye.**

**LS:** No, he would have his own ideas. I would please him sometimes, he would please me you know. I remember going, I think I wanted to see an Andy Hardy one you see, no, I want to see a Cagney one, so we just went our separate ways you know. I say I liked Andy Hardy at that time [laughs] I wouldn't watch them now, 'cause it's nauseating, but umm occasionally, we'd just say, oh, I'm going my way you know and that's it.

**VB: How about afterwards, did you sit and--?**

**LS:** Oh in a café, we'd go in a café if we'd been to one together and talk things over and then look up the paper, there was an Evening News at that time in Glasgow and umm it was especially good for us. Every cinema you could think of was in the Evening News, so we'd plan out the thing for next week.

**VB: Right. How-- how did you go about choosing it?**

**LS:** Well um just the film you know that we fancied you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** There was usually one somewhere as I say, where we'd say right, that we fancied at the cinema and we'd go to that. If it was in Partick, yeah that's fine, you know, the nearer the better you know. And umm at home, you know when I went back again, it was more, more in the war years obviously as I say, I was up in Glasgow because of having to go to the hospital you see for check-ups [on my knee?] and all that, so umm and I gradually got into the habit, long after I didn't have to go, just going to my grandmother's you know. And umm saying, ach, I'll have part of my school term though there and that's how we got on. But then I would go back home again and you see catch up on the cinemas there.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** And with my parents then you see. But umm I mean as regards the opera I mean I would go to Glasgow when I was fifteen then. I would take-- there were late trains in these days, straight through to Alloa and it wasn't closed down at Lime Street. You could get a train at about 11 o'clock at night, back you know from Glasgow, such was my devotion to opera [laughs] I'd get in to my home town about half past twelve in the morning.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Mother wasn't too pleased but umm--

**VB: Just out of interest, I mean what sort of operas are you--?**

**LS:** Oh, sort of, all operas, I've been going to the opera now for the last fifty years you see.

**VB: Yes.**



**LS:** I've seen an awful lot of operas in my time. Well there's Verdi to start with, *Il Trovatore*, that was my first one. And, of course I say, all the theatres here, you had the Royal, you had the Alhambra, you had the Empire, you had the Lyric, you had the Empress, you had the Queen's, you had the King's, you had the Princess's, which was the Citizens, it was just strewn with theatres, as well as with cinemas.

**VB:** Was is expensive to go to the cinema when you started going. I mean to the theatre?

**LS:** The theatre? Well it was a bit more than the erm cinema obviously, it was umm well you could get it cheap for 2 shillings or two and six then, as it was then, 2 shilling and two in six. But erm and the Alhambra was a great theatre for drama you know, for drama in the Alhambra, you could get up into the Gods there you know for one and six. See a different play every week, although there was a [inaudible]. This was after the war of course, I'm digressing a bit now.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** So, yes, is there anymore you can think of?

**VB:** Umm probably once I've left [laughs]

**LS:** I know, I know.

**VB:** That always happens.

**LS:** I know. Well just think a bit then. Err I've told you about some of the places I've gone to, right, and the type of films erm and as I say-- oh, you see what I don't like here, I'm not saying that, you get a film here, you get one film and that's about it now, isn't it? Because they don't need to put on news, the news was interesting in these days and sort of, you've got it here. You don't-- I mean you don't wait for a cartoon all of a sudden. But you haven't even got a travelogue now, you know you used to get two big pictures, and a cartoon, and a travelogue and the news. So you were there-- it was a real evening out you see.

**VB:** Yeah. Did you enjoy these, did you enjoy these other bits then, [inaudible]?

**LS:** Oh yes, oh yes. The travel ones too were good, as you got older, you liked the travel films. But the news items they kept you, because that was your only means of seeing anything, you know of the war or even the-- you know [the start of the war?] and everything and when the war broke out of course, we were through at home and from then on, we got what news we could obviously. Censored a lot, you know, but eh we got what news we could through the Pathé news of the cinema and that was a great thing. We all, we all liked the Pathé news in the cinema you see, 'cause that was your only way of seeing things you know.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** We know now that Leslie Mitchell and all that, was a lot of propaganda with a lot of things you know, that weren't happening you know. Umm I don't know if you've been watching *The World at War* things, the series?

**VB:** I haven't, no. I've heard it's very good.

**LS:** It's very good. But, you see, to take an example there, well I can remember the actual -- what was it about 1943 then we're talking about, the report on the Dambusters, you see. The Dambusters, we heard it was a great success, blown up in the theatres, marvellous thing. You got the film, which reinforced that and then you got the real truth last night, that it was only partially successful.

**VB:** Really?

**LS:** It was only partially successful, it didn't hardly impair the war machine at all, the German war machine. Yet we were-- if you were to listen to the war reports then, which you can't do, or watch the film, which you can do now, the film was a reinforcement of the fiction and what this Group Captain said last night is, what we lost in men and aircraft, he said, we lost some of the best men that we ever had, meaning the pilots, he said, it wasn't worth it, wasn't worth it. And yet, that was blown up in the war years and one of the major, major events, the Dambusters.

**VB:** Really, sure. I find that kind of surprising that--

**LS:** I didn't know until last night until I saw this you see.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** This was only-- and it hardly impaired the war machine, you know.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** You wouldn't think that when you saw some of the-- some dams weren't breached you see, still. So you got these things in the war and of course they built up everything, the Battle of Britain, right that was [fine?] you saw what you could of that then and umm the Russian Campaign I remember. It was really-- it was your only link, your only visual link, the Pathé news was important really, but then you were waiting for the big film.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** And there was always the trailer too of course, what was going to come next week. Another double bill you see.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** They rarely let you leave with just one picture [laughs] otherwise it was a long one, a long one.

**VB: Yeah. I mean just moving on from that--**

**LS: Aha.**

**VB: Do you remember kind of seeing promotions for things during pictures? 'Cause, erm--**

**LS: No, they didn't advertise in these days.**

**VB: Right.**

**LS: No advertising, it was great. Marvellous. You didn't have to suffer that advertising. None at all that I can remember. None at all, no promotion. It just did not feature in these days.**

**VB: Did they ever give out-- I heard someone was telling me that they went to one film where they gave out, I don't know if it was a sort of romance or something, but they were giving out toy rings to people going to that and that sort of thing.**

**LS: Mhm, they might have done that. They might have done that in some places, I can't remember. Might have been some things like with *Gone With the Wind*, which was associated with the South, you know.**

**VB: Right.**

**LS: They might have done that, but I can't really recall much in the way of that. But there was no definite sponsorship or sort of promotion.**

**VB: Right.**

**LS: Or anything like that and no advertising on the screen that I can ever remember in these days and this goes for quite some time after the war. I don't know when it started really, the advertising on screen you know.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS: But umm no, it was great, free of that [laughs] um, no, I think this is the key thing you see, we're all spoilt for choice these days, aren't we, with the TV, with the cinema, with the theatre, you've got the video, you just put on this, you just put on that, so you switch it off switch on and put something else on. You could not-- you had spent your money and by heck, you were going to enjoy it. And it had to be pretty bad before you say that was awful. I don't remember us walking out.**

**VB: No.**

**LS: [laughs]**

**VB: I mean did you every go in, in the middle of the picture or?**

LS: No.

**VB: It was always right--**

LS: I would rather miss it. I would rather miss it all together than go in the middle.

**VB: Yeah.**

LS: Oh yes, and I wouldn't leave before the end, before the you know. Aha, oh yes. I remember going to umm with my pal, through there at Alloa, and it was *Beau Geste* you see. And the assistants, the usherettes and all that, were very good and of course it was umm halfway through you see, and she said, you don't want to go in now, son. Not with *Beau Geste*, it'll spoil the whole thing. And it was-- have you've seen the film? Right, you know. You have seen it? You know how it starts at the fort and then they go back, they recap the whole thing, the dead legionnaires on the fort, and you see they go back, the story. And she says, you don't want to go in now. So we were too late to see it that night, so we went back the next night and I cannot ever remember going in in the middle of a film.

**VB: Right.**

LS: The first thing I would look at would be the times on the wee notice board.

**VB: Right.**

LS: No, I'm afraid I was a perfectionist that way.

**VB: Right.**

LS: [laughs] still am in a way.

**VB: You know it was interesting when you said that you know, going to umm *Victoria* three times with your granny.**

LS: Yeah.

**VB: Were there other films that you remember doing that with?**

LS: Umm Secr-- not three times, no. Not three times, but twice, quite often, say a Marx Brothers. Quite often sat through it twice. And I remember *Secret Life of Walter Mitty* that I first saw in the Rosevale and I sat through that twice, an absolute scream that sort of [style?], again you see, and Kaye of course was at the peak then at that time, Danny Kaye, was right at the peak, everybody flocked to them. Yes, I could say there was a few umm *Gone With the Wind* obviously, couldn't-- I went back to it pretty quickly, you know, in fact I think I saw it three times within a month say.

**VB: Really.**

**LS:** *Gone With the Wind*. Well, you know, I was in love with, you know, Vivien Leigh you see, [laughs] twelve-year old very much in love.

**VB:** Oh wonderful [inaudible].

**LS:** Oh wasn't she, you see. Aha, yes. Yeah, I could umm well, I hadn't read the book obviously by that time you see. But everything-- well I mean the film was so well done, it was really well done you know. As I say you, you could hear a pin drop you know. So you hadn't the distractions, all the noise, the paper and cling film. People seemed to be better behaved in the whole-- I don't remember being disturbed with rustles you know, with all the rustling, they waited until the interval to have their sweets and their snacks, they waited. We were well behaved then, except for the smokers.

**VB:** Right.

**LS:** And as I say, nowadays, you can't imagine why you put up with it. But it was just one of these things you did, because so many did smoke.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** And it did spoil things. I remember the eyes getting watery and all this.

**VB:** I can imagine [inaudible].

**LS:** [inaudible].

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** The clothes and everything, you know, smoky and everything. It was a shame, it was a shame. I don't know with the theatre as much, whether they enforced it a bit earlier. The no smoking thing, maybe in the theatre. I don't remember it as bad anyway, but the cinema, yes. But umm well I remember that night as I say we sat through *Victoria the Great* three times. [and it was?] with my grandmother and the two of us when we got back, half past eleven at night. 'What kind of time is this? You've been away since one o'clock.' [laughs] It was ridiculous, I mean absolutely ridiculous. But she loved Anna Neagle, she absolutely adored Anna Neagle.

**VB:** That's amazing.

**LS:** So yeah it was quite a few I went to and umm what else now was there? Some great films, there were some good Westerns too, although as I say I went off them. You mentioned some [inaudible]--

**VB:** I've got a list actually.

**LS:** Yes.

**VB: Umm I don't know if you've seen that before umm of sort of talked of movies of '30s umm some of them of course will be--**

**LS:** *Victoria the Great's* here, see. Well I remember the *Come On George!* with George Formby.

**VB: Did you like George Formby?**

**LS:** Yes and no. Yes and no, I could take him in small doses. But we did go to them. But I wouldn't go, sit round twice for George Formby. In *The Citadel*, yes. *Three Smart Girls* and *Three Smart Girls Grow Up*, that was the sequel.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* – yes, *Queen Christina* – yes, *Private Life of Henry VIII*, and *The Mutiny on the Bounty* of course, which was the 1935 with Clark Gable. I thought that was good, although now we know it was not, nothing like the fact [laughs] erm--

**VB: Did you like these sort of Adventure films when you were a child, like, erm, do you remember watching Errol Flynn when--?**

**LS:** Oh yes. *Captain Blood* and *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, yes, I did sit round that one twice, *Adventures of Robin Hood*. *Captain Blood*, *The Sea Hawk* – yes and umm what was the other one? Another I remember umm whichever her name was, *The Black Swan* with Tyrone Power.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** and um George Sanders. Of course I like George Sanders, he had a voice like [inaudible] so--

**VB: Was that with *Robin Hood*, was that an early colour film as well?**

**LS:** It was, it was, aha.

**VB: I remember being--**

**LS:** 1938 that was. Appeared up here in Glasgow the same year I think. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, of course. Everybody went to that. That was 1937 and the other one was *Pinocchio* and *Bambi* and all these films. But oh yes, for the colour then, it was marvellous *Robin Hood*.

**VB: It must have been quite something to see colour for the first time?**

**LS:** Oh yes. Yes, certainly. And *Gone With the Wind* was so startlingly new in the colour. I mean there had been the colour obviously in these earlier ones, but they really hit it at that time. That was the best you know so far you see.

**VB: All these big scenes with the planes and everything**

**LS:** Oh yes. I mean it was marvellous you see and umm you just sat there in another world then. So of course I went for Vivien Leigh, to every picture she ever did [laughs] umm *Fire Over England*, that was one of her first ones, with Flora Robson and umm that was Laurence Olivier in that one too. Yes, a young Laurence Olivier in 1937, that was *Fire Over England*. *Wuthering Heights*, we all saw that one.

**VB: Did you like Laurence Olivier then as well?**

**LS:** Yes, oh yes, I liked Olivier, yes. I liked the films he made you know. The *Hamlet* too, of course, came to the Cosmo, as it was then, I saw that. And *Richard III* of course and *Henry V*. Oh yes, I liked Olivier.

**VB: Did you go to the Cosmo a lot then?**

**LS:** Oh a lot mmh yes a lot to the Cosmo. I mean there was a spell about 1940/1950, probably every week you know. Probably every week. *Third Man* and *Fallen Idol* and any ones that came in. Really good films.

**VB: Yeah. Did you like the foreign films?**

**LS:** Oh yes. French ones too, yes, oh yes. *La Ronde* and all that Jacques Tati and you know others umm oh yes, I went to foreign ones too. Ones in Russian at times, with translation.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** Aha, oh I liked the Cosmo I must say umm some of them stand out obviously. *Hamlet* had been given such a great boost beforehand you know. Although when you see it, I don't know if you've seen it, much-- *Hamlet*, have you that one? It's badly cut you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Badly cut, it's not, it's not an artistic *Hamlet* in the sense that-- it was good from his point of view, you know what I mean. Basil Sydney is the king and all that. I mean it was well done, but there were too many cuts in it, now that I know the play so well. You see I didn't know it as well in the 1940s.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** But erm Gielgud I saw on the stage.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** As *Hamlet*, in 1944. His last tour, just caught him. When I was 16, at the Royal. Leslie Banks [pause] I saw Richard Burton's *Hamlet*.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** Yes. In 1954 at the Old Vic, with Claire Bloom eh still got the programme there [laughs] So I've seen a few in that role. But the Shakespeare on the screen mmh yes, alright, but I still prefer it on the stage. You know, Shakespeare on the stage.

**VB:** Obviously you know, I can see you read a lot--

**LS:** That's the opera there, mainly that's the opera up here. And the festival, Edinburgh, of course, that's a different--

**VB:** Yes.

**LS:** I could talk about that for hours. About the Edinburgh festival, I've been to everyone except 1948, so--

**VB:** Really?

**LS:** I've been every year. Sometimes maybe just once or twice, but umm I've been to every one.

**VB:** Yeah. I mean you say the films changed a lot, you must have seen a lot of changes in the theatre as well?

**LS:** Oh yes, aha, yes. I could say that whatever they say about the festivals now, they have not a patch on what they were in the '50s and the '60s in Edinburgh. Not a patch. For opera, ballet, drama, concerts, chamber concerts, the variety in the '50s and '60s, quite frankly, I didn't have the money to cope with what I wanted to see. Now, even when I was working, which I'm not now, even when I was working, I couldn't be bothered going to a lot of things. The films got bigger and bigger and bigger and I'm afraid they got worse and worse and worse. In my estimate, maybe I'm wrong, because I haven't been often enough.

[End of Side B]

[Start of Tape 2]

[voice testing the tape]

**VB:** Yeah, maybe that was, you replied to that umm

[rustling/Inaudible]

**LS:** Erm, where were we, yes?

**VB:** We were talking about the festival, you were saying the festival--

**LS:** Oh, I see, aha. Well just to give you one instance, if you look at the opera programme now of say the King's, before this new theatre opened, the Edinburgh Festival Theatre, if you look at the King's, which was a theatre for opera up to this year, right. You can't see it being used every night. Why



these wasted nights? And it's just closed, it's lying empty. Oh they say, oh the excuses, we have to have the time for the production. That was no excuse in the '50s and '60s when the Glyndebourne came, which came every second year, say 1947, '49, '51, '53, '55, there was never a night missing. There were eighteen performances in three weeks. Now how did they do it? How did they do it? You don't get that with Scottish Opera.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Other companies came, the Hamburg, the Stuttgart, all that, they all came and there was never any missing night. Then gradually and gradually and gradually, you find that there's just so many nights they have opera, the King's, that they shut the rest of the time. Festival Theatre, this year even then, we went to *Midsummer Night's Dream* and umm and umm *Fidelio*, but I mean there was times where that had no opera, and yet a brand new theatre, just absolutely made for opera, and that should have been having opera every night. You see, and this is why I feel now and erm Assembly Halls not always used, they don't have the gateway anymore, they're lacking-- the drama is far weaker. Now I'm not talking about the Fringe, you know to be honest, I'm not talking about the Fringe, because I don't know enough about it, because I just don't go. I may be missing something, but I don't think I'm missing an awful lot, you know, great stuff anyway. Whereas the '50s and '60s, the Fringe, you daren't miss some of the things that were going on. They were so good, so good. And umm I think the drama is weak at the Edinburgh Festival, far, far weaker than it was. They want to do something about the drama. Pack them in at the Assembly Hall again, some of these productions that there were in the '50s and '60s like the *Three Estates*, *Richard II* with Ian McKellen, *Hamlet* with Jacobi, you just don't get that now. They want to really look at the drama and they need to build up the opera and the ballet too. Well, the ballet wasn't bad this year. And they are so expensive now, sort of-- you see, I could-- maybe this is wasting your tape, [it's maybe a matter?], I could go down to London, to Covent Garden in the '50s, on a small income, what was is, 6 pounds/7 pounds a week. How-- it even baffles myself now how I could go to London on such a small pay? Rates must have been very cheap. Now are you interested in opera? No?

**VB: Umm**

**LS:** Not much?

**VB: I'm interested in it, but I don't go much**

**LS:** Okay, well then, I'll give you just one example, one more example. In 1959, I was down in London and there was an opening of a new production of *Don Carlos* by Verdi, by the producer Visconti, you've probably heard of him. And um it was a marvel-- Tito Gobbi in the cast and Boris Christoff, and of course all the seats were sold out in advance, Gré Brouwenstijn, what a star-studded cast. I had this girlfriend in London at the time. So, sold out, sold out, went back to the Box office, sold out. It was the opening night of this new production and I can remember this as clear as anything, we stood there in the drizzling rain and it was five minutes to seven and the opera began at seven, and the commissioner came out: '2 tickets'. 30 shillings each [laughs] 30 shillings, that seemed a lot [laughs] but with your girlfriend with, you know. Am I glad I went! Absolutely magnificent. I was in Covent Garden for the last time in 1985 for Domingo, that was £17 in the stalls, which was

reasonable. Extremely reasonable. My friend in London tells me that seat is now £124. If that's not killing off the opera lovers, I don't know what else.

**VB: That's incredible.**

**LS:** £124. He said, you were on the side stalls? I said yes. He said, it's now a £124. So hence I'm no longer at Covent Garden.

**VB: Too right. I bet not many people are.**

**LS:** Yeah, that's right. So I can only be glad I went in these years.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** Up and down with the bus, up and down with the bus. You could do it on the train, but you could get to London for £3 return then.

**VB: In the thirties. [laughs]**

**LS:** I don't know about 1933 [laughs] 1955, you see. These were the days, I mean these were the days, sometimes you didn't need to think of money then. Oh, that'll take about-- oh, look at the fantastic plays, ah that's okay. But you see your money went further, your money went further. I could go to a bed & breakfast there and go to the opera, and maybe, you know for under £10 or something, you know. Round trip for everything. That, as I say, I digress, I've digressed, we're back onto the cinema now.

**VB: Right. I mean one thing that struck me when you were talking about seeing all these stars was um I wondered if you'd ever seen any of the film stars coming to Glasgow?**

**LS:** Eh in person?

**VB: In person.**

**LS:** No, no, eh I can't say I saw any at all. I have umm I was, the only time that I did see one was when Lauren Bacall came to sign a book

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** And my wife had to get there. She said she wanted Lauren Bacall to sign it, that was many years after Bogart had died of course. I never saw any as a kind of promotion for a film. I don't remember any, even reading about that, that such and such a star-- there might have been, I might have missed them

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I might have missed them to be fair, but I don't remember much about it. I certainly didn't meet any, you know.

**VB:** That must have been quite a thrill to see Lauren Bacall seeing as you were such a Bogart fan.

**LS:** Oh yes. That's right, yes. But she had no time you see for chats, she was signing books and things in John Smiths, you know kind of thing. I mean it was just-- my wife was just another number, another book, you know, that was all you know. No, I would have liked to, when you mentioned that, quite liked to have seen them, but they never, they never came. Umm so but I think that was the great thing, you didn't need to walk far. You didn't like that film there, you just turned round the corner and there was another one there [laughs] all at a stone's throw you see. If you want to ask me what was the cinema that I enjoyed the most being in, I think it was the Regal probably. The Regal, which is still there now. And the Odeon, and the Odeon, which was the Paramount then, it was called the Paramount at that time, as you probably know from that book.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** I think these were two I liked going to as cinemas. And of course La Scala with its er you could include that in it too. And then later the Cosmo. I seemed to have an affection for the Regal. I don't whether it was maybe starting off with seeing *Gone With the Wind* there, they seemed to get the great film there you know. And the King's, I mean the cinema, which is no longer there, that was a nice wee one too, where the Paparazzi is now. Just along from Charing Cross. Eh no other-- oh, and the Kelvin was one, that's in that book too, at Argyle Street, it had a Turkish atmosphere. The mosque sort of thing, it was all kind of Turkish effects everywhere, you know. You'd get the usherettes that had dressed up too. [laughs]

**VB:** Really?

**LS:** That was the Kelvin for you, that was funny.

**VB:** It's amazing.

**LS:** Yeah, yeah.

**VB:** So what--

**LS:** Kind of you know, turban things, yes, marvellous. You would always go to the Kelvin--

**VB:** With bright colours or?

**LS:** Yes, aha. Quite bright, from what I can remember. It didn't-- I mean it don't think it persisted through the war years and all that much. But I remember, sort of pre-war, they had this sort of Turkish angle to it [laughs]

**VB:** That's amazing.

LS: So, that was the Kelvin.

VB: Yeah.

LS: The Kelvin, which I'd—

VB: Coz I'd hear the staff were often sort of very smartly dressed.

LS: Oh, they were, oh yes. And the waitresses, I mean I can remember this, the waitresses in the La Scala had all these wee lacy things you know, these wee caps, caps and laces. I mean they were like the waitresses in the best restaurants in Glasgow at that time you know. They were all dressed the part, in black and white you see, so you did, you know, they served a great deal there at La Scala. And the Regal too, I mean the Regal had the restaurant too. So that all added to the cost of course, if you were going to have a meal out, you know, and the cinema. That was all adding to the cost and you had to watch out for your pennies. Transport was cheap of course, as you probably have gathered by now, with trams and everything was very cheap.

VB: Yeah.

LS: The subway you know. You could get any of them for a penny and a tuppence or something [laughs] To Paisley, it was two pence old money, yeah, two pence old money [pause] So--

VB: It sounds like quite an occasion as well, what you said about the sort of grander cinemas? Like La Scala, the Regal.

LS: Mmh, oh yes, oh yes. Oh yes, it was quite an event for me you know. The thing was in most of them you couldn't book that was the thing, you had to queue. So in the war time especially, you were, you had to be prepared to go up there and stand in the rain maybe you know. You could be there for quite a while. Quite a while. If you're willing to step up the price and say go for the best seats at the front of the circle say or something like that, then you might get in, you know if they say, well there's two here, you go into the front there and then you sit and you've got this [laughs]

VB: Was there separate queues then for the different seats?

LS: Yes, aha yes, for different parts, yes, aha. You could be standing in the stalls queue you see.

VB: Yes.

LS: And there'd be a circles queue on the other side and if that got shorter you might be tempted to leave the stalls queue and go to the circle queue in the hope that you might, you know, that you could afford that extra shilling or something [laughs] that you could afford that. So we had to stand at separate queues and the commissioner there would shout out, at the Gaumont and La Scala and these ones, you know, 'stalls, four in the stalls, two in the stalls,' 'cause they were coming out all the time you see. Well, not all the time, you had to wait mainly till the end of the film, or some did come out in the middle obviously.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** But umm some people would say I don't mind going in at any old time, you know, they'd just come back, but I couldn't do that, no. Not for the world.

**VB: I think that's right. [inaudible]**

**LS:** I wouldn't go in in the middle or all that. Oh no, not at all. You're the same, you feel like that?

**VB: Yeah, I have to see the first words on the screen, if I miss anything [laughs]**

**LS:** [laughs] I know, I know. So umm and of course if you enter too late you might get one film, but you'd miss the second one, so you're having to watch if you wanted erm So we would prefer, my friend and that, mother, or grandmother, or whatever, to just wait another night. You know, go on a different night or on a Saturday for matinee, and then make sure we see the two and back at a reasonable hour you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** 'Cause some film were, you know, after 11 o'clock at night. Although there was plenty trams.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You know going to all parts. You know no trouble with trams-- it's not like we--

**VB: Would trams run pretty late then?**

**LS:** Pardon?

**VB: Would trams run pretty late then?**

**LS:** Oh till midnight and after

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** Oh yes. It was a great service, marvellous before the war. It wasn't the same after the war. Well, it gradually declined in a way, you know, as the busses took over you know. The trams were there about every 5 minutes you know. I never had to wait any time, went into Partick, you see from Sauchiehall Street [pause] and you knew, that was another thing, you knew your transport to every cinema. I would have a timet-- I would actually have an old tram timetable [Bath Street?] and I would know where, what route number I needed to get, you know, to get to the cinema. I knew Shawlands, or Riddrie, or Springburn, or Scotstoun, I knew what number tram to take [pause] it was all part--

**VB: You were well prepared.**

**LS:** It was all part of the preparation, all part of the preparation. We'll never see these days again. They've been gone for a [long time?]. It was a marvellous time. Marvellous time. I mean I'm not just saying that because

**VB: No.**

**LS:** I'm not just saying that, it was really, because it was-- television's been a great thing, but I just wonder how the theatre would have developed or the cinema itself if it hadn't been for television.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I just wonder how it would have gone, you know, sort of taken a different direction you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You're too young to sort of compare say the production methods nowadays with the older ones unless you see an old film.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I mean if you see an old, sort of a good old one, do you prefer it to say a modern one?

**VB: I think overall, I do actually.**

**LS:** You like the oldies?

**VB: Although I like umm modern movies as well, but--**

**LS:** Aha, yes. That's good.

**VB: I mean certainly the films we've been talking about, I do enjoy a lot.**

**LS:** Yes, aha. You see they had a lot, they had a real sense of direc-- they seem to arrest the attention.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** You see. I mean you didn't have to be young or anything to say, I mean I just mentioned *Beau Geste* there, I mean you got that opening scene of *Beau Geste*, that was you hooked for the film. The acting could have been rotten, it wasn't, but the acting could have-- Gary Cooper and Ray Milland. I mean it could have been rotten.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** But you were gripped.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** In other words, the directors knew how to hold you.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** From the beginning, you see. The same with *Maltese Falcon*. *Casablanca*. These films had a, a sort of grip there you know.

**VB: Yeah, very much so.**

**LS:** Very much so, isn't it. It really is. Umm [pause 4 seconds] I mean I've said to my wife, try this one. Ah, she says, [inaudible] [laughs] [inaudible] So, the Kelvin round there, you know, I think we've been there once maybe in five years or six years, just the once. That's how it's sort of declined. Yet we go to the theatre when we can.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** As much as we can. Um I'm more keen on opera than she is, but she likes ballet and plays you know. Err so that's how it's gone with me anyway, that's that. So as I say, I'm sort of quite happy now to go to the theatre and watch the oldies here. That's what it amounts to really.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You feel that they sacrifice a lot in the story. I mean the producers in these days, the directors, they went for what was the material. I felt the material, the quality, now they go for sensation first. Sensation first. The story could be good. I mean sometimes it is nowadays you know, but they go for the sensational. At the expense-- I don't mind if they've both in harness, I think when there's been sacrifices if you know what I mean.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You have to have a film with a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Like you have a good play or a good opera.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Modern opera too, can be corny at times, I mean it's going nowhere, sometimes. And the producers, you probably [inaudible] I'm disillusioned at the moment with Scottish Opera you know, quite a while. Oh yes, and with English National, which I've been to too, some of the weirdest things you ever saw are on the opera stages now. Weird productions, oh grr. So I have to watch this. There's an instance, but I'm digressing again, but when the Scottish Opera started, again at Theatre Royal 1975, I don't know how old you were then. But umm they had a subscription, well they still do a subscription, you book up for all the operas and you get one free. That's what it amounts to, you get one free. Well I had one for two seasons, but as the productions got weirder and more uncertain

and shabby, downright shabby at times, I stopped that. Then they got in the modern trying producer, who did all sorts of things, you know, with the stories. I can put up with a lot, I can put up with weird costumes, weird acting, weird this that, I cannot put up with the destruction of the story itself. When they put in their own ideas and you don't recognise the opera as such you see. So gradually from having a subscription, I stopped that, and I was a friend of the Scottish Opera, I stopped that. I went to a few without checking on reviews, now I don't go to an opera until I've read at least three reviews. Anyway, I wouldn't even step inside the Royal until I know what I'm going to see, that's how bad it's become. And I think I'm maybe I'm being unfair to the cinema industry too, but sometimes you know, when I watch Barry Norman say there, it just, well it doesn't attract me. I mean I could be unfair, he'll maybe praise the film, but I don't like it you know. I sort of-- ach, maybe, maybe I'm just getting older now. [laughs]

**VB: [inaudible]**

**LS:** Just getting too old [laughs] erm I mean I started going when I was eh well with my parents, grandparents, I first went to the movies when I was six, 1934. Say off and on. Maybe sixty years you know between the theatre and the film, it's been a long time, long time [pause 6 seconds] you think of anything else?

**VB: Aehm, I can't think of a lot actually.**

**LS:** Can't think of more. Well I didn't think I had as much to tell you really [laughs]

**VB: It's been really interesting.**

**LS:** Aha, you think so.

**VB: Very interesting, yeah.**

**LS:** Good, good.

**VB: Umm in fact I'm hard pressed to think of something we haven't talked about.**

**LS:** Well, that's right. I think if you remember the, the points about, well just what I've said about the production methods, the director's methods, the directness of a film, you know the directness as distinct from direction, if you know what I mean of a film. The directness to it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** In other words, getting you held, which they could do and as I say, the diction and everything was so clear, there wasn't this obtrusive background noise and music that there is nowadays. They set out to hold the audience with a good story and I think you can't get better than that you know. You go to *The Third Man* and say, well, when I sat down at the Cosmo that night for the first time, 1949, for *The Third Man*, I mean the zither music, that was good, I mean that was good introductory music, but it was kept in the background, it never intruded on the dialogue. Never intruded, so it made it a



marvellous film. *Third Man*, a marvellous film. But he, that was Carol Reed there, right, I don't know whether that was by accident or design that. I mean the zither-- he'd obviously heard the zither in a Vienna Café and thought it was a good idea. It was a great idea. If you listen to this zither music, well that's you hooked, isn't it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** That's you hooked and erm that happens with a lot of films. Take the theme music of *Gone With the Wind*, the entire theme you see.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You've got the atmosphere there in a stroke. But this modern music, modern films tends to jar, I think it jars. I think that's a mistake [pause] I mean you see the difference, don't you?

**VB: Yes, yes.**

**LS:** Good background music.

**VB: I was just trying to think of an example of the modern music, but I know what you mean.**

**LS:** You know what I mean.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** Aha, aha. I just can't pinpoint one at the moment, but I know it's there. And Jean would say, oh I wish they would just cut that music there you see.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** In the background. But it's umm [pause 3 seconds] and she'll say to me again, and her hearing is good too, what's that they're saying, what's that they're saying. Actually, I don't know, it's just a mumble.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Just a mumble [pause 4 seconds] so umm it's just all, the director's idea of change, of what the entertainment should be you know. But you don't think maybe they have the young in mind more than they had before. You know the [pause] I mean the teenagers by that.

**VB: Possibly true, yeah.**

**LS:** The teenagers, you know. They want to catch that. They want to catch them with the TV too. I bet that's the thing you see.

**VB: I think that's a really interesting point, 'cause if you think--**

LS: Aha.

VB: When you mentioned that *Robin Hood*, I mean a film like that could appeal to anyone really.

LS: That's right.

VB: From a child

LS: to a man

VB: to an adult.

LS: Right. On till old age. That's right, I know. Because it's so well acted you see.

VB: That's right, yeah.

LS: You might say to yourself, well that's corny, when Robin Hood jumps in at the table at Prince John and all this, and he's lying back and they could kill him on the spot you know, but he gets out you know

VB: Yeah.

LS: Yes, so corny, but it's a corniness that you can accept.

VB: That's right. And then there'll be the other bits like that the big swordfights with Basil Rathbone, which is so skilful.

LS: Basil Rathbone, that's right you see. There's some great duel scenes you see.

VB: That's right.

LS: And erm och what was it now, there've been a few of late, *Corsican Brothers*, I saw, was it last year on TV, with some grand duel scenes. At the time, I was absolutely enraptured, because, I'll tell you why, it was the power of Flynn, or Tyrone Power, or any of these, was so strong, magnificent appeal was so strong with these actors and Bogart. It over rid everything else, you didn't stop to think and say oh well that couldn't have happened you know, it couldn't have happened sort of thing, you see.

VB: That's right.

LS: That's the star quality. Now I'm not saying that's-- we've had Steve McQueen, we've had Paul, Paul Newman, we've had good ones, we've had all these good ones, but, erm I can't, I can't put my finger on it, there was a [pause 3 seconds], maybe if Newman and McQueen had been given great films say--

**VB: Yes.**

LS: Rather than good ones.

**VB: Yeah.**

LS: They might well have made great films I think.

**VB: Yeah.**

LS: I mean they did some near to great ones, you know, *The Hustler* and that when you know-- *The Towering Inferno* and that was erm--

**VB: Yeah.**

LS: Err [pause] umm I think you see the point I'm trying to make, the difference.

**VB: Yes, yeah.**

LS: There was a terrific magnetism with these stars, you know.

**VB: I was just thinking when you were saying that, I was watching TV the other night, *The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo*. Was it Ronald Colman?**

LS: I think it was Ronald Colman that one, yes.

**VB: I mean the story in that is nothing very great, but--**

LS: Nothing very great.

**VB: It was a wonderful film.**

LS: I know.

**VB: As you're saying, the magnetism of Colman um just kept you totally wrapped up in it.**

LS: Mhm, aha, I say now-- my wife said once, we were watching um *Stagecoach*, this is one point I want to make too. When they make a good version of a film, like *Stagecoach* and *Beau Geste*, it's beyond belief, I cannot understand why they go and make another one, which doesn't even attempt to get near the other. I mean if you've seen the other *Beau Geste* with Doug McClure and--

**VB: No, I don't think I have.**

LS: Savalas.

**VB: No, I haven't seen that.**

**LS:** Telly Savalas is the sergeant who Brian Donlevy played. It made a, a mockery of the book, a mockery of the story. Whereas the 1939 one with Gary Cooper and Ray Milland-- so you see, I'm always at a loss and they made another version of *Stagecoach* which was an absolute flop with Bing Crosby. They made a disastrous *Brief Encounter*, as you probably know, with Sophia Loren and umm was it Richard Burton?

**VB: I don't know about that one.**

**LS:** It was a later *Brief Encounter*, which no one has seen nowadays [laughs] thank goodness!

**VB: [laughs] I can't imagine actually.**

**LS:** You can't get better than the first one, can you, with Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson. Why do they attempt it? There's some things you can tackle more than once I suppose, some of them, provided you do it basically from the right angle and that you're not losing sight of the novel or the play. It's where they lose sight of the novel and the play, that it becomes a disaster. But *Brief Encounter* was so perfect in its own way, that nobody should ever have attempted another version.

**VB: No.**

**LS:** This, this puzzles me beyond all [pause 3 seconds], say a Dickens novel, they've made more than one version and, I think sometimes you can do that you see, say there's *Chuzzlewit* just now, I don't know of a film version, but *Great Expectations* I think there was more than one, wasn't there?

**VB: Must have been.**

**LS:** There was a pre-war one, but the one after the war was great with John Mills, absolutely great. Well there was a *David Copperfield* certainly, 1934 W.C. Fields, and there was a later one with Ralph Richardson in it. Umm you can do that kind of thing you know, but not where there's been a masterly film done, you don't need to do it again you see [pause 4 seconds] So, I don't know what they are trying to do, you know the producers, quick film, unless it is just gratuitous sex and violence you know [pause; sighs] umm that was another thing in these days, the sex was always implied [laughs] it was just no-- [laughs] I mean MGM just would not have, would just not have-- you know they wouldn't have allowed it. They wouldn't have allowed it. You know how even Clark Gable could hardly swear in *Gone With the Wind*?

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

**LS:** He had to say [imitating intonation] 'Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn'.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** He had to keep the 'damn' very quiet [laughs] I think it was terrible, wasn't it. I mean the whole shock of course in these days, when Rhett takes Scarlett away up the stairs--

**VB: That's true.**

**LS:** That was really, that was really something. And yet the implication of sex was always there of course you know.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** Was always there.

**VB: I was just thinking of one example, that umm what's the film with Cagney and Jean Harlow in it**

**LS:** Oh yes, that was--

**VB: The Dark--**

**LS:** Erm, oh dear. Was that the early one?

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** *Public Enemy?*

**VB: *Public Enemy.***

**LS:** *Public Enemy.*

**VB: Yes, and she's quite, erm--**

**LS:** Just put it on that. [laughs]

**VB: I remember there's a sort of scene in that which is quite, well quite juicy for the times.**

**LS:** Oh right, aha, I know, aha.

**VB: Quite suggestive.**

**LS:** Yes.

**VB: As you say, nothing--**

**LS:** No, no, you wouldn't get come into bed in these days. You wouldn't get them into bed. Eh that came later but umm [pause 3 seconds] you seem to-- well, different age [laughs] you weren't looking for sex, you were younger then, you weren't looking for sex.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** You just waited until you got older, and then to French films and all you get--

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** But they were very, very straight laced, yes. Well you know from yourself with these old movies. But, erm, even the gangsters' molls and that were always, you know, kept out the bedroom sort of. [laughs]

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** [laughs] umm [pause 10 seconds] I think maybe, in the war years especially, laughter was what they were after mainly, you know, the comedies, I think that's maybe why we went. You know, because it was the war, you know because it was the war and it was a grim time you know, a grim time.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I was in Partick with my grandparents, erm, just around the time of the Clydebank bombing, you know.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** Yeah. So we weren't far away from it you know. There was a saturation, kind of two nights there you know. Two nights at Clydebank. I remember a week later, my grandfather and I went out with the tram and we could only get so far into Clydebank you know of course. I think one of the cinemas had gone there you know, I forget which one. But it had gone [flat?]. So umm oh it was a ruin, so I think you were looking at, you know, escapism really. You could get escapism in different forms obviously, you could get it in different forms. Umm but I think you wanted a laugh at least sometimes. So the balance was often good. You would never get two westerns, you would never get two romances, you would never get two gangsters. You would always get one and one, one and one, the balance was always good. Important point.

**VB: It is.**

**LS:** Important point. Hmm.

**VB: So you wouldn't get bored with-- you know if you're sitting in the cinema for four hours or something, I mean you'd want some sort of variety.**

**LS:** Mhm, you couldn't get bored. You couldn't get bored 'cause there was a contrast always you see.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** You either had a terrific drama with a Bogart or a Cagney, or with whatever, or Randall Scott and a Western, and then you get a Romance, maybe a Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** It was great [pause 7 seconds] I think that was almost all the films then at the cinema. I mean even the Shirley Temple films. [laughs]

**VB: Do you like Shirley Temple or?**

**LS:** Err I did quite like them, they began to pall after a while you know and you sort of said well one's the same as the other, but she was a great wee actress. And Jane Withers too, she was another good one. She was underrated I think, she was underrated, a good wee actress. Umm but because Temple was there, she ruled the roost in the '30s, you know as a child actress she obviously ruled the-- and then Judy Garland of course later in--

**VB: What about Deanna Durbin?**

**LS:** Yes, aha aye. *Three Smart Girls, Three Smart Girls Grow Up, Nice Girl?, One Hundred Men and a Girl*, yes, she was, she was light entertainment. She got out of it all quite young, and just eh got married and went away to the South of France. I never heard of her since [laughs] I think she didn't like the razzmatazz and then erm Shirley Temple had a job to make the transition. She didn't make it as well as Garland made it I think. You know Judy Garland did at a cost to herself you know, a cost to herself you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** But Shirley Temple I think just resigned herself that she was growing up and up. I think she was wise enough to know that her time had past. There's not many that emerged, you know, but Judy Garland did you know, but as I say at an awful cost to her health [pause 3 seconds] same with the Marx Brothers too, they were at a peak in the '30s, at a peak, and then after the war, they made about another two films and that was you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I mean they sort of disappeared. It was Danny Kaye's sort of turn then, his humour too. You see there's a time for humour too. Laurel and Hardy in the '20s and early '30s you know umm

**VB: Chaplin?**

**LS:** Yeah, Chaplin too. I never seemed to go for Chaplin strangely enough, you know, he didn't turn me on the same. I could sit there and admire his craft

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You know. But to me, I don't know how you feel, if you've seen much of his films you know?

**VB: One or two.**

**LS:** His early ones you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** To me, it was too self-conscious. The comedy. You know what I mean?

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You know to compare a silent with a silent, Laurel and Hardy to me was funnier, and even Buster Keaton, Buster Keaton. And umm Chaplin, although I could admire his work, I felt it was self-conscious, so I didn't laugh as much as some.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** While my father was sitting and roaring

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I couldn't do that with Chaplin.

**VB: [inaudible] sorry, I think we must be near the end--**

[Side A ends]

[Side B starts]

[music for 5 seconds]

**VB: Erm I mean one thing that I've heard other folks say was that Chaplin was maybe for children or?**

**LS:** Is that side four starting?

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** That's right.

**VB: Or something that you maybe grew out of?**

**LS:** Oh no, no. I think if you like Chaplin, my father-- I mean it started, 'cause he saw him, from the time when he was in his twenties, he was starting to make his name you know. So we're talking about the 1920s now. I think he never lost his love of Chaplin you see, all his life.

**VB: Yeah.**



**LS:** And I think there was a lot of people like that. I mean what should I say. My mother to a certain extent, but I think she was like me, she laughed more at Lloyd, Harold Lloyd. We had the same sort of humour, it was like umm like the Ritz Brothers too, some didn't like the Ritz Brothers, I don't know if you remember them at all, they were not funny at all you see. They could be, and yet they were a pure version of the Marx Brothers you see. Humour is a very, very strange thing as you well know. My wife, when she first, not when I first knew her, but I'll just come back to Marx Brothers again, when she did see them during the war, she used to think no, not funny. But gradually, that was the funny thing, gradually, she began to laugh and laugh and laugh. She loves them, but she didn't like them in the beginning. But, see with Chaplin, I could say I admire what he's doing, but I can't-- what's he trying to say, is he trying to be tragic, or trying to be comic, or is he trying to be a bit of both you see. And somehow it just, he didn't, you know. I mean I'm in a minority I'm sure there you know, but humour is a strange thing. As I say, I could like Danny Kaye, loved Danny Kaye, sat round twice at *Walter Mitty* [inaudible]. And I'll give you another example, I don't know if you know the film *The Naked Truth*? That one with Terry-Thomas, it was a Boulting Brothers film, about the '50s, Peggy Mount, Joan Sims and all that. It was a-- I think it's-- my wife just waits for it to come back on the box again and we roar. The first time I saw it was in, erm, Leicester Square in London, 1960 something, 1960, with a girlfriend then, she was Canadian. We'd met up at Glasgow and she lived down in London. We were just about to get married, but that's [laughs] umm she sat throughout, I was, I mean I'd seen many funny films, but I was rocking, like most of the audience, in the aisles. Marvellous, just absolutely hysterical. She wondered what I was getting all worked up about. To me, Terry-Thomas, Peggy Mount, Joan Sims, Peter Sellers, the combo. Have you ever seen it?

**VB:** I'd quite like to actually.

**LS:** If you get the chance, *The Naked Truth*. An absolute riot. Having said that, you might not think it [laughs] you might not think it, but every time it's on, I think 'oh yes, I must watch that again'. 'Again', you see, we've seen it umpteenth times. Whereas it's like an automatic thing you see, something switches on with us, no matter what we say beforehand. Say that *Casablanca* is advertised say the next Sunday, 'ah', she'll say, 'I'll never watch that again'. I say, 'alright, we'll give you a test, we'll just watch it for five minutes.' Fatal, fatal. There's no such thing as watching it for five minutes, not a film like *Casablanca*. Nor *The Maltese Falcon*, anything like that you see, you cannot watch it for five minutes. She says, 'I don't know what is wrong with me, I must be weak-minded' [laughs] well, the two of us are. [laughs] No, no, it's just one of these things. A great film you will watch again and again.

**VB:** I mean just even hearing you mentioning *The Maltese Falcon*, I mean that, the opening of that, where you have the big shadow of the falcon, once you've seen that.

**LS:** Yeah, the falcon, that's right you see.

**VB:** You're there.

**LS:** See the care they took too with the minor parts too. I mean they didn't sort of say oh well, we've got Bogart. Sydney Greenstreet, as you probably know, that was his first film. He was already 61, but that was his first film. They didn't make do with that, they had Peter Lorre as well you see. Gladys George, they had Jerome Cowan. I mean they didn't spare, they made sure they had a good cast all

round. You probably don't know that there was two versions of that sort of before that one. There was a very good one in 1931 with Warren William, I think his name was. And it appeared under a different title in 1936, *Satan Meets [Met] a Lady*, I think it was something like that.

**VB: I've heard of that.**

**LS:** *Satan Meets [Met] A Lady*.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** That was the second version of it. So the one that you're seeing, the Huston one, is the third and best obviously. Mary Astor, of course, Mary Astor.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** The dialogue in that absolutely crackles, doesn't it?

**VB: Yeah it does.**

**LS:** I mean it crackles.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I mean that scene where he interviews Mary Astor for a second time, not in the office, but in that room and she's starting to poke the, slipping up the poker.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** When he says, you're not going to start and poke my fire and do things like that [laughs] You know he just had her sized up right away you know. And the characterisation was so brilliant. And when he says to Sydney Greenstreet, let's talk about the black bird you know. Just, you know, he gets straight to the point. No pre-amble, let's just talk about the black bird. And then Green says, 'I love a man like that' you know. He comes straight to the point, I love that guy. And the wee gunsel guy was great, Elisha Cook.

**VB: Oh, he's great.**

**LS:** Isn't he?

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** Incredible acting [laughs]

**VB: [inaudible]**

**LS:** Elisha Cook you see, mhm, so you see is-- quite frankly I don't see that in the modern day. I don't see that attention to detail. I could be most unfair here, because I'm not going enough. I maybe have just seen a snippet from Barry Norman here and there. I'm just not going enough, but somehow it's not there, all I'm seeing is this incessant violence.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Going on. I think sensation is the number one thing they're in for, with sex and vio-- no, as much of both as you can get. The story then becomes incidental.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** As you rightly say, there's been a lot of good stories, you know, in modern ones. But erm [pause 4 seconds] erm, I think that's the strong point now, attention to detail. Characterisation. Now *The Towing Inferno* say, which I think was one of the better modern ones, but the characterisation detail wasn't there I felt. No, Fred Astaire had a good part as the old man and Steve McQueen was a fireman and Paul Newman was a-- it wasn't-- it was there again for effect, it was brilliant effect, but erm [pause 9 seconds] Mind you, the colour is great too, but I think there's a lot to be said for the black and white, isn't there? For starkness of effect sometimes.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** There's a lot to be said for black and white.

**VB: Certainly for a film like *Maltese Falcon*. I can't imagine that in colour.**

**LS:** No. *Stagecoach* too, you see. You could say-- I mean if you went to *Stagecoach* and said, what's this about? They're going from A to B in a stagecoach with apaches chasing them for most of the film, that's it, they're just getting chased by apaches. But who are the people in that stagecoach? And that is what makes it, isn't it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** They're so well contrasted. You've seen that one, haven't you? John Wayne, Claire Trevor, I mean Thomas Mitchell, John Carradine, George Bancroft, I can recite them all of by heart, Andy Devine. Everybody is so contrasted. The different motives for getting to-- where was it they were going, I don't know aehm

**VB: Erm**

**LS:** Wellsborough or somewhere, Wellsborough or something like that.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I know they're going through apache country and then John Wayne joins the coach and you know the whole thing. And the guy that's escaped with the bank money you know, I forget his name, Berton umm what was it? well he's another one. But you see if you boiled that down for someone and you said, or they said, what's *Stagecoach* about, oh well they're moving in a stagecoach across Utah.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You know with the apaches chasing them. [Inaudible], you know. Of course, John Ford knew it wasn't just a western, it was about people.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You know in a given situation, like you would get in *Lifeboat*, you know the film *Lifeboat*?

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Where somebody has to [laughs] well the panic erm on the Titanic in *A Night to Remember*.

**VB: Hmm.**

**LS:** There was two versions of that as well. You know that? There was one with Clifton Webb, which was called *Titanic*.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** With Barbara Stanwyck.

**VB: Yes, that's the one I've seen actually.**

**LS:** Which was very good too. And then there was *A Night To Remember* with erm, Kenneth More.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** That was a later one.

**VB: I've seen that as well actually.**

**LS:** You've seen that as well. Ah that's right, well you see, there you've got two-- you've got room to portray the characters.

**VB: Yes, yes.**

**LS:** And you've got the advantage of knowing what's going to happen.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You see in that film you know what's going to happen. The tension is building up all the time you know in either cases and erm--

**VB: I think just listening to you talking about this as well, it sounds like some of these earlier films, the sort of bit parts and the--**

**LS:** Yeah.

**VB: the small parts**

**LS:** Yeah, the small parts are very strong. Very strong. That's the great thing. And erm it was *The Roaring Twenties*, you see that one again, that was Bogart and Cagney.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** Who else was in that? Let me see.

**VB: [inaudible].**

**LS:** Ed Brophy was one that was used. That wee guy, the one with the hat always at an angle. He always appeared as these gangsters often eh George Bancroft and Charles Bickford and these ones you see. They kept cropping up all the time. See they didn't just make do with one or two stars.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** They had-- they packed them in at times. Well you just need to ta-- go back with *Gone With the Wind*, how well cast the minor parts were. I mean incredible.

**VB: Olivia de Havilland and--**

**LS:** Aye. But I mean take away the big four, take away the big four--

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** Thomas Mitchell.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Barbara O'Neil, Hattie McDaniel, Butterfly McQueen, you know, the weeping maid.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** The erm Evelyn Keyes and Ann Rutherford, as the two sisters of Scarlett.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** You see you've got absolutely-- it goes right down to ones that could make a film themselves, almost.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** That's the care they took in these days, you don't-- that I haven't seen during the modern. The care they took in the casting. Well that's a case in point, when we're talking about *Gone With the Wind*, which is always the best one to talk about. Selznick waited and waited and waited until they got their Scarlett. You've read about that, haven't you?

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** You've read about that. Goddard was near it, she almost got it. There was Bette Davis and other ones I think who were in the running, but umm he just said no. You know there were hundreds were interviewed for that, Vivien Leigh just happened to come over, because Olivier was doing *Wuthering Heights*. She came over because they were having an affair and um Selznick saw her. So he took her back to the studio and said, I want you to meet not Vivien Leigh, I want to introduce you to Scarlett O'Hara [laughs] that's how he-- he wasn't going to take any opposition or anything, he said that's it. She had to learn the accent of course, you know, had to learn the Southern accent [pause] Leslie Howard didn't want his part. There was a great actor, Leslie Howard. He was a great actor, saw him in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* of course. [The '34 version, I was petrified for us, first film?]. But he didn't want that part of Ashley, no, he didn't.

**VB: Was he-- I mean did he want the Rhett Butler?**

**LS:** No, no, he didn't want Rhett Butler, that just wasn't his style. He just didn't want to be cast, he thought it was too weak.

**VB: Yes, I see.**

**LS:** Leslie Howard had always played the strong man and the leading strong guys you see.

**VB: And yet in the role--**

**LS:** Oh he seemed very-- and yet maybe a wee bit too old, as regards the age factor.

**VB: Possibly.**

**LS:** He was nearly fifty at the time, so he was probably a wee bit--

**VB: [inaudible]**

**LS:** It didn't show, but it was Olivia de Havilland that sort of I think kept them all together. Gable couldn't get on with Vivien, and Leslie Howard didn't want the part, and she persuaded him, and Rhett Butler didn't want to cry erm--

**[VB laughs]**

**LS:** [laughs] but umm oh dear, rather [inaudible]. Clark Gable, I think was-- I don't think he was a great actor, but I think he got into the part and put his whole heart into it. Because of his sort of rugged good looks and that he got away with, well, I wouldn't say got away with murder, but I mean, he just was Clark Gable most of the time, that was it [laughs] Bogart was Bogart most of the time too I suppose. But umm Bogart, later, as you know, could do various parts, quite a bit. I mean he was quite glad to get away from the gangster bit, as was Cagney who didn't really-- I thought he thought [Yankee, Yankee Doodle Dandy?] was his best film.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** He did think *Yankee Doodle Dandy* was the best and umm Bogart, as you know, got into parts like *The African Queen*.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** You know that was quite different for him. Umm what was *The Left Hand of God* and things like that [pause 4 seconds] eh he was a talented bloke. I think he was just cast because he looked the part as [inaudible] They couldn't think of anything else for him [pause] But *Casablanca* of course, that was the turning point, because that was a different Bogart there. That was a different Bogart [pause 8 seconds] What you should be asking about, is what eight films I would take on a desert island [laughs] I don't know. I don't think I could do that.

**VB: [laughs] That's tough, isn't it.**

**LS:** It's tough, isn't it. Very tough.

**VB: Really is.**

**LS:** It is tough you know. What would you take?

**VB: Everything we've mentioned tonight.**

**LS:** I know. You'd have to take a [balance?] you'd have to take ones that are sheer entertaining, sheer entertaining.

**VB: I liked *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, actually having said that.**

**LS:** Oh yes, you see, dancing did Cagney, he loves to dance you see. But umm they couldn't get umm they couldn't think of things for him you know. I mean that was it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** And umm I think that was the case with a few actors. I think it was Rex Harrison too felt that. I read two of his biographies and what goes through is that he said when he went over there, that he felt they didn't know what to do with him. This is long before *My Fair Lady* of course and all-- He just said they didn't know what to do with him. Rex was such a good actor, he could clearly do anything. You know they could just have-- because I think *The Rake's Progress*, I think was one of the best films.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** I'd like to take that as one of the eight. I think *The Rake's Progress* was one of the best films he ever made. And it was one of the best films actually. And he played that you know, to perfection. Did you see that?

**VB: I haven't seen it, no.**

**LS:** Oh, *The Rake's Progress*, you've not seen it? Oh, you want to see that one, oh, he's good in that. And *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*. Have you seen that one?

**VB: I haven't seen that one actually, so I've got--**

**LS:** Oh well, you've got a few to catch up on with Rex Harrison. Umm what else did he do? *Blithe Spirit*?

**VB: Oh yes, I've seen that.**

**LS:** You've seen *Blithe Spirit*. *The Constant Nymph*? I think he was in that one.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** *Constant Nymph* and erm then of course he did *Dolittle*, and then *My Fair Lady*, oh he was great in that you see [pause 3 seconds] I saw him once on the stage, in an Edinburgh play at the Festival, it never came back, this was in 1954, a flop of a play. So he said, you know going through his books, he said that sometimes he felt like you know going straight back to the English stage again, because they didn't really know what to do with him you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Some parts he liked, some parts he didn't like. But erm [pause] I think with Errol Flynn it was a case, it was easy, because he was an adventure outdoor man you know.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** They were able to just slot him in you know.



**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** And umm they were typecast to a degree I think. I think like Davis felt this in a way, she was quite often pressed into parts, she didn't, you know, really want. She fought them of course you know. Anyway [pause 6 seconds] *All About Eve* of course is good, isn't it?

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** George Sanders and Anne Baxter. That's an incredible film, isn't it. Fascinating. Incredible film. George Sanders is just George Sanders [pause] There was a case of casting maybe Gary Merrill, who was the husband of Bette Davis at that time, maybe he was just sort of put in because-- he was probably the weakest of it. But the other five you know, just exceptional cast [pause] Right down to the part for Marilyn Monroe, you know the wee part that she had played.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Now there was an actress you see, she was all-- was misunderstood I think. She missed out. You know what I think the best film that Marilyn did, was *Bus Stop*. That was funny.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** Her sense of humour was incredible in that. She had a great, great sense of humour. Not the Marilyn of *Niagara*, you know where she played the villainess, you know the murderess.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** The murderer. It was *Bus Stop*, with this guy pursuing her all the time.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** You know proposing to her all the time and whatnot [laughs] I thought that was a very funny film. I think they misunderstood her you know. She was all body, but no brain, but she had a brain. She was clever, she was clever. Norma Shearer was too. Umm Joan Crawford, well, I could take her away [laughs] Joan Crawford [pause] Suff-- what was it they said? 'Suffering in mink'.

**VB: Really?**

**LS:** Aye. You know you went to see Joan because she suffered in mink. She was usually playing rich parts, who'd be going through hell you know [laughs] like *Mildred Pierce*, you know *Mildred*? You've seen that one, have you? *Mildred Pierce*? [pause 5 seconds] *The Third Man* was a great film. *Fallen Idol*. Two of Carol Reed's masterpieces [pause 4 seconds] and *Double Indemnity*. I would have to have that one. That, that film was-- talk about holding you from reel one, from shot one. I think it was the dialogue, the background dialogue, you know the insurance.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Fred MacMurray speaking his thoughts in the background. You know how he said he went to this house, this day, just had to make that call, and then he goes back and he says to Edward G. Robinson, you were in the office that day and you were talking to this guy and you know it was terrific tension building up. That was maybe Wilder's masterpiece. That *Double Indemnity*. You've seen it more than once I'll bet?

**VB:** Yes, I have actually, yes. [laughs]

[LS laughs]

**VB:** My father actually [inaudible].

**LS:** You see-- Aha, aha. They didn't do enough of erm they didn't do enough of that kind of flashback thing, which could be very effective if it was handled. Sometimes it became monotonous I think. Sometimes you got a film that was wrong for that kind of idea if you know what I mean.

**VB:** Right.

**LS:** But in *Double Indemnity*, it was just every-- and you knew oh, I wish he would do this, or oh, I wish he wouldn't do that. You know? Sort of saying that. Why he did go back there and you can see his mind working you see when he's back in his flat and he thinks maybe he can bump him off you see. And then of course she turns up at his flat you see and I mean that's the dice cast you see. But the thing is, I felt this was marvellous. The way when they reach the call scenes at the office again, when you see him going back, and Edward G. Robinson was trying to get him a job. And all the time you thought Edward G. with his sharp brain you see because he was an insurance fraudster we'll say

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** would pinpoint Fred MacMurray, you know, he would catch him. Yet right at the end, he didn't, right under his nose.

**VB:** That's right.

**LS:** So that-- that to me is the essence of that, a great film.

**VB:** I like that sort of movie where [inaudible].

**LS:** Oh yes, yes. And I think they did the right thing with that film, with *Double Indemnity*. As you probably know, they cut the gas chamber scene.

**VB:** Really?

**LS:** It was a bit-- it was tagged on. It was cut before it was released. So I think it was better to end where it did.

**VB: Oh yes.**

**LS:** Where he's making his way to the lift, where he's wounded and trying to-- and Edward G. says, you'll never make it you know. I think that was right just to stop it there you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** He says you're all washed up you know.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** You're all washed up, Walter. But they had an anti-climatic scene, which they had in the original sort of him going to the gas chambers.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Yeah, *12 Angry Men*, that was good, that was super. Lee J. -- I mean Henry Fonda was good, but Lee J. Cobb was magnificent. I mean you knew obviously at the beginning that Lee J. Cobb was going to be the last-- would take some cracking. And that other guy, who was that, the one that was the second toughest one in the resistance?

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Erm, he's quite well known. He plays lawyer parts and these business men umm I'll know it. A.C. Marshall, is it? A.C. Marshall?

**VB: I'm not sure, I know who you mean, but I can't think of his name.**

[sound appears more distant]

**LS:** I wouldn't be without these by the way.

**VB: [inaudible]**

**LS:** This is the latest one?

**VB: Is it?**

**LS:** Aye. [rustling] As my wife would say, 'who on earth was that?' so I search for so and so. I think it was A.C. Marshall.

[slight distortions to sound]

**VB: It's invaluable that, for checking these things, isn't it.**

LS: Well this is the film stars in this one, that's the films in that one.

VB: Yeah.

LS: E.G. Marshall, that's right. E.G Marshall. *12 Angry Men*, page 37. The guy with the glasses, you know the rimless glasses.

VB: Yes.

LS: Henry Fonda is another one [inaudible] bunch of Westerns, he played Frank James in the Jessie James films.

VB: Yes.

LS: And um [pause] *On Golden Pond* of course. And um James Stewart of course [pause] and [inaudible].

[sound distorted – inaudible]

VB: That's amazing. He's not afraid to be laughed at either, is he?

LS: Oh no--

[tape disrupted – music; 2 seconds]

VB: -- it's just that coming in. Och, that's a shame. I can't even remember what--actually that must have been--

LS: So it's alright up to the Henry Fonda bit?

VB: It's alright up to when we were talking about Henry Fonda and-- I can't remember what we talked about after that specifically, erm--

LS: Now right, wait a minute, should I keep going?

VB: Had we talked about Garbo?

LS: Err I don't think so, but not the-- I think you mentioned Garbo.

VB: Yes.

LS: But I don't think we enumerated her films then.

VB: No, no.

LS: Have you got in on now?

VB: I've got it on now and that's umm--

LS: Right, I think we didn't get that bit about her sense of humour as in *Ninotchka*?

VB: Yes.

LS: We spoke about umm um what was it? *Queen Christina*.

VB: Yes.

LS: *Camille, Flesh and the Devil, Two-Faced Woman*, we didn't mention that, which was her last one, and umm did we mention Crawford after that?

VB: Yes, we were talking--

LS: What about the *Double Indemnity* in case we didn't get it?

VB: I got *Double Indemnity*.

LS: You think that came after Henry Fonda?

VB: Erm, I think that might have been before actually.

LS: Before. I think so, yes, aha.

VB: Yes.

LS: And um we went on about *Brief Encounter* then, again that was the--

VB: That's right, yes.

LS: I've said about *The Third Man* and *Fallen Idol* and all these things and umm what was there? Was it Bette Davis that I mentioned?

VB: Yes. You were saying-- yes.

LS: And [pause] *All About Eve*. Did that come after that bit?

VB: Yes.

LS: About the character parts. In case you didn't get that, you know, the stress that they put on the minor parts at this stage, you know like *Maltese Falcon* and *All About Eve, Double Indemnity*. They

were all-- even the big epics, *The Ten Commandments* you know, all the small parts were filled by stars more or less too. It wasn't just the question of blockbuster two names or something, you know. And erm *Titanic* was after that, we mentioned that.

**VB: That might have been there.**

**LS:** That might have been after you see. Building up the tension again. And erm what else did we-- we talked about Garland and Temple and all that.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** I said something about that I hadn't seen much of the silent films of the '20s.

**VB: That's right.**

**LS:** Very much. I'd like to see *Ben Hur* and erm *The Ten Commandments* then.

**VB: Yes.**

**LS:** The 1920 version, which was also DeMille, I think that would be missed, probably be lost in that too umm we never mentioned Al Jolson.

**VB: No, we didn't, no.**

**LS:** *The Jazz Singer*, which was the first talkie. Well, I didn't know-- I didn't see *The Jazz Singer*. What was the next one? *The Singing Fool*, was that the next one?

**VB: Um yes, I think that's right.**

**LS:** *The Singing Fool*, I think I saw that one then, aha. And umm *Al Jolson* in that, made him really, didn't it [pause] So who else? I have the feeling there's somebody we missed.

**VB: I know.**

**LS:** We've spoken about Cagney and Bogart, Bette Davis, and what about *Gone With the Wind*--oh, we mentioned that a few times of course.

**VB: Yeah. You mentioned Barbara Stanwyck as well.**

**LS:** Barbara Stanwyck, aha.

**VB: And how you would go to film particularly if there were people like--**

**LS:** Yes. Well when you got a trio like that, it was an absolute must you see. An absolute must.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** And erm I was just saying with a few-- I mean *Beau Geste* was a-- I keep coming back to that, I think 'cause I was looking at the book recently [laughs] was Gary Cooper, Ray Milland, Robert Preston, and yet it was Brian Donlevy that stole the film as the sergeant, as the tyrannical sergeant. You often got that in fact. The lesser star who suddenly popped out and hit you between the eyes and umm the big stars. And then *High Noon* of course.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** With Gary Cooper. There's a film that just sort of builds up the tension. Come in. Marilyn Monroe, was that in this?

**VB: That must have just been--**

[door opening - LS's wife JS comes in]

**LS:** Before the Henry Fonda we discussed. I think we've been going over all the stars in history.

**JS:** I've just had a wee rest tonight, I was a bit tired. I didn't realise what the time was.

**LS:** We were just saying the movies we watched on the TV, haven't we?

**JS:** Yes, aha.

**LS:** The oldies, the oldies we go back to.

**JS:** Aha, we just love these old films you know, yes. [pause 4 seconds] of course you've got Greta Garbo who--

**LS:** Ah, we've been over her.

**JS:** Ah yes. [laughs]

**LS:** We've been over Garbo too

**JS:** [laughs] You've probably been over all of them.

**LS:** Bette Davis, Crawford. Yeah we've been thinking of them all there. Oh I think there'll be somebody we missed. But I think you were wanting to find some that I would have gone to absolutely. That's true. I think these are ones I have mentioned, these are the ones I would go to and erm,

[sound of china clattering]

**LS:** Ray Milland of course. Ray Milland.

**JS:** Yes.

**LS:** *Lost Weekend*, you know these ones, *Dial M for Murder*.

**JS:** What's your favourites yourself, you know?

**VB:** Umm well I think actually pretty much the ones we were talking about. I like Garbo very much.

**JS and LS:** Yes, aha.

**VB:** I think umm I'm starting to like umm Ronnie Colman more.

**LS:** Yes.

**VB:** The more I watch him.

**LS:** Yes, that's right, aha.

**VB:** He's very good. And I like Robert Donat as well, I don't think we mentioned--

**LS:** Yes. There again Robert Donat we haven't mentioned [pause] That's right. There's so many--

**JS:** You'd never stop, really.

**LS:** *Goodbye, Mr Chips* again and all that.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LS:** *Lost Horizon*, *Lost Horizon*.

**VB:** Yes. *The Ghost Goes West* is one that I've seen quite recently.

**LS:** Yes.

**JS:** And what about childhood ones, like Shirley Temple?

**LS:** Yeah, we've been there. We haven't discussed the films exactly of course, 'cause they made so many. I was just saying Jane Withers too and Judy Garland was the only one that survived the childhood stardom you know. Err [pause] sorry, did you get the--

**VB:** No, I just take it black.



**LS:** Right, just keep going.

[inaudible exchange with Jean]

**LS:** You just chirp in. And maybe you'll come away with some things that we've forgotten about [sighs] [pause 4 seconds] *Jezebel* with Bette Davis.

**VB: Yeah.**

**LS:** Good one, good one. *Dark Victory* of course. She made a lot of good ones [pause] *All About Eve* we've spoken about, and George Sanders.

**JS:** You would-- I mean there's so many really, that I wouldn't really disturb yourself.

**LS:** She wanted to know the ones that I've been to myself, sort of more than once. It's like I told her about the time with my grandmother, *Victoria the Great*, three times in a row at the Paramount from 2 o'clock until 11 o'clock. [laughs]

**JS:** Mhm.

**LS:** And she had no idea of the time. I mean she had no idea, what sort of time it were whatsoever. It's 11 o'clock. 'Whaat!?' [laughs]

**JS:** Which part of [inaudible] do you actually come from?

**VB: Oh well its's a way back--**

**JS:** Oh I didn't, oh yes, I know.

**LS:** We're better to keep to films with the tape on.

**JS:** Oh sorry, is the tape on?

**LS:** Hmm. We keep to films um wait till the tape's not running. Now where were we? [pause] You say something that might trigger off something else. You know you say--

**VB: Errm--**

**LS:** Some of the oldies that you've seen or the ones--

**JS:** Do you like musicals or umm?

**LS:** See the ones I don't like now are sort of these Broadway Medley things, you know before the war.

**VB: Right.**

**LS:** They seemed great at the time and spectacular, but I couldn't watch them now with all these dancing girls round pools and all that you know. I couldn't you know, I couldn't watch that much now. Yet the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers are fine, okay. But the musicals got so stronger after the war, so much stronger you know. You know with Rodgers and Hammerstein, Rodgers and Hart, whoever it was, oh they made some good things. I think the musicals then as distinct from the medley films you know, were still good. But not as good as the ones post-war.

**JS:** What about thrillers? You always used to get this double bill--

**LS:** I know.

**JS:** [inaudible], a romantic.

**LS:** A Western, a Romance, or a Gangster

**JS:** Of course you'll have mentioned Humphrey Bogart?

**LS:** Oh yes. We've talked all about Humphrey there. I was petrified for a sight for his last one, which was *The Wagons Roll at Night*. No, umm the boxing one was his last one, umm *The Harder They Fall*.

**JS:** Mhm.

**LS:** *The Harder They Fall*, that was a top film [pause] I think one of his best ones was *The Desperate Hours*, I remember they escape and take over this house, with Fredric March, do you remember that?

**VB:** I've not seen that one.

**LS:** He and two other hoodlums have escaped from a prison and erm hold the whole house as a hostage, you know, the wife and the young son. And Fredric March is working with these [inaudible] by day and he know that nothing has happened at all to his wife and child. And he sort of behaves strangely--

[End of interview]