

Disclaimer: This interview was conducted in 1995 and concerns memories of 1930s life; as such there may be opinions expressed or words used that do not meet today's norms and expectations.

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\* Transcript ID: MR-95-210AT001

\* CCINTB Transcript ID: 95-210-17a-ag

\* Tapes: MR-95-210OT001

\* CCINTB Tape ID: T95-109

\* Length: 00:59:17

\* Needham Market, Suffolk, 11 October 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Leonard and Mickie (Minnie) Rivers

\* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Annette Kuhn

\* LR=Leonard Rivers, MR=Mickie Rivers, VB=Valentina Bold

\* Notes: First of two interviews with Leonard and Mickie Rivers; Sound Quality: Fair; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner; the original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection - please contact Lancaster University Library for details.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

**MR:** We went over the Erskine Bridge and went up to where we were going. We had a holiday up there and we went right up into the Highlands.

**VB:** Aw, lovely.

**MR:** Ice and snow. Then it started to pour and then some more'd come down and it refroze and it was just like lace.

**VB:** Oh.

**MR:** It was absolutely fantastic! That's never a microphone.

**VB:** It is. [laughs] I was just wondering if I could maybe clip it onto this paper or something.

**MR:** No, I wouldn't put that on the paper. Clip it to the cloth.

**VB:** Okay.

**MR:** Put it through the holes of the cloth.

**VB:** Right.

**MR:** That book will hold it.

**VB:** Just to keep it steady.

**MR:** Erm--

**VB:** I'll put it here so it picks up you both.

**MR:** Ah, Lenny.

**LR:** Mhm.

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** [laughs] There you go then. [laughs]

**VB:** Aye. So I think that's the best... probably the best time [laughs] to see Glasgow actually.

**MR:** Oh, it was lovely. Oh yes, I've been to Scotland in the summer. We both went on a holiday and we stayed in Edinburgh at the Ritz Hotel. It wasn't very Ritz. It was lovely inside.

**VB:** That's a coincidence. I actually stayed there on my honeymoon. So I know the one you mean.

**MR:** Did you!

**VB:** Yes.

**LR:** A-ah!

**MR:** It's lovely inside. The walls were all cream, and a delicate green and tartan carpets.

**VB:** It is nice.

**MR:** Weren't they?

**VB:** Yeah.

**MR:** But we were right on the top floor.

**VB:** Right.

**LR:** Eighty-four stairs I think it was.

**MR:** Eighty-seven. Eighty-seven from our room to the dining room.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MR:** And the food was atrocious!

**VB:** Was it? I didn't eat there, so...

**MR:** It was atrocious!

**VB:** Yeah.

**MR:** And erm, about nine o'clock at night, they wanted you to bed.

**VB:** Oh dear.

**MR:** You see, we were with elderly people. We were with retired people from the firm that my husband worked for, ICI. He worked there in the accounts office for 33 years.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** We none of us were big drinkers. We used to have a drink. But we didn't want to sit and get drunk and silly.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** Because we weren't buying their famous brew. [laughs] They even brought the brush and dustpan to sweep the hearth out.

**VB: Aw dear!**

**MR:** When the fire went out! [laughs] We didn't feel too welcome but erm, never mind.

**VB: Ah, that's a shame.**

**MR:** We saw some wonderful sights. Gorgeous scenery. But I loved it best in the winter. But I'd like to see it now. Now that the heather is all out.

**VB: It is nice at this time of year.**

**MR:** I would love to see it now. Then I could say, well I've been in late spring. I've been in the winter. I don't want to see it in the summer. That's when everybody goes. But I'd like to go. [laughs] One year. [laughs] One day.. we might. Anyway, you were talking about the cinema, Leonard.

**VB: That's right. Yes.**

**LR:** Yes, we done all that.

**MR:** You told the lady about how you went to the Palladium on Victor's crossbar.

**LR:** Yeah. And the film, of course it was silent and eh--

**MR:** [whispers] Couldn't read. [laughs]

**VB: 'Course. [laughs]**

**LR:** You know all the [figures about?] but they were ghostly figures.

**MR:** [laughs]

**LR:** Queer ones. But what it was, I don't now... I never remember. I only remember one, when eh, of course at that time, when they eh improved, they had what was known locally as the talkies. And they were films you see with the speech. With the speech. But eh, course, it was an occasion. They'd go to Ipswich. It was the Regent--

**VB: Mhm.**

**LR:** That had it. And eh [inaudible] I remember mother took me. I remember a bit about one of the films. And the main actor, his name was Jack Holt. H, O, L, T. And it was a film called *The Wrecker*. And he had got a steam engine which he bung under the railway line [inaudible]. He was known as the wrecker. But I haven't seen or heard of it since.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** [laughs]

**LR:** But eh, to go up to the Regent was an occasion... [inaudible] occasion. And er, that's what they called the talkies. [inaudible] mother took me in those days--

**VB: It must've... it must've been quite a journey actually.**

**MR:** It was. I mean it was two miles from where Leonard lived.

**LR:** Yeah. Walked. A couple a miles up the road this way.

**MR:** Walk down and catch the bus. And that used to be half an hour and five minutes in those days. On the bus. They do it in less now.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** And eh, and of course erm, [pause 2 seconds] Leonard was an only child otherwise he probably wouldn't have had that treat. Because it was all expensive. They were all agricultural workers, way out in the sticks. I mean Leonard's father was a wealthy man compared with a lot, because he was a gardener to a private house. And they got paid a bit more, didn't they? Well in fact, he was gardener to the rectory.

**VB: Ah.**

**MR:** He was there for fifty-two, fifty-two years before he retired. With one, with one boss all that long time.

**LR:** And he was the village erm--

**MR:** Yes, well, erm--

**LR:** Clerk.

**MR:** Clerk to the church.

**VB: Ah I see.**

**LR:** The church.

**MR:** But erm--

**LR:** He was also a gravedigger.

**VB: Ah! [laughs]**

**MR:** So you've got the picture.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MR:** The sort of life that Leonard lived. That was very very [laughs] rural, to say the least. But erm, I lived in town, you see. I lived in Ipswich all my life till I got married.

**VB: Right.**

**MR:** And erm, as I told you when I was talking to you on the radio, my mother was a religious person. And to go to the cinema was the most sinful thing you could do! But one day I heard her talking about the cinema, that she'd been. And actually saying! And it turned out that it was Al Jolson! And, I've been thinking about it you see. Knowing you were coming. And I remember erm, she couldn't go to see it, because of this religion. But one night I heard her and my auntie talking and mother said, "It was lovely." So mother had sneaked out!

**VB: A-ah! [laughs]**

**MR:** But the first time I went, I told you, that was when my uncle took me. And then I remembered that we had a school treat. When erm, Princess Marina as she was, married the Duke of Kent, all the schoolchildren in Ipswich were given the morning off, or a day off I think it was. I must've been six or seven. No more. And we told mother that we were having a treat. And we didn't know what it was, so we couldn't have got into trouble for going. But they took us to the pictures. And it was to this Regent cinema which was fairly new. And I remember they showed us two films. And one of them I remember to this day. It was erm, Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge. And he was in the Navy in this film. And I remember a little song he sang. And people still sing it [possibly referring to *The Camels are Coming*]. And I never ever thought anything would stay with me as long as that, you know. That little song was, "Who's been polishing the sun? Driving all the cares away, they must have known, just how I like it. Everything is coming my way."

**VB: Aw!**

**MR:** Then there was another film as well. All about a couple getting married. And how they played hide and seek. And the bride hid in the trunk. Apparently it was a legend. And they found her. She disappeared completely. And they found her skeleton, in her wedding dress, years and years later. [possibly referring to *The Mistletoe Bough*]. Well it wasn't a very suitable film for little children to see. But of course that was what was showing that week I suppose. And we were given a treat. Then the very next time I went was when my uncle took me. When I'd been ill. And I was staying with my gran and my auntie. And erm, they'd gone to Ipswich for the day. And I didn't want to go to Ipswich

'cause it was like going home. And I didn't like going home. I was happier away. 'Cause I weren't a very happy little girl. [pause 2 seconds] But anyway, Uncle Oliver took me to this football match in the afternoon. And that was wicked! It was worldly, you see, and it wasn't allowed in our house. And then to the cinema at night. And that was Claudette Colbert. In *Cleopatra*. The first time that was made. I remember her pencilled eyebrows! Oh dear! And her sleek black hair. And course it was black and white. But erm, we didn't know anything else, did we? We didn't see a coloured film. I think the first coloured film I saw was Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz*. And I was quite grown-up then. And then that was only part, part colour. Not the way that we recognise it now. But erm, when I grew up and started sneaking out with boys, you see. [bursts out laughing] Being very sinful. The first time I had a date with Leonard I think, I met Leonard and known him for about two weeks when he took me to the pictures. We went to see George Formby. In *Trouble Brewing*. That was a black-and-white film. Erm, before that I'd been one or twice with various boys. But eh, it wasn't part of my life until I was about sixteen, seventeen when I sort of learned that there was another way of life and you didn't have to be sinful to enjoy the things that were in the world. And I used to go to the pictures every Friday night with my friend. My friend and I are still friends. She lives in Manchester. But erm, we don't see each other. I've seen her once, in the last fifty-odd years.

**VB: Aw.**

**MR:** But erm, she came to see us, mhm, 'bout five or six years ago, didn't she, Phil [name of friend]?

**LR:** Mhm.

**MR:** And we used to go straight from the office on Friday nights. We used to go into Woolworth's. She'd buy a quarter [of a pound] of peanuts. Salted peanuts. And I'd buy a quarter of a pound of cheese biscuits. [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR:** That was our tea! We shared each, you see. Couldn't afford any more. We used to go to the pictures and pay sixpence to go in. And then gradually walked back a row or two you know. [laughs] So we ended up in the ninepennies!

**VB: Oh! [laughs]**



**MR:** [laughs] That was great. And that used to be our treat. And of course, the war came. And erm--

**LR:** Which war was that?

**MR:** That wasn't the Great World War. That was the Second World War. I'm not as old as that Leonard. And erm, there was no trolley buses. And we lived by Ipswich Airport. And that was a good two and a half, three miles from town centre. So we used to have to walk. We'd got our bicycles but you hadn't always got lights you see. And during the war you couldn't get batteries for bicycle lamps. But we never minded. We often used to go to work on the tram on Friday morning. Because that was our great day. We had to go to work Saturdays as well. Until one o'clock. But we didn't go to the cinema on Saturday nights 'cause everybody was there. And Friday nights, they used to be special. Because, at the Regent, they'd got a wonderful organ as well. And the organ used to provide a break in the film you see. Between the two films. Used to come out of the ground. And all the lights. And all the colours. Oh we used to have a wonderful singsong. And during the war, people used to go there, especially for that singsong on a Friday night 'cause it really lifted your spirits.

**VB:** It sounds lovely.

**MR:** Oh it was wonderful. It really was.

**LR:** They were Wurlitzers you see.

**MR:** Wurlitzer organs. Great times. But erm, it was an occasion, to go to the cinema. It was something that you dressed up for. Nowadays people don't dress up a lot for anything, do they? I mean, I'm an old-fashioned person. I still like to sort of feel that I'm neat and tidy. And every week my friend, well, not every week. But most weeks, my friend and I'd go out on a Tuesday when my husband goes to day centre. And we look along as we're going along the town. And you see the untidy young people. They earn tremendous money. And they look such slobs. I know it's the modern fashion. But I don't like it. I like to see, like you, with a decent pair of shoes on your feet. And neatly dressed. You don't have to be expensively dressed do you?

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** Just neat and tidy. But the way they walk. They roll as if they've been at sea [laughs] all their lives.

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR:** It's a different thing altogether.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** But, to go and see what's on at the cinema now, doesn't interest me at all.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**MR:** Possibly because I know I can't go.

**LR:** And we've got the box—

**MR:** And you see we've got the television.

**VB: Yes.**

**MR:** And I've got all my hobbies. Eh, and I'm quite happy to be at home. But I remember the lovely times that we had. Sometimes when the old films come on in the afternoons. On Channel 4 especially. They show a lot of old ones.

**LR:** Old black and white.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** You get things like Anna Neagle and Michael Wilding in *Spring in Park Lane*.

**LR:** Anna Neagle opened the Ritz Cinema.

**MR:** Yes she did.

**VB: Is that right?**

**MR:** Yes, she did.

**VB:** Yeah.

**LR:** Yeah.

**MR:** Yes she did. Saw her there doing it. 'Cause at the time I was working in a shop in the very road. There was a cleaner's there. And I used to work in the cleaners.

**VB:** That must've been quite an occasion.

**MR:** Yes. When she opened the Ritz Cinema. That's all gone. Eh, and that became the ABC later on.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** But, it was lovely because these places used to have a restaurant as well. You could go and get out... be taken out to tea by your boyfriend--

**LR:** Oh... Yes.

**MR:** Couldn't you?

**LR:** [inaudible]

**MR:** When we left... when we first got married and went to live in Maidstone, in Kent, my husband was in the Royal West Kent regiment. And he came back from Dunkirk. And eh, and we got married eh, after then. And he was going overseas again, with the reason that we got married 'cause we were quite young. And erm, [pause 2 seconds] he didn't go. Because he had to have an operation on his leg. Well he went, but not on that draft. And, Fridays when he had finished work at the depot, I used to meet him outside the barracks. And off we used to go. And he used to take me out to tea, oh! And that was lovely. Sometimes we'd go into the Lyons in Maidstone. They're all gone now. All Lyons Corner Houses have all gone. But when we used to go to the Granada cinema. They've got a lovely restaurant. And, we'd go and have a meal and then go through to the cinema. It was great! Eh, lovely. Something to look forward to all the week. But erm--

**VB:** 'Cause I was interested. The number of cinemas that you've mentioned in Ipswich, 'cause--

**MR:** There used to be a lot!

**LR:** Ooh, there was a lot.

**VB:** [inaudible] the Odeon--

**MR:** There used to be a lot. There used to be erm... [pause 3 seconds] There was the Regent! Which is now the Odeon, in Ipswich. If ever you get to look round while you're down here.

**LR:** [inaudible]

**MR:** The Regent became the Gaumont. And then became the Odeon. The actual erm, original Regent Cinema I think has been changed. Haven't been for years and years and years, so I wouldn't know. Last time I went to the pictures in Ipswich it was too see *Doctor Zhivago*! So that'll tell you! [laughs] Eh, but they've built a new complex there now so they've got several, small cinemas [referring to the Odeon Multiplex]. But this big one... [probably referring to the Regent] erm, and they used to hold concerts and everything in there. I think they've still kept that complex on. Not really sure. But that used to hold twelve hundred people. It was a beautiful cinema!

**VB:** What was it like inside?

**MR:** Oh-h. Plush and wonderful. You know, lovely. I was disillusioned. When I was fourteen. Because I went on stage there. I went for a talent contest. Just for a bit of fun. And I won it.

**VB:** Ah!

**MR:** And of course I had to go up, on the stage to do my little bit. Didn't I? And I was so disappointed. I thought that was gonna be as lovely, behind that screen, as it was in front. But it wasn't. It was dirty, and ropes and pulleys and wires and--

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** Electric light bulbs. I mean, probably totally different now, 'cause this is, how long ago? Sixty years. It's a long long time isn't it? And so many many changes. But there was as I say, the Regent. Erm, then there was the cinema in the Social Settlement hall at the bottom of Bishops Hill. There was Pooles Picture Palace. Which is up the side road of the British Home Stores in Ipswich. Erm, that later became the Arts Theatre in Ipswich. I used to go there for every production, 'cause I was interested in drama. I used to act a bit myself. And erm, [pause 2 seconds] then there was the Central Cinema down Princes Street. That was the fleapit of Ipswich that was. But they used to show good films the second time round. So that if you missed it, when it came to one of the big cinemas, you could go back months later and see it again. And then of course, they built the Ritz. In the Buttermarket. Followed very shortly by the Odeon, at the top of Lloyds Avenue. That is now used as a bingo hall. Then there was the Hippodrome. That used to be an old-time music hall. Which showed films during the war. When they couldn't get stage shows. And then reverted to variety, after the war, but that's all been destroyed now. All incorporated in some [laughs] wonderful road scheme, you know. Which I don't see [laughs] 'cause I'm a pedestrian, not a car owner. [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** But, we were very well catered for in Ipswich, for cinemas.

**VB:** Mhm.

**LR:** [overtalking] [inaudible]

**MR:** Stowmarket is only a small town and that had two.

**LR:** We used to go up in the gods as we called it, [for the?] performance... that was way up--

**MR:** That was the Hippodrome. That was the Hippodrome.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** And it was a theatre you see. So naturally, you went up and you... and the tiers looked down didn't they? There were about four, four galleries round it. And you got up there for fourpence and you sat on [laughs] wooden seats. And you leaned forward [laughs] and you felt you were falling! [laughs]

**VB:** Did any of the cinemas round here have these bench seats? I've heard about.

**MR:** Up in the gods.

**VB:** Right.

**MR:** In the Hippodrome. But eh, all the rest of them were individual, you know, pop-ups.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** I can't tell you about Pooles, because I never ever went there. Or the Social Settlement cinema.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** I never went in that. But, the Central Cinema, down in Princes Street, that had individual seats. 'Cause, there's a town called Beccles in Suffolk. My husband had relatives there. And when we got engaged, and he was home on leave from France--in 1940 this was, when we got engaged--we went off to see Auntie Mary and Uncle Jim and cousin Joyce. And cousin Joyce was going with her boyfriend to the cinema that night. And as my husband had not been prepared for the fact that we could get to Beccles but couldn't get back by British Rail, there was thick snow and ice everywhere, being February. We decided we'd stay the night and eh, Auntie Mary got room to put us up. Even though I had to double up with his cousin Joyce and I was full of German measles at the time--

**VB:** Aw.

**MR:** So I told Leonard that was snow rash cause I didn't want to spoil [laughs] his leave!

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** And off we go to Beccles for the cinema [probably referring to Cinema, Beccles]. And there they had double seats! On the back--

**LR:** Double seats at the back!

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR:** On the back row! Specially for people who just got engaged! [laughs]

**VB: [laughs] Ah, I see!**

**MR:** That was lovely! [laughs] But I didn't know that luxury anywhere in Ipswich. Never seen it anywhere else.

**LR:** No, I've never seen anything like that.

**MR:** Yeah it was good.

**LR:** Double seats.

**MR:** But that was great. Cinema was very much part of our life.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** I mean then, if you had a radio in your home, you were considered very fortunate.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** And 'course, television didn't come out erm, for the majority of people until after the war did it? And we didn't have one till our last child was five. And now our last baby is now forty-two! So!  
[laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR:** We've had television for a long long time.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** Wouldn't like to be without it, but it's a mixed blessing I think. It can be a spoiler.

**VB: Mhm. It's a different thing watching a film on television.**

**MR:** That's right. That's right. Going to the cinema was something to get ready for. Now you just flop, and it can take your life away. Doesn't in this house. We won't let it. But, Leonard is very glad of it because, you can see, he's quite limited. But erm, I get on with my hobbies as long as I can. I spend a lot of time on that.

**VB: Ah. Your fish are lovely actually. I just noticed that.**

**MR:** Yes, yes, well, there's a sad story about them actually. This one likes to have some dinner...  
[pause 2 seconds]

**VB: 'Cause I was interested when you were talking about sort of dressing up to go to the cinema.**

**MR:** Oh yes!

**LR:** Mhmm!

**MR:** Ye-es.

**VB: An occasion.**

**LR:** Oh indeed. It was a... it was an evening out. Or afternoon out. You see you went to the cinema and then went down for the short film, what they call a main film today. And then there was a break. And in the break they had eh, stage acts. And eh, the organ came up out the floor and played. Along the screen were the words.

**MR:** Yeah, it was lovely. Lovely.

**LR:** Yes. You would read the words. And a fellow used to come up and say, he was [at] the Ritz. His name was Andres. That wasn't his name.

**MR:** No, his name was Charles Smart.

**VB: [laughs]**



**MR:** [laughs]

**LR:** He went to eh, somewhere in the United States. Farmer, he was. Took the farming out to the USA. And eh, Wurlitzers are still about you know. We still have them about here.

**VB: Mhm.**

**LR:** Erm... places you'd never think would have one. [pause 3 seconds] They're well hidden up.

**VB: Mhm.**

**LR:** But they're there. And people play them.

**VB: Mhm!**

**LR:** Now I'll tell you where, where there's a good one. In a place called Thursford. [You'd never know?] [inaudible].

**MR:** Oh, that'd be an experience.

**LR:** An experience. [inaudible]

**MR:** 'Bout 65 miles from here.

**VB: Right.**

**LR:** And now, [there's how we started out?]. The steam engines.

**VB: Oh!**

**LR:** And they've got all sorts of steam engines in there. [inaudible] remember steam. But then I suppose they realised there was more to life than that. [inaudible] And now, you go to a show, you don't know where to look. And so far across it.

**MR:** It's a great big hangar. An aircraft hangar.

**LR:** Aircraft hangar, yeah.

**VB: It sounds amazing.**

**LR:** [inaudible] inside of it. And the shows that go on there are terrific! [pause 3 seconds] As I say, you need to go on an organised trip.

**MR:** Well, erm, the connection between that and the cinema, you see, this old chap, he started to collect these steam organs--

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** And that was what he had. Steam organs. And course, they're wonderful sounds, aren't they? On their own. And then you got this big Wurlitzer, that came from the big cinema. And they usually had the tower, [pause 2 seconds] eh, organ player from Blackpool Tower, down for the season at Christmas. And they put on these special Christmas concerts. During the year, for a set number of weeks, I think it's only January and February that they close, erm, they'll have erm, various organists playing. They do evening concerts during the summer. And Sunday concerts during the rest of the time. But at Christmas it's fantastic. Aw, it's a wonderful wonderful tonic. I've been twice. They have choirs. They have... last year it was the Grenadier Guards.

**VB: Sounds great.**

**MR:** Oh! And the show! You just don't know where to look.

**LR:** You couldn't believe it.

**MR:** There's a big roundabout going, you know, the carousel. And you see all the little ballet dancers on there. The ballet dancers do wonderful things! They really do. And all the lighting effects.

**VB: Ah.**

**MR:** All the lighting effects.

**LR:** [overtalking] [mentions something about dovecots]

**MR:** It's fabulous. It really is.

**LR:** And the doves come out and fly all round!

**VB:** Ah!

**MR:** You just don't know where to look.

**LR:** You don't know where to look.

**MR:** Don't know where to look. It's a three-hour show. It costs you about fifteen, sixteen pounds to get in. But it's well worth every penny.

**VB:** For something like that.

**MR:** That's right. And every year's show's different. It's a Christmas-- [tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

[tape starts mid conversation]

**MR:** Christmas stockings. That was the fireplace. And there was two Christmas stockings hanging, either side. And in the top of each Christmas stocking was Pierrot. [pause 2 seconds] Right. And his little lady the other side. And there's a flash of smoke! And the fireplace is ascending but they were two ballet dancers, exactly like the ones that were in the... Dressed exactly the same as the ones that were in the Christmas stocking. And then of course, Father Christmas appeared. He'd been in the chimney as well, hadn't he? That was lovely. And then of course, the organ starts to play. And the speciality acts. They had a Scottish piper and all the mists rise. And you're looking through the window of a house in the background. And the lighting is changed all the time. From moonlight. To starlight. Snow falling. Then you see dawn breaking. As Father Christmas disappears. Aw, it was fabulous. It really was. And the first year, when Leonard went, the King Singers were there. So they

have good class. It's not cheap, tatty entertainment. It's really, really wonderful, [pause 2 seconds] to watch.

**VB: It sounds amazing.**

**MR:** But you see, a lot of these cinema organs, when the cinemas were upgraded, made smaller, about five theatres don't they now--?

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** Instead of one big one. All showing these different films. Which is fine. Because so many people got different tastes. And let's face it. Towns have grown. I mean, they have to cater for all these tastes, don't they?

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** There's no good putting one film on, to be shown three times a day for a week 'cause they wouldn't get the houses full.

**VB: I was trying to think, when you were telling me about the show, erm, the thing that came to mind was some of these spectacular musicals.**

**MR:** Oh they were wonderful.

**VB: Some of the these [Busby] Berkeley sort of, *42nd Street*.**

**MR:** Aw yes!

**VB: Was that something that you enjoyed in films as well as--**

**MR:** Well, not so much *42nd Street*. But we used... I used to. I don't know about Leonard. But I used to like the romantic ones you see. All the, all the lovely gowns and the wonderful dancing. Because we both used to dance.

**VB: Ah.**

**MR:** And that was lovely. To see all these wonderful dancing. Fred Astaire! Ginger Rogers!

**VB:** I brought along some stills actually--

**MR:** Have you! Oh lovely.

**VB:** I thought you might like. Here's one from erm, from *Top Hat*.

**MR:** Yes, I remember that! [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs] Were they favourites of yours?

**MR:** Yes. Yes, great favourites, yeah. I still play some of the music sometimes.

**VB:** Right.

**LR:** Mhmm.

**MR:** [laughs] 'Cause I've got a little organ in there. And it makes a nice noise. [laughs]

**LR:** Robert Walford's dad played the organ.

**MR:** [sings] "I'm, putting on the top hat". [laughs] Lovely! [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs] So the music, were there other musical stars that you liked?

**MR:** Erm, well Ginger and Fred, nobody touched them did they? But we used to like to see Cyd Charisse dancing. Her lovely long legs! [laughs].

**VB:** Ah.

**MR:** Yeah. Ah.

**VB:** That's erm, Joan Crawford actually.

**MR:** Yeah. Yeah.

**VB:** Was she someone that you--

**MR:** Yeah. Well Joan Crawford was always a hard actress but she used to play some terrific dramatic roles, didn't she?

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** But, I read the book, that her daughter wrote, and I didn't know about her at the time. I never liked her very much 'cause I didn't like her type of jawline.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** She always seemed hard. And she really was, wasn't she?

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** She was a hard person.

**VB:** It seems like it.

**MR:** But eh, well according to the book she was.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** Her daughter wrote about her life. [laughs]

**VB:** These are sort of just ones I picked up.

**LR:** Mhmm.

**MR:** That's Edward G. Robinson. [laughs]

**LR:** Edward G.

**VB:** Mhm. Did you like these sort of gangster films?

**MR:** Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Remember him in erm, tch!

**LR:** [inaudible]

**MR:** No. Oh, 'Orchid', no, was it? 'The Orchid Man' or *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* or something like that he was in. Yes, he was always a sleazy character wasn't he? Got that look. [laughs]

**VB:** Did you like the sort of Cagney, That type of movie?

**MR:** No, I didn't like that as much. No. Didn't like the gangstery ones. I liked erm, Dulcie Gray and Michael Denison. I used to like to see them act. Erm... [pause 2 seconds] Who else did we go for? Oh, Irene Dunne. And Charles Boyer! Waaa! [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** Oh yes. That was lovely! [laughs]

**VB:** Ah.

**MR:** All comes flooding back when you start to think about it.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MR:** Do you remember Charles Boyer, Leonard?

**LR:** Ye-es!

**MR:** My dahling! [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs] Who else have I got here? Erm, there's eh, from a magazine that one I think.

**MR:** *Lost Horizon*, I remember that.

**VB:** Ah!

**MR:** Yes. Ruritania was the fabulous land. I even looked on the map for it. [laughs] I was about fifteen!

**VB:** Do you like sort of Ronald Colman?

**MR:** Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

**LR:** Deanna Durbin.

**MR:** Oh yes. He liked her.

**LR:** Yeah. She lives in France doesn't she?

**VB:** Think that's right. Yes.

**MR:** That's right, yes. She retired from singing didn't she?

**LR:** Yes.

**MR:** Yes, she had a fantastic voice.

**VB:** Was that one of your favourite stars, Deanna Durbin?

**LR:** Yeah, oh yes.

**MR:** Yes, he liked Deanna.

**LR:** She was the best singer I've ever heard.

**VB:** Mm.



**MR:** Well she had a fantastic voice for a girl so young. 'Cause she finished erm, when she was about eighteen or nineteen didn't she?

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** She didn't make any films after that.

**VB: I just saw *Three Smart Girls* myself--**

**MR:** Aw yes.

**VB: For the first time a couple of weeks ago.**

**MR:** What do you think of that?

**VB: Ah, it's really wonderful.**

**MR:** Voice. Mhm. You knew what she was gonna sing. She was gonna sing erm, 'Il Bacio' or erm, erm 'Waltzing in the Clouds'. And, that type of music.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** But she was great. Kathryn Grayson was another one I used to like. She got a marvellous singing voice. I used to imagine it was me. [laughs]

**VB: Ah! That's interesting. I mean when you were watching the films, were you thinking of yourself?**

**MR:** Oh yes! Yes! You were there! You were there! When Charles Boyer was kissing and holding somebody else, That was me out there. That was me on that screen.

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR:** I used to live it. But erm, another one I used to like, erm, was George Brent. And I remember, I mean I got very varied taste, very wide taste really. Erm, I remember seeing him with Bette Davis in

*Dark Victory*. Aw and I sobbed buckets. And I went back the next night and sobbed again. I think my friend and I went every night that week to see that same film over and over again. And I'd watch it now. I've seen it on television. And I'd watch it again. I don't know why, but, it seemed to be made just to interest me. To hold me. In later years, I nearly lived it again, because I lost my sister like that. [pause 2 seconds] So, that seemed funny that that should be then. And that when she was ill, that just seemed as if that was closing up. Closing that book up, you know. But oh! That was fantastic. The acting was wonderful. Erm, when you're transported away by something [laughs] that's just a picture up there. You've gotta be with it haven't you? You can't just say, well, I'm watching it. You're not. You're living it. 'S like when I get in a book, I'm in a book. That's me there. [laughs] You feel it. [laughs]

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** So there we go. Funny old people aren't we? [laughs]

**VB: Not at all. [laughs] It's very interesting what you're saying, you know, about films grabbing you really.**

**MR:** Well it did. I mean, when you're watching television, you're at home. You're not taken anywhere. Are you? You're in familiar surroundings but you go to a theatre and because you're going to a theatre, to watch a film, like as I said, you got yourself dressed up. In a decent fashion. And off you went. And you walked in there. And the carpets used to bounce. We had carpets at home. But we didn't used to have that super underlay that they seemed to have. And the newer cinemas, particularly. I mean, when you walked in the Ritz, that's like walking on the carpets in Buckingham Palace! And I've been there! [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR:** I went with my son.

**VB: Ah!**

**MR:** When he was eighteen. He's fifty next year. And he got his Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award and I was elected to go with him to watch the presentation. And there you bounced on the carpets. And it used to be just the same. To me, in the cinema. Because homes those days, weren't all carpeted.

We had linoleum on the floors and rugs didn't we? Some people didn't even have that! So it was all luxury you see. Transported you to another world. Whereas now, we've all got nice comfortable homes. Well, those of us who are fortunate enough to have a home. There's a lot of people in the world who haven't got one. But, in this country, most of us are fairly comfortable aren't we? There are a few poor people but, quite often that's their own fault through misuse of what they've had isn't it?

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** Drugs and drink and things like that. That consume all your life. But you see, we sit back in an armchair and watch a film on the television. That's not the same as making the effort to get up and go! And choose to be there because you want to see that particular show.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** It's not quite the same is it?

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** [laughs]

**VB: Not at all. I agree with you there.**

**MR:** It used to be lovely.

**VB: I was wondering actually if I could ask, if you would mind if I asked one or two questions about yourselves. Just so that I'm sure I've got everything.**

**MR:** Mhm. Oh yes.

**VB: Right. I know I asked you one or two on the phone but, erm, again nothing too--**

**MR:** [laughs]

**VB: Over-personal [laughs] or anything. Erm, the one thing I wanted to check for both of you was that I had your place of birth right. Where you were born. Erm, was it Ipswich?**

**MR:** I was born in Ipswich.

**VB: Right.**

**MR:** My husband was born at Creeting St Mary's.

**LM:** Creeting St Mary's.

**VB: Could you spell that for me please?**

**MR:** Creeting. C, R, double E, T, I, N, G, S, T. Mary.

**VB: Right. That's great.**

**MR:** That's erm, that would be near Ipswich you see.

**VB: Okay. That's great.**

**LM:** Not a postal address.

**MR:** No. It's not a postal address.

**VB: Aye. And I know that your father [to LR] was a gardener.**

**MR:** That's right.

**VB: And lots of other things as well.**

**MR:** That's right.

**VB: Could I ask what your father did?**

**MR:** My father was just a general labourer.

**VB: Right.**

**MR:** He had no trade.

**VB: That's great. And Did either of your mother--**

**MR:** Use the table – that'll be easier for you.

**VB: That's a good idea. Erm... did either of your mothers work?**

**MR:** No.

**LR:** Yeah!

**MR:** Well Leonard's mother,

**LR:** Mine did.

**MR:** Kept a Post Office.

**VB: Ah, I see!**

**MR:** [laughs] Little village Post Office.

**LR:** Sub post office they call it don't they?

**MR:** Mine didn't.

**VB: Right.**

**MR:** [laughs]

**VB: And you were saying you had a few brothers and sisters did you?**

**MR:** Leonard had none.

**VB: Right.**

**MR:** He was an only child. I had two brothers and two sisters.

**VB: That's great.**

**LR:** They had a look at me and said, "No more!"

**MR:** [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** "What have we done!" [laughs]

**VB:** I'm sure that's not true. [laughs]

**MR:** [laughs]

**VB:** You were probably so good that [laughs] that they didn't want to. [laughs]

**MR:** [laughing]

**VB:** Erm, and can I ask how old you were when you left school?

**MR:** We were both fourteen.

**VB: Fourteen.**

**MR:** I had to be taken away from the school 'cause I needed a new school outfit. 'Cause I went to grammar school in Ipswich.

**VB: Ah.**

**MR:** And my mother couldn't afford to keep me there any more. It was the hard thirties.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MR:** I mean I left school in '36. And, as you see, my dad was a labourer.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** And that often meant that he got no work.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** And she just couldn't do it.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** So I had to go out to work and earn seven and sixpence a week! My first office job was. [laughs]

**VB: I'm sure, I'm sure that was appreciated.**

**MR:** Well, I had no choice.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MR:** I didn't want to leave school. I loved school.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MR:** I would love to have carried on with it. But, it just wasn't possible.

**VB: Mhm.**

[pause 2 seconds]

**MR:** Never mind. I've made quite a good mark in the world I think. [laughs]

**VB:** Yeah. I think so.

**MR:** I had a good job.

**LR:** I left fourteen. That was in '34. And we had a gent's outfitters down here. Which was a [barn?], a big shop in Stowmarket.

**VB:** Ah I see. Yeah.

**LR:** Big shop in Stowmarket. I was apprentice down there. Until I found out, you did your apprenticeship and you're [signals] out!

**MR:** [chuckles]

**LR:** After your apprenticeship you had to find your own way.

**VB:** Mhm.

[pause 3 seconds]

**MR:** There we go.

**LR:** That's how it was.

**VB:** Mhm.

**LR:** So, guess who got out! At the first opportunity.

[pause 5 seconds]

**LR:** Then I went various places. I went in the Army in '37.

**VB:** I see. Yeah. [pause 2 seconds] And then you worked with ICI most--



**LR:** When I came back.

**VB: Recently.**

**MR:** When he came out of the Forces.

**LR:** It was forty--

**MR:** '45 you started work. Because he was in [inaudible]--

**VB: Mhm. That's great. And have you always lived around this area?**

**MR:** Yes. Ever since we've been married, we've lived within two hundred yards of where we are now.

**VB: A-ah!**

**MR:** [laughs]

**VB: [laughs] That's great. And can I ask what year you were married in? Well you told me actually I think. Erm--**

**MR:** Sorry?

**VB: The year you were married in.**

**MR:** 1941.

**VB: That's great. And is it just the one child that you have?**

**MR:** No. We've got four. Two sons, two daughters.

**VB: Two sons, two daughters.**

**MR:** Our eldest daughter is manager of BNA [British Nursing Association] in Maidstone.

**VB: Ah!**

**MR:** And our son is an insurance assessor. The eldest son. The next one drives an underground train. And the youngest one plays in... [tape cuts out] [recording recommences]

**VB: That's interesting. They've all gone into different sort of things.**

**MR:** That's right. They're all different people aren't they?

**VB: Yeah.**

**MR:** Yes.

**VB: Erm, and can I ask if you have any strong political views or...?**

**LR:** No.

**VB: Member of a party or anything like that?**

**MR:** No, no, no. We listen to them all. And form our own opinions.

**LR:** [inaudible] politics.

**VB: That's great. And can I ask what religions you were raised in? Was it Church of England?**

**MR:** Well, Leonard was Church of England.

**LR:** I am.

**MR:** I was brought up with the Salvation Army. But after I erm, drifted away from that strict regime--

**VB: Uhuh.**

**MR:** And it was. To live up to the expectations, it was very strict. But I became a member of the Church of England as well.

**VB: Ah, I see.**

**MR:** We don't attend now.

**VB: Right. Of course, that explains why your mother was so hostile to the cinema.**

**MR:** That's right. That's right.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MR:** But erm, the training that I had, in that life. I think that's influenced my life a lot. [pause 2 seconds] I still try to do what I can for everybody.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** People have said to me, "I'm surprised you still look after your husband." I said, "I married him. I loved him then, I still do." Differently. It's not the same sort of love. Bubbles still go up and down my spine! [laughs] But I don't say, oh oh oh oh! [growls] Any more. I go, "Ah, ah, I love you." And that's deeper. And nicer.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** And that happens. With a lot a people. We were discussing it the other day, about love and marriage and all the rest of it. And it changes.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** It changes with the years. And it's worth it. There has to be some compensation for getting old. And that deep rich relationship, that's still there. And as long as I can I shall look after him. [laughs] Even though we don't go to the pictures any more. We play the great lovers sometimes. We have a little cuddle. [laughs]

**LR:** Mhm.

**VB:** [laughs] It was interesting when you were telling me about, erm, you know, going and sitting in the double seat.

**MR:** Oh yes! [laughs] Oh yes.

**LR:** Mhm, yes.

**VB:** Did you go a lot to the cinema when you were courting?

**MR:** No. We didn't have a very long courtship did we? Well we did. But we weren't together. I'd only known Leonard two weeks and he asked me to marry him. And I was sixteen. And I said, "One day." But you see, he knew because he was in, what they call the supplementary reserve. They don't have it now. He was on the Army reserve list. Erm, he knew that there was troubles brewing, and he would have to go.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MR:** I knew there was troubles brewing. Because I belonged to the St John Ambulance and we were being taught emergency first aid. But I never put the two together. I was sixteen! I wasn't serious was I? And I said to him, "Yes, one day I will." And of course, few weeks later he found himself out in France didn't he? And he came home from France on leave. And he bought me an engagement ring. And I said, "Yes, I'll marry you." And that was my promise. That was my commitment. And I'm still tied to it! [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** But, you see, when he came home on leave, we went to the pictures. But leaves weren't very frequent. 'Cause he went overseas again after he came home from Dunkirk. He left me a present then. [pause 2 seconds] And she was two when he came home. [laughs]

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** So, I didn't go the pictures that time.

**VB: No.**

**MR:** But, after he got home and he found I'd not been anywhere. I was stuck up at the little village of Creting with his parents. And I never used to go out, because I got a child. But during that time he didn't know I'd been to work. And I went to work in the local Food Office. Used to be the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food during the war. There was all the ration books to be prepared and everything else. And all the amount of meat to be allocated to butchers--

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** For the number of registered persons they'd got. That was my job. And then of course I knew he was coming back from overseas again, so I'd to pack up. Because he was not really pleased when I told him I'd been to work. Until I took him by the hand, and took him into the box room, and showed him all the boxes I've got. And the labels outside, what was in the boxes. Showed him my Post Office book. And how much I'd saved. And we'd done all right, thank you very much! We'd got a little bit to start with.

**LR:** Fall back on—

**MR:** That was nice. And eh, and 'course I didn't go to work any more--

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** Until my youngest child was nine. Then I went out part-time. Shook like a leaf in front of the typewriter. I hadn't touched one [laughs] for a lot of years! But, I ended up with a very good job. So it didn't matter that I left school at fourteen, I got there in the end.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MR:** Yeah. I worked full-time until just before I was sixty. And I could see Leonard was beginning to need me. He'd been retired for four years--

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** When I packed up work. He finished work when he was fifty-seven/ fifty-eight. And we thought we were gonna do wonderful things together. We got all sorts of plans that we were gonna do but, fate decreed otherwise. So, we've had to accept what we've got. But we're all right. Leonard used to look after the garden and everything else. Now it's my job. [laughs] He used to do the decorating, now it's my job. [laughs]

**VB: You've got a lovely home.**

**MR:** [laughs]

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

**MR:** We've put a lot a work in it.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** Do things to make it nice. Mhm. That picture I sewed.

**VB: That's beautiful. It really is. I was admiring that one.**

**MR:** That was... my daughter did that.

**VB: Ah! That's lovely.**

**MR:** That was for our golden wedding.

**VB: Aw!**

**MR:** Which we had four-and-a-half years ago. That one over there I did.

**VB: Oh That's beautiful.**

**MR:** And the flower arrangement one my eldest daughter did. Some friends that have been here this morning, they are pictures of pictures that he did.

**VB: Ah! Great.**

**LR:** He was a [inaudible] artist—

**VB: You can tell! That's great!**

**MR:** Fantastic! And that was a picture that my daughter took. Erm, I was going to Greece in the Spring with her and her husband. [pause 3 seconds] But erm, Leonard wasn't very well, and I decided that that wouldn't be very wise to go. If I was needed in a hurry, I couldn't get home. So I thought, well the best thing to do, is stay home. And the money I'd saved up to go on my holiday, I bought some new cupboards for my kitchen. So I've still got them. And I've got the picture of where I would've been!

**VB: Ah! [laughs]**

**MR:** That was in the morning mists. Up in the mountains.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** And when she went back, two months later for another fortnight... [laughs] 'Cause she's a lucky girl. That's the eldest one, the one's who's in BNA. Her husband's a Senior Lecturer in Maidstone Technical College. When she went back, all the flowers on the mountain tops there. They'd all dried up.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** But the week that I should've gone, or the week before I should've gone on holiday, I came up with four numbers on the lottery.

**VB: Oh! [laughs]**

**MR:** So the money I got, I gave to her to bring me that.

**VB: Aw, that's beautiful.**

**MR:** So I've got a souvenir--

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** As well as my kitchen! [laughs]

**VB: Oh well! [laughs]**

**MR:** So that's what we did.

**VB: Ah!**

**MR:** That's our eldest daughter.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** I'll show you some of the things I do shall I?

**VB: Yes.**

**MR:** You're not still recording are you?

**VB: Erm, I've still got it on but I'll just put it up here. It's no problem.**

**MR:** I'll get some of the things I do.

**VB: Thanks.**

[pause 12 seconds]

**MR:** This is the bits I'm doing for Christmas. [pause 3 seconds] Makes [nice?] presents [inaudible].

**VB: That's beautiful! How lovely.**

**MR:** Well you see, we have two carers in every morning and every night. To erm, help look after Leonard. They get him up. And, want to give them a little something for Christmas. But we keep can't



going, 'cause we got twelve grandchildren, two great-grandchildren. Before we think of our children. And our children's other halves. There's a lot a presents to think about.

**VB: Certainly is.**

**MR:** So I thought, well, I'll make several tray cloths and eh, they're all different. And I thought, well, I'll number them when I pack them. Then I'll give them all a number. Tell them to draw a number.

**VB: Aw, lovely idea!**

**MR:** And then they can choose. Then they can't say, well, I don't like the one she give me! She don't like me as much as... [inaudible]

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR:** I've got some more to do. I've only really done four.

**VB: It's beautiful. It really is.**

**MR:** [laughs] It's an odd little piece of material I got off the market. In Ipswich.

**VB: It's lovely.**

**MR:** All various things I've been doing lately. You see I don't waste my time.

**VB: Far from it! [laughs] I do a little bit of embroidery myself but nothing as fine as this.**

**MR:** Well this is machine. This is machine you see. I used to embroider by hand but because I'm messed up with arthritis--

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** Sometimes I have a job to hold a pin. When I can't do it, I don't do it. [speaking faintly; inaudible]. [pause 5 seconds]

**VB: They're just - they really are lovely!**

**MR:** Little odd pieces of material you can all sorts of things with. Giving you ideas there, am I?

**VB: You are! [laughs]**

**MR:** [laughs]

**VB: I like the idea of... I don't know as many people as you do. Or have as many relatives. But it's a lovely idea that.**

**MR:** Well I can do it all the year can't I?

**VB: Yeah.**

**MR:** I've done Christmas presents for people and then [laughing] given them to them in the Summer!  
[laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR:** 'Cause I couldn't keep it any longer!

**VB: Ah!**

**MR:** [laughs] It gives me a lot of pleasure to give. [pause 3 seconds] A little hostess apron.

**VB: Aw!**

**MR:** Made it out of strips. And I've got some strips of material for the width of it. I gave one to a friend for a birthday present the other day.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR:** And I put the lace in and cut the material all out the back. [laughs] Thrilled to bits with that. Here's one.

**VB: That's lovely.**

**MR: I've never done a hem as small as that before.**

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

**MR: [inaudible]**

**VB: It's almost worth entertaining to wear it! [laughs]**

**MR: Well I made myself the one I gave away.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**MR: I thought, oh no. Give it away. Somebody'll appreciate it. Here's a tablecloth.**

**VB: That's gorgeous.**

[pause 4 seconds]

**VB: It's all so beautifully finished. I really like that.**

**MR: [laughs]**

**VB: It's lovely.**

**MR: That was a picture of a sheep.**

**VB: [laughs]**

**MR: [laughs]**

**VB: Well, you never know now. Ah. Is that a hobby you've been doing all your life?**

**MR:** Well I always did sew.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** Erm, but erm, I've got a knitting machine in there. And when I left work I needed something to keep my brain active. Because I had to use it in my working life. And erm, I bought the knitting machine for that. Bought it one October, and by Christmas I'd made [laughs] twenty-seven garments!

**VB:** [laughs]

**MR:** But erm, there comes a time when they don't want grandma's woollies any more.

**VB:** Aw!

**MR:** Fashions change, don't they?

**VB:** They do. Yes.

**MR:** So eh, anyway, I need to have a hobby. I wouldn't be without. And erm, [pause 2 seconds] my husband bought me that super sewing machine about two-and-a-half years ago.

**VB:** Aw, wonderful.

**MR:** I'd got a nice one. And I traded it in and they gave me two hundred pounds. And he bought me that one. And it used to be through in the room.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MR:** But then, I'd have to stop sometimes. And so I thought, well... [tape cuts out]

[End of interview]