

Disclaimer: This interview was conducted in 1996 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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* Harrow, Middlesex, 30 April 1996: Valentina Bold interviews Nancy Carrington and Nancy Prudhoe

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/Standardised by Richard Rushton and Annette Kuhn

* NC=Nancy Carrington, NP=Nancy Prudhoe, GP=Nicholas [Nancy Prudhoe's grandson],

VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: Fourth interview of four with Nancy Carrington; Sound Quality: Good

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction; year incorrectly given as 1995]

VB: [NC showing VB her drawings of stars; inaudible].

NC: Yes, she's erm, I've got an idea she just died. I'm not sure. But she was a great star, in my time. She was lovely.

VB: Yeah. 'Come give me a push'. Was she a singer?

NC: Erm?

VB: Was she a singer?

NC: No, I think she was an actress.

VB: She was an actress, yeah. Jane Carr.

NC: Jane Carr. [pause 2 seconds] I did these mostly in Africa.

VB: Yep. These, these are lovely. Do you just, just do them from memory, or--

NC: No, no, I've copied them.

VB: Yep. [pause 3 seconds] These are really lovely.

NC: [inaudible] just got to draw them, you know.

VB: Erm, shoeshine boy. [pause 2 seconds]

NC: And that's Nyanga. This is where my son-in-law used to go fishing. He used to stand there--

VB: Ahhh. Yep.

NC: When we had a lodge there, you know.

VB: Yep. It looks beautiful. It really does.

NC: I don't know what's on the other side of that. Oh yeah.

VB: Pamela Anderson and Clint Eastwood. [pause 3 seconds] Texas Dan[?] [laughs]

NC: Yeah.

VB: Who, who's this?

NC: I don't know who that one was.

VB: I like, I like that.

NC: Oh--

VB: You've got the character, I think.

NC: Oh yes. I showed them to an artist out there, she's a Lady, a titled Lady.

VB: Yep.

NC: And she's, I was hoping she would find fault with them and tell me my problem, you know, but she didn't. She said I've got wonderful expression.

VB: Yes.

NC: And she liked my drawings. And she never said anything nasty about them, you know. And I was hoping she would really.

VB: [laughs] Ahh. [pause 2 seconds] Ready for the ball. That's lovely as well.

NC: [laughs] A bird on his head!

VB: Oh. [pause 4 seconds] Ahh, that's lovely too [the pets?].

NC: Yes. She's got some on her shoulder I think there, a parrot--

VB: Yeah.

NC: And a cat.

VB: Oh, and Charlie Chaplin. [laughs]

NC: Yeh. Charlie Chaplin.

VB: That's a beauty. I like the eyes in that, you've got the--

NC: Yeah! [laughs]

VB: Sort of sparkle. That's beautiful. Was he one of your favourites, Charlie Chaplin?

NC: Oh! He was one of my favourites.

VB: Yeah.

NC: Yes. And Laurel and Hardy. I've got those. Or one of... That's the African--

VB: [inaudible] some animals.

VB: Yeah. Oh yeah, Laurel and Hardy.

NC: That's Laurel.

VB: [laughs] I like the way he's reaching out. [laughs]

NC: Yes. Yes. These are some of the African [inaudible].

VB: Ohh! The colours are really vivid in this.

NC: They're just pencils, you know.

VB: Yeah. I like this one, Stan Laurel.

NC: [laughs; pause 4 seconds] I don't know what's on the back of that one.

VB: 'A wee bit of Scotland'! [laughs] 'My little grey home in the west'; 'The floral dance'; 'God send you back to me, 1950-51'.

NC: Yes, that's an old song, you know, that the actors and actresses used to--

VB: Yep.

NC: It was a beautiful song. You know. And she's looking at her husband, you see, it's the 1914-18 war--

VB: Yeh.

NC: And she's thinking of her husband. And she's asking God to send him back to her.

VB: Aha. It's a lovely scene that, with the window and the--

NC: Erm.

VB: Aah.

NC: This one, I haven't. I had just started that. This is on the other side.

VB: [pause 3 seconds] Nana Mouskouri. John Denver. Are these, erm--

NC: They're just some of the pansies.

VB: Our flowers? Yeah. How lovely.

NC: And this was my daughter's dog when she was in the [inaudible]--

VB: Oh! [inaudible]

NC: It was a stray dog. But it went with the house, and we don't know what happened to it because the Russians took over.

VB: Ahh.

NC: And they had to leave him behind. And their cat is the other side.

VB: Ahh, whisky!

NC: And she died, you know. [pause 5 seconds]

VB: These are lovely. They really are. Welsh. Welsh women.

NC: Welsh harp.

VB: Yeah. Welsh harp.

NC: And this is what they used to do years ago. In my father's time.

VB: Really?

NC: They used to have these things on their shoulder and have to carry the water or whatever.

VB: Yep.

NC: They worked very hard. The men, you know. [pause 2 seconds]

VB: Yeah. 'Cause it sounds, from, you know, what you were saying before, that the area's changed so much.

NC: Oh.

VB: And I'm sure going back another generation to your father's time.

NC: Oh! You know, going back over the years. We were only discussing that at the Club today, you know, about the wonderful years we had--

VB: Mhm.

NC: You know, our childhood and, erm, to go to a film, you know, and, and, see these beautiful films.

VB: Yeah.

NC: Nothing like they've got today, you know. You never saw them in bed together, they always had twin beds, you know, and then you just, the light used to go out and that was it, you know, nothing horrible like they do now.

VB: Mhm.

NC: Now what's on the other side of that one? [pause 2 seconds]

VB: Who is this? The 'Just Friends' one?

NC: I don't know. I just put 'Just Friends' on that one. That's 'Grandma before and after'.

VB: Ah! [laughs]

NC: [laughs] Well, years ago.

VB: Yes.

NC: An old grandma. [pause 3 seconds]

VB: Frank and Nancy Sinatra.

NC: Oh, Frank Sinatra and Nancy Sinatra. They were both good. But they're both still... are good.

VB: Mhm. Yeah, he's amazing, isn't he?

NC: Mhm?

VB: He keeps going.

NC: He does, yes.

VB: Can't stop him.

NC: I saw him on, erm, a video at my friend's house the other week and, erm, he was at a show, watching a show, and they were doing one of these, erm, 'My Way' or something. They were singing, three singers, I forget who they were, wonderful singers. And he was clapping, and they had a standing ovation, you know?

VB: Mhm, yeah... [looking at pictures] Andrew Shue is it?

NC: Mhm?

VB: I don't know him, Andrew.

NC: What, who is it?

VB: Andrew Shue is it?

NC: No, I don't know him.

VB: Nope. [continuing to look] Oh these are lovely. Is that more African? 'Black-eyed bulbul and golden'...

NC: Yes, these are their birds out there.

VB: Are these quite big birds, or?

NC: Mhm?

VB: Are these quite big birds, or just small ones?

NC: No, they're not very big, not those. We saw some white-bellied storks and they were huge things. And they were wild, you know, just running round the garden.

NC: Judy Garland in--

VB: *The Wizard of Oz.*

NC: 'Over the Rainbow', No! *The Wizard of Oz.*

VB: Oh that's a lovely one.

NC: Because she sang 'Over the Rainbow'.

VB: The dog's lovely as well, her--

NC: Yes, that was her pet.

VB: Yeah.

NC: She took him everywhere. [pause 2 seconds]

NC: 'Mary had a little lamb'.

VB: Oh, that's lovely too.

NC: [laughs]

VB: I really like the colours in these, they're so--

NC: Erm.

VB: Vivid.

NC: They're just ordinary pencils.

VB: Yep. [pause 3 seconds]

NC: Now that was an old... What, what is it on there?

VB: [reads] 'No rose in all the world until you came'.

NC: Yes, 'Until You Came'. That was, way back, about 1914-18 I should imagine.

VB: Really.

NC: And they used to sing that, you know, it was beautiful.

VB: Mhm. 'Cause I remember you telling me about how your father had the gramophone as well.

NC: Oh! The gramophone, with a... It was beautiful, it was solid brass. And it went from the brass right to deep red and it was all scalloped with flowers, leaves round. And I used to polish it every week, you know? And it was beautiful. I threw it out, I think.

VB: Mhm.

NC: It'd've been worth a bomb now. Lovely old thing.

VB: Yes.

NC: You had to turn the handle.

VB: Ah.

NC: There's more film stars.

VB: Ah. Rudolf Valentino and Gloria Swanson.

NC: Yes. Oh he was lovely.

VB: George Arliss.

NC: The great lover.

VB: Yeh.

NC: George Arliss.

VB: 'The Sunshine of your Smile'.

NC: Yes.

VB: I think you--

NC: That was another song, that was.

VB: Yeah. 'Cause you mentioned George Arliss before, as well.

NC: Yeah.

VB: Was he somebody you particularly liked, or?

NC: Well, well he was an actor.

VB: Yeah.

NC: You know, a wonderful actor. One of the very old ones.

VB: Yeah.

NC: Like these, [indicates drawings] you know.

VB: Yeah.

NC: [pause: 3 seconds] That was just. She's just reading, she's got binoculars, she's watching a bird.

VB: Yeah.

NC: Bird watcher. [pause 2 seconds]

VB: 'Toast for tea', a town crier. [pause 3 seconds] Omar Sharif! [laughs]

NC: Oh! He's one of my favourites!

VB: Ah, Doctor Zhivago!

NC: Yes! Oh yes!!

VB: [laughs]

NC: He never married.

VB: Mhm.

NC: No, that's just an African girl... And Grace Kelly.

VB: Mhm. These are, these are lovely.

NC: Mhm.

VB: I like the Grace Kelly and Omar Sharif particularly. They're really good.

NC: Did you see the back of that one.

VB: I think I--

NC: Yes, I believe you did.

VB: Yeah, I did. A zebra. [pause 6 seconds] A skylark.

NC: Mhm.

VB: Oh that's lovely!

NC: That's just a little girl. You know, with her daisies. [pause 3 seconds] Now, I just, I don't know who they are. They were just from magazines, you know.

VB: Yep. These are, these are great! I don't know how you found the time to do all these, while you were away!

NC: Well, I used to, I'm not keen on television. I don't, not keen on television.

VB: Yeah.

NC: I like what I like but, erm, you know, the television of today doesn't appeal to me. I like Bruce Forsyth, erm, 'Bramwell' last night, 'cause that's Victorian.

VB: Right.

NC: It's a lovely film of a doctor.

VB: I haven't seen that, I think that's just started?

NC: Well, very good.

VB: Quite recently.

NC: It's in Victorian days, you know, how they used to treat the patients, you know, very primitive it was.

VB: Yeah.

NC: Mhm.

VB: These, these are really lovely, thanks—

NC: I'll try and get through now--

VB: Right.

NC: They've probably forgotten! [pause 2 seconds] The time they asked me when it was my...

[NC telephones NP to see if she is coming; tape switched off; tape resumes when NP and grandson GP arrive]

NC: If we hadn't got the money we used to take a jam jar, you know?

VB: I remember you saying that, yeah.

NC: [looking at 1938 film book] Oh him. Oh yeah that was sad, wasn't it, that? She never lasted long after him, did she though.

VB: Cicely Courtneidge?

NC: Cicely Courtneidge yeah.

NP: Ooh! Who are these? [NC shows photograph] Ooh Cicely, ooh yeah.

NC: Look at those.

NP: Ooh! Jack... [referring to Jack Hulbert] Ooh! Do you remember some of these Nicholas? One or two of them?

GP: A little bit before my time!

NP: Yes, I think Cicely Courtneidge is. [Laughs]

NC: They were really beautiful stars, weren't they, you know.

NP: Yeah. [pause 2 seconds]

NC: Sometimes we used to sit through it twice.

VB: Really?

NC: A whole film. Didn't we?

NP: Ooh yes. Yes.

NP: We used to queue up for hours, to get in, too. Terrible long queues there used to be, didn't there?

NP: Mhm?

NP: The queue outside to get in.

NC: There used to be a queue to get in, yes.

VB: Yeah.

NC: Ooh always queued up, yes. It was worth it though, wasn't it? [pause 2 seconds]

VB: 'Cause I was wanting to ask you about a couple of things you mentioned to me.

NP: Mhm?

VB: I was wanting to ask you a bit more about a couple of things you mentioned.

NP: Oh yeah, yes.

VB: If that's alright. Erm. 'Cause you mentioned, erm, for instance, the Cosy Cinema. But we didn't have a chance to talk about it very much.

NC: That's right, the Cosy.

VB: What was that actually like inside, the Cosy?

NC: It was on the Hill.

VB: Yeah.

NC: And my niece, she won, erm, they wanted a name for it. And she named it the Cosy.

NP: The Cosy.

NC: And she got five shillings in the old money for that.

NP: Ooh! [laughs]

NC: Yes, that was my niece.

VB: Yep.

NC: And she, I always remember that, she won it, you know. And... [pause 2 seconds]

NP: They're good aren't they?

NC: They're both sides, Nicholas. [pause 3 seconds]

VB: What, what was the Cosy actually like as a cinema.

NC: Oh, very small, wasn't it?

VB: Was it small?

NP: Very, very small.

NC: Very tiny.

NP: Very tiny. Mhm. One big room really, wasn't it.

NC: It was like a big room.

NP: Yeah.

NC: The screen was down the bottom, wasn't it?

NP: Yeah.

NC: You know, and you just had the seats, like this. And the sides, two sides, wasn't it.

NP: Yeah.

VB: Yeh. **So was it on a slope, the seats were on a, sloping seats, or was it...?**

NC: Erm, no, not on a slope, no. And there was no upstairs.

VB: Yeah.

NC: I tell you the last one, well when I was fourteen, I saw *The Bohemian Girl*. And I was with Marjorie and Ann [inaudible] when I saw that.

NP: Oh, Marjorie and Anna.

NC: You know, [sings] 'I dreamt that I dwelt in great marble halls'.

NP: Yeah.

NC: That one. *The Bohemian Girl*. Oh, that was beautiful. And it's, you know [tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: [looking at notes] This is how I know what you mentioned! [laughs]

NC: Yeah, and what else?

VB: The other one was about the Odeon, because--

NC: Yeah, that was at South Harrow.

VB: Yeah, what, what was that like inside?

NC: That was an upstairs to that.

NP: Oh yes there was, yes.

NC: Erm I saw Gracie Fields in that, and she sang, erm, 'Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye'.

NP: Oh yes, that's it.

NC: And, erm, I was going in hospital I think, the next day, and I always remember that. And we used to have, eh, Ralph Reader with, erm, the scouts on the stage. Right? Do you remember him going there?

NP: Yes, I do.

NC: He used to have all the boys on the stage, in the interval like, you know, and we watched the films. My friend she was an usherette so, of course, we got good seats!

VB: I see!

[all laugh]

NC: We were in the shillings! [laughs] We paid sixpence! [laughs]

VB: I see. And she smuggled you in!

[all laugh]

NC: Oh yeah, and, erm, you know, that was at the back, just sixpence at the front, and it's in the back. I don't know how much the upstairs was, do you?

NP: No, I don't, I never went upstairs.

NC: One and six?

NP: Never had enough money.

NC: No, no.

VB: [laughs] Or knew the usherette!

[all laugh]

NC: But it was lovely wasn't it.

NP: Yeah.

NC: Really lovely.

NP: Yeh, it really was.

NC: Every Boxing Day, eh, we went there. We used to take Jessie.

NP: Oh yes.

NC: You know, always went there on Boxing Day and, erm, what was the other. Any more?

VB: Well, you mentioned there the, the shows at the Odeon and I think you mentioned that they had, erm, was it a band at the Dominion, as well? Did they have?

NC: Oh, that was at the Dominion.

VB: Could you tell me some more about that?

NP: I don't remember a band at the Dominion.

NC: They used to have a band on the stage that was, you know, during the interval. I always remember them playing, you put the nickel in, or something, and--

NP: You play [inaudible], or something, was it you drop the penny or the nickel in.

NC: Yes. 'Put another nickel in my nickelodeon' or whatever.

NP: Yeah.

NC: Yes. And, I always remember that, and erm, we used to go down there. That was in, erm, Harrow.

VB: Mhm.

NC: That's still there.

VB: Yeah, yeah.

NC: But I think they've got bingo and whatever. As well.

NP: Yes, I think they have, yes.

NC: Then there's, erm, the Granada, that is now the Greenhill cinema.

NP: Is it?

NC: It's three different films.

NP: Is it? The Granada, the Greenhill theatre?

NC: Erm, no, it's erm films. But instead of the Granada cinema.

NP: Yeah.

NC: It's the Greenhill or something [possibly referring to Greenhill area of Harrow].

NP: Oh.

NC: And, I've never been in there, I don't think I've ever been there. Oh yes, I have been to the Granada but, they've got a restaurant and everything now there. Everything's altering.

VB: Yep.

NP: Nicky doesn't know anything of all this. It's long before your time, Nicky.

NC: Long before his time, I'll say.

VB: 'Cause it did sound like the cinemas were quite different inside from what you were saying.

NP: Yes, yeah.

VB: Yeah.

NP: But I don't think I went to the films much, in those days, towards the end, because I used to go dancing a lot.

NC: Yeah. Well I used to go twice a week.

NP: What to? Yeah.

NC: Dancing. Tuesdays and Fridays, with Rose.

NP: Oh, Rose [surname redacted].

NC: Yeah. Yeah, yes. I had a card from a friend that used to be the... the three of us, we used to go to each other's houses every week and, erm, she's in her nineties now, and she sent me a birthday card. She used to come here and play the piano. And erm, 'course, played it properly by music, you know. And erm, she still remembered. She's in a home now, a nursing home, you know. And I heard from Margaret, a friend of mine, over fifty years ago. She made all Shirley's bridesmaids dresses.

NP: Oh yeah.

NC: Yeah.

NP: A long time ago, Nancy.

NC: And erm. She put your old friend. And then she phoned me up, on my birthday. And erm. So it was great really. So I took all the drinks, and I went up and bought a cake.

NP: When - did that yesterday?

NC: I had it ordered. So I've got a piece for you.

NP: When was this? Yesterday?

NC: Yesterday.

NP: Oh.

NC: Yes, we went out to lunch. I was out all day.

NP: Oh were you?

NC: Yes. We went, erm, we left here about a quarter to eleven and got home about ten past six last night. And then today I had my party at the club.

NP: When was your birthday?

NC: Yesterday.

NP: Ooh and I didn't send a card.

VB: [laughs]

NC: Yeah, so it was great, really. The cards kept coming, you know. That was from British Airways.

NP: Oh, when you--

NC: From my plane. And I had a bottle of champagne with that.

NP: When you went to erm--

NC: To see Hazel.

NP: Yeah, where was that now?

NC: Erm. When I came back for a walk--

NP: Zim, Zimbabwe.

NC: Yeah, yeah... And all the crew signed it at the back. Yeah.

VB: That's lovely.

NC: And that's, this is the one Hazel made for me. My daughter.

NP: Ooh, that's nice. Eighty-five. Happy birthday! Eighty-five. [laughs]

VB: It's hard to believe, isn't it? [laughs]

NP: So I... I... Am I older than you?

NC: No! I'm eighty-five now.

VB: [laughs]

NC: You're eighty-three.

NP: Ooh am I?

VB: A youngster!

NC: You've got to do as you're told!

VB: [laughs]

NC: You're only a youngster!

VB: [laughs]

NP: I'll be eighty-four in February. Not long to go yet.

NC: Yeah... No that's not, you're next year.

NP: Next year, yeah.

NC: And you're eighty-three now.

NP: And you're eighty-?

NC: Eighty-five!

NP: Oh my God!

VB: [laughs]

NP: I didn't know you were all that older than me!

NC: Two years. A year and ten months, to be exact.

VB: [laughs]

NP: It's frightening.

[all laugh]

NP: It's frightening, Nicholas!

VB: **That's lovely.**

NC: [inaudible] next door but one, he's twenty-eight today.

NP: Twenty-eight?

NC: Next door but one neighbour. He said, "I'm twenty-eight." Yeah... But erm... [pause 2 seconds]
Yes, going back to the old films I, I, we had such great days.

NP: This lady wants to know about the old films. Do you write about them?

VB: **We will be, yes.**

NP: You do?

VB: **Yeah, yeah. I mean some of the things you were telling me were just amazing, I mean the number of stars for instance that you mentioned.**

NP: Yes.

VB: That you liked, erm, people like Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy.

NC: Oh! Katharine Hepburn. Erm, she was in erm, yeah, what was it, [*The African Queen*]. And they went in the, I remember the ship got shipwrecked or something, and her and Humphrey Bogart were in the water and there was all these leeches clinging to their, you know, oh they were horrible black leeches, all slimy water, and it was a war picture, I think. And erm, I think the guns were going and that, of course everything turned out all right in the end, you know. [pause 2 seconds] But, erm, I liked her in *Little Women*, do you remember that?

NP: I think I remember that, but I don't think I saw the film.

NC: There was, eh, the Bennett girls. The three Bennett girls, Constance.

NP: Oh, Constance.

NC: Joan.

NP: Joan and, eh.

NC: Ooh, ooh were the other ones?

NP: Oh, oh, I don't know. The three sisters, yeah. [pause 2 seconds]

NC: One of them.

NP: She writes all about them, she's taking it down.

NC: One of them was Beth, eh, the one that died in it. She was, erm, oh dear, she was one of the Bennett girls, I know, and they used to call the mother Marmee, didn't they.

NP: Yes.

NC: Not Mother, Marmee. The father was in the war, you know, but oh it was a beautiful film.

VB: Mhm.

NC: There's a book as well about it. But I'd like to see those old films again.

NP: Yes, so would I. But I don't think you ever will, Nancy.

NC: I think they're horrible. Do you like television, Nicholas?

GP: Mhm.

NC: Well, it's more for your age, isn't it, really?

GP: I like the films more on it, really, than --

NC: Pardon?

NP: He likes the films on it, on the telly, he likes the films on the telly.

GP: It's good on a Saturday afternoon, BBC2.

NC: Do you watch the old ones?

GP: Yeah.

NP: Yes.

NC: They're lovely, aren't they.

GP: They are lovely.

NC: I'm never in, 'cause I never watch it.

NP: BBC2, he said, on Saturday afternoon. I must have, I must have a look.

NC: Yeah, 'cause you get the very old films, don't you.

NP: I must have a look. I really must.

NC: But I love them but I'm out, you see on, you know, I'm out.

VB: 'Cause, erm, one of the things you said that I thought was really interesting was how the older films were more sort of clean fun, they were, they weren't, erm, like the modern films that have lots of sex and violence and..., that the films in the thirties were a lot more, erm, just like you were saying just now, that they had twin beds and erm--

NC: Oh yes.

VB: Everything was a lot more.

NC: Didn't they have twin beds?

NP: Who?

NC: In the old days.

NP: Oh yes.

NC: In the old films, yeah.

NP: Oh yes.

NC: You know, not like today.

NP: Not, well you never saw so much in the old films.

NC: Oh no.

NP: They'd take their dressing gown off and that, and then they would--

NC: And the lights would go out.

NP: And then they were in bed! [laughs]

NC: Yeh, but you never saw anything like they do now.

NP: Yeah.

NC: No, it's horrible now, I think.

VB: Do you think that was, did you prefer that sort of, erm--

NC: Oh yes.

VB: Attitude to--

NC: 'Cause they was romantic! I mean, it was romantic, wasn't it.

NP: It made it, you guessed the other part, you know, it made it more romantic.

NC: And I mean, we went to the pictures or whatever, if we went with a fella, you know, or come home from dancing, we used to go dancing, and of course the man that had the last waltz with you always took you home, right?

NP: That's if you wanted.

NC: Isn't that right Nance?

NP: Well, that's if you wanted them to.

VB: [laughs]

NC: If he'd attempt to kiss you you'd slosh him!

NP: That's if you wanted them to!

NC: Yeh, yes, wouldn't you? And in the interval, the interval dance, they'd come over and, "May I have this dance", didn't it?

NP: Yeah.

NC: Erm, and they would pay for your refreshments, wouldn't they.

NP: Oh dear, if they'd got any money!

VB: [laughs]

NP: If they had some. Boys never had any money in those days!

NC: No, not, I always used to get my refreshments paid.

NP: They used to expect for you to pay for them!

VB: Is that right?

NP: Ooh, yes.

NC: Always got the interval waltz with.

NP: They were all out of work! They were all out of work!

NC: Yeah but, erm, I did get mine paid for, I remember that.

NP: They used to wait for Minnie!

NC: And my sister used to go to the Parish Hall.

NP: That's it.

NC: Of course she's a lot older than I am. And the men then, there, they always had white gloves, the ladies were in evening dress, right?

NP: Ooh, I can't remember that.

NC: And they'd come over, and they'd come right over.

NP: Ooh.

NC: And they'd say, "May I have this dance?" Or there was a little book, and it was coloured, and they had coloured pencils.

NP: Oh my, oh my.

NC: And they used to write down, "The waltz with Harry" or "Something with Bill", the foxtrot, and each one, and they knew, and the boys used to come over, but they always had white gloves so that when they danced with the girls they wouldn't mark their evening dresses.

VB: Oh.

NC: And we used to get a quarter of, an ounce of peppermints, never, not peppermints, erm, cashews.

NP: The boys were all out of work!! They used to wait for us girls to pay them in.

NC: Oh, I don't know. The ones I danced with were in work.

NP: Well, mine weren't!

VB: [laughs]

NC: Because I remember one was a carpenter.

NP: They were all out of work, Nancy.

NC: One was a carpenter, and the other one worked at the studios, he used to make all the things for the sets, for the films. The aeroplanes. I mean, you see these huge aeroplanes and they're really only little. That was George [surname redacted] and he's still alive.

NP: Well that was, all the boys.

NC: He married Joyce, Joyce [surname redacted].

NP: All the boys that went to Farris were out of work. And you remember Minnie [surname redacted], the greengrocer, her father had the main greengrocers of South Harrow and they all used to wait for Minnie to come so, so she'd pay them in.

NC: Oh, I don't know Nancy.

NP: Yes! Oh Nancy!! Yes.

NC: Well the ones I danced with--

NP: And then they'd say, "Nancy? Have you any money?" And I'd say, "Well you've only got so much." And they'd say, "Well, we'll wait for Elsie to come", or "We'll wait for Gwen [surname redacted]". They were all out of work in South Harrow.

NC: Well George [surname redacted], as I say, he worked at the studios, eh, Harry [surname redacted] was a carpenter, he made me a beautiful powder box, they were all, got money, his parents lived in, eh, Wembley.

NP: But they, they were out of work, Nancy. All the boys were out of work, out of work, work was very, very short.

NC: Well, they paid for my refreshments. And sometimes they paid for you to go in--

VB: Mhm.

NC: The ones I danced with.

NP: You were lucky.

NC: I was lucky, yes.

NP: I used to have ones that waited for me, "Nancy have you got any money?"

NC: Oh, no, I never had that.

NP: And then they'd wait for Minnie [surname redacted], who had the main greengrocers shop in South Harrow, and... [tape cuts out]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

NP: Did you go to Farris?

NC: Yes, I did. Twice a week with Rose.

NP: Yeah.

NC: Rose and I used to go together. She was thirteen and I was sixteen.

NP: That's when they were all out of work, Nancy.

NC: Oh not our boys weren't.

NP: Oh, they were.

NC: She went with a fellow in, John [surname redacted], in erm, Sherrard [?] or Stanley Road.

NP: Well if, erm.

NC: And he was a good job. He had a good job.

NP: You remember Fatty [surname redacted], don't you?

NC: Yeah.

NP: His mother had the ironmongers and--

NC: That's right.

NP: And oil shop.

NC: Yes.

NP: Well he was never working and his mother wouldn't give him any money, so he used to wait for us girls to come down to see how much spare money we had--

NC: Mhm.

NP: To help.

NC: Yes, well you were in a different gang to me.

NP: Yes, yeah. But, I mean, and his mother had the main ironmongers stores.

NC: Yes, but the boys I worked with, as I say, George [surname redacted], right up until he retired he was working at the film studios. He used to do all the, erm, like if it was a war picture he'd make all the aeroplanes, in wood, but they were enlarged, you see. But they were only small when he made them, and Rose and I went there, before she died, like, and erm, he was telling us all about it. He worked in Elstree Studios.

NP: But all the boys were out of work.

NC: And Harry [surname redacted] lived in Wembley and they were all comfortably off people. He had a good job, he was a carpenter.

[NC and NP continue discussing the lives of various acquaintances of the period, including the lack of work and that the young men had no money]

VB: I was interested just now when you said, was it right that you stopped going to the pictures so much when you started going dancing?

NP: Oh, I never went to the pictures any more when I went dancing.

NC: Mhm?

NP: Every night, I used to go dancing. Every night.

NC: Mhm, no, I only went twice a week.

NP: Well, I didn't.

NC: And I used to go to the Parish Hall when I was nine. You had to have a chaperone in those days. My sister was sixteen and my mother had to go as a chaperone so she had to take me. I learned ballroom dancing, well you know where we went. We went there together, didn't we?

NP: Oh, yeah I danced, yeah, every night! [laughs]

NC: And, erm, I used to dance with her boyfriends, the Air Force and that, and my mother used to invite them home, you know, they were away from home and so, erm, I did well out of her, dancing with her boyfriends.

NP: And when Mr Farr, in the summer he used to have a big fountain, I think we told you once, didn't we?

VB: You mentioned that, yes.

NP: Yes, a big fountain, with all water coming out.

NC: And fairy l--

NP: And fairy lights all outside.

NC: And deck chairs.

NP: And deck chairs. Oh! It was out of this world!!

NC: And during the interval you used to take your boyfriend and sit out there.

NP: Yeah, it was out of this, Yeah!

VB: It must have been lovely on a summer's night.

NP: And the --

NC: Yes.

NP: And he had a, a, large house and loads of grounds, and there was apple trees and pear trees and in the interval we all used to go scrumping!

VB: [laughs]

NP: Not half!

NC: He was a nice chap, nice man, wasn't he?

NP: All the boys were out of work.

NC: Mhm. But, as I say, I don't, I didn't know them.

[discussion continues on so many men being out of work and having no money]

NC: Oh we used to go halves, I mean, when I was courting, you know, in those days, 'cause my fiancé never had all that amount of money, he had a job but not all that. We'd go halves, you know, we'd share it.

NP: I used to walk home from Wealdstone to save my money to go dancing, in the evening.
Sixpence!

VB: Yeah.

NC: Well of course there was no buses those days, was there.

NP: Oh there was, 'course there was.

NC: Well, I remember the first bus.

NP: Oh, there was.

NC: From South Harrow, and that was tuppence.

NP: Yes, that's right.

NC: There weren't any buses when, when, I used to walk right to Pinner Road, right down there.

NP: There used to be buses to Harrow.

NC: There was no buses and I used to walk, I used to go to the Speedway, meet some boys there, I was the only girl, they'd sit me up on the wall and we used to watch the Speedway riders, you know, the motorbikes. I loved that. They sat me on the wall and then after that we went into the ballroom. And all the players used to be, eh, the riders, used to be having their meal.

NP: Yes.

NC: We used to go in to the ballroom, and catch the last train from Harrow Met, but you'd have to walk from the Met right to, I'd walk right home on my own.

NP: Well we used to live down here when we were teenagers, going dancing. Down here, in the next road. And, eh, Grundells, you remember the Grundell brothers?

NC: Oh yes.

NP: They had a taxi.

NC: Well they came down here.

NP: And they, we used to pay tuppence or a penny to ride up to the dance hall.

NC: And the cinema.

NP: And you'd get, he daren't charge you so he used to have a hat, else the police would have had him!

VB: [laughs]

NP: They daren't, they daren't, there were two brothers.

NC: They used to bring us right to the door.

NP: They used to have a hat, they used to bring you right to the door, but the boys were all out of work, and they put dud coins in or, or something like that. They were all out of work, Nancy.

NC: Yeah, well, I was going to say.

NP: My God, they were, they used to wait.

NC: I wasn't with that gang, I was with a different one.

NP: Well, you must've been with a posh gang! [all laugh]

NC: I was lucky I expect.

VB: Well what was your fiancé working... what sort of job did your fiancé have then, was he? You said your fiancée was working...

NC: Well my husband worked. Well, he had, he worked, he was a driver for the off-licence in [inaudible], he worked for him. He worked for Coles. He was a driver.

VB: Yep.

NC: And he went to the home store. And then he was in the furniture line.

VB: Yep

NC: And they were going to give him a shop.

NP: But South Harrow was very small in those days.

NC: And their, erm, blooming relative came, the brother-in-law came over and they put him in it, and my husband never got it. He was going to give him that shop, put him in, well, not give him the shop, but make him a manager of--

NP: Yes I remember you before you married your husband. I think he was a manager, wasn't he?
Your husband?

NC: No.

NP: Well he worked there, didn't he?

NC: He might've been. He worked there.

NP: Because they all said Nancy Meads is marrying the guy that's in the furniture shop.

NC: They were going to put him in as manager.

NP: Yes, And I remember Judy and I saying, "Ooh, she'll be well off!"

VB: [laughs]

NC: No! He didn't earn very much money.

NP: Yeah, well, we all thought he was a manager in those days.

NC: Well he would have been, but the brother-in-law came from Canada, and he'd got no work.

NP: Yes, yes, I remember.

NC: So they gave him that shop.

NP: Yeah.

NC: And then Will went to another shop in Ealing Road. Worked for a fellow there. He'd got two shops and one of them had lost all the trade and it went down to nothing. So, my Will, he erm, acted as a manager, and he got it all built up again, and erm, he said "You've done so well I'm going to give you that shop, and you can pay me back when you get on", you know when--

NP: Yeah, yeah. So I know when--

NC: Then the war broke out!

NP: I know when you were--

NC: And he put his sister in there, or his sister-in-law. And I. My Will cried.

NP: I know--

NC: He really cried over that job.

NP: When you were thinking of getting married it got all around South Harrow, 'cause South Harrow was very small.

NC: Yeah.

NP: And erm, Nancy Meads is marrying the man in the furniture shop, and we all said "Ooh, won't she be well off!!"

VB: [laughs]

NP: I remember it, Judy [redacted] saying "Ooh, isn't she lucky? She'll never want for anything because she'll be well off".

NC: He didn't have much money. Neither of us did. We had to pay for our own wedding. My mother had died.

NP: Well, if you had a bit of a position in those days, just about four shops, wasn't there, here?

NC: Yeah, we had to pay for our own wedding. My mother died.

NP: Yeah.

NC: Dad paid for the cars and the wine and all that--

NP: But in those days we all thought your husband owned the shop. You know, you do.

NC: Oh no.

NP: But you do in those days.

NC: But he would have been a manager.

NP: Well, that's it.

NC: But he didn't get it.

VB: Mhm.

NC: They were out of work see, that was in Canada.

NP: Yes, that's it, yeah.

NC: And it was a relative. So they put him in it. Yeah.

[pause 2 seconds]

NP: But South Harrow was very small, wasn't it. Everybody knew everybody's business.

NC: Ooh, I must show you this Nance.

NP: Everybody knew everybody's business. [pause 3 seconds]

NC: It's a birthday card.

NP: Who's this from?

NC: You'll see. She's done that. [pause 3 seconds]

NP: I can hardly see ... "Love ...", who's that? "And Ted".

NC: Vera. Vera [surname redacted].

NP: Oh my God!

NC: Painted that --

NP: From Vera [surname redacted].

NC: Yeah, she always gives me a birthday card.

NP: Good God!

NC: She lives next door to Muriel.

NP: Well!

NC: Where we went yesterday.

NP: Where, where did you go yesterday?

NC: Muriel's.

NP: Where's that?

NC: Alexandra Avenue.

NP: Where?

NC: Alexandra Avenue. Just up the road.

NP: Ooh. I haven't seen that, this girl for years.

NC: She does these, this is what she does.

VB: **That's beautiful.**

NP: Ooh!

NC: She always gives me a birthday card and a Christmas card. She paints it herself.

NP: When you see, you tell her I was asking. Ooh!

NC: So I sent them a piece of cake, you know.

NP: My God!

NC: Yes, it's nicely done, isn't it? Very artistic... She goes into, Muriel every, erm, night, erm, of the Club nights, for an hour. 'Cause that happens [inaudible].

NP: I don't think I'd know her now.

NC: Mhm.

NP: Oh my goodness.

NC: Yeah. That was from Sue, who takes me to church. You know, so.

VB: **Yes, that's lovely.**

NC: Did you ring her?

VB: **I tried her yesterday, but I couldn't get her in.**

NC: I told her you were going to ring her.

VB: I'll try her again. Erm, that's beautiful with the pressed flowers, isn't it? That's lovely.

NP: Happy birthday, oh dear. [inaudible]

NC: [Debbie said?] I'd like to have sent you a card, I said, but I'd rather... Had a card from my sister. She's blind but somebody sends it, you know.

NP: How is your sister, Nancy?

NC: She's better

NP: Oh is she?

NC: She wasn't well last week

NP: Oh. How old is she now?

NC: Erm, Ninety-two.

NP: Ninety-two

VB: Thanks.

NP: How long has she been blind, Nancy?

NC: I think she was about eighty-two.

VB: Mhm.

NP: Mhm.

NC: She lost her both eyes together, you know. [pause 4 seconds] Her son, you know, Ted, you know he lost his wife last year? When Hazel was over here. Emmy's son.

NP: Yeah.

NC: She died while Hazel was with me. Well, he's found another lady. Erm. She lost her husband, out in America, and erm, he's been doing jobs for her, and they've fallen in love.

NP: Ooh.

NC: But they're not getting married. Because she is a Catholic, and he is a Protestant. He won't change his religion. And she couldn't marry, you see, they couldn't marry. So, they're just going--

NP: But can't you marry, then, if one's a Protestant?

NC: No, you mustn't . Catholics very--

NP: Well Elsie did. My sister, she married Gerry.

NC: She wasn't a real Catholic though, was she?

NP: No, but Gerry was, her husband was. Elsie got married. At church!

NC: Did she, take on, she never took on the religion did she?

NP: Oh no, she wouldn't change her religion.

NC: Well, anyway, Ted, Ted said that he'd have to change religion, he wouldn't do that.

NP: Well, my sister didn't change her religion.

NC: Oh, well, anyway, it's different in America probably.

NP: Gerry was a staunch Catholic.

NC: It probably is different out there.

VB: Mhm.

NC: But anyway, they're ever so happy together and he's going to take her to Niagara Falls.

NP: Ooh, that's nice

NC: She's never been there. So they're going to. She's got a house, and a swimming pool, in America. So they're going..., he's not given up his bungalow at all. She's not giving up. So they're going. They've got families both of them, you know, but erm, they just love one another and erm, that's it. So good luck. They were both lonely. You know. [inaudible] So she said "Good luck".

NP: My sister's husband was a Catholic.

NC: Mhm. Well anyway, that's the situation, that's all I know. Probably different in America. But they are very, usually, you know ...

NP: I think this religion business is stupid, absolutely stupid.

NC: It is stupid really, isn't it.

NP: Absolutely. If I thought I'd marry a German or somebody, I'd marry them.

NC: Well should we have a drink now?

VB: Oh, that would be lovely, yes. It'd be great.

NC: Tea or coffee?

VB: Tea would be great.

NP: Anything.

NC: Tea?

NP: Tea.

NC: You stay there. [all laugh] I'm waiting on you today.

NP: You've got two old girls to be looking after, haven't you Nicky?

VB: [laughs]

[inaudible; NC prepares tea for everyone; general discussion]

VB: We were just er, before you came in, Nancy and I were talking about the changes in this area, erm, over the years.

NP: Yes, yeah.

VB: About how different it is nowadays.

NP: Yeah, changed, yes.

VB: Yeah.

NP: Everything is changed.

NC: I had one of these today from our leader, her husband, they're Continental [chocolates].

NP: Ooh, which one can I have? I'll have that one, thank you!

VB: Ooh, these look lovely. You don't have to force us. These are great!

GP: You were hearing about all the horses and fields--

VB: Yeah, it sounds like so different to--

GP: Yeah, it's amazing.

VB: To what it looks like now, yeah.

[sounds of chocolates being unwrapped]

GP: [unintelligible] When my father lived here, was it different?

NP: Oh yes, there was none of this around.

GP: Different generations.

NP: When your father was born.

VB: Mhm.

[pause 5 seconds]

VB: Do you think it's changed more rapidly over the last, sort of, twenty, thirty years?

NP: It has. It changed very quickly.

VB: Mhm.

GP: It's changing again though, isn't it, with all the new sort of shopping precincts and stuff going up.

NP: It's building up again, isn't it. I mean to say, these houses weren't built or anything.

VB: 'Cause when you were saying there about--

NP: The population's getting so large, and they've got to build, haven't they, to house them and that.

VB: Well, I was going to say when you were saying about everyone knowing everybody else, and I think that would be quite difficult now.

NP: Yes, yes.

GP: It's really nice as well because, you know, there's such a difference between the way you talk about people and the way that we would talk about people, sort of like Fatty [surname redacted] and I mean.

NP: How right he is, yes.

GP: Just that it sounds like, so much, a community--

NP: Ooh.

GP: Than it is today. [pause 3 seconds] I'd love to meet that guy, Fatty [surname redacted]!

[NC hands out pieces of her birthday cake]

[GP asks about the project and VB explains it's running from Glasgow University, talking to people in Harrow, Glasgow, East Anglia, and Manchester]

GP: It's very different, you know, to see people like Katharine Hepburn, for me or whatever is just a very different experience, you know, being removed from her.

NC: I can't hear.

VB: Yeah, just talking.

NC: Pardon?

VB: We were just talking a bit about the stars when you were making the tea there, people like Katharine Hepburn, and--

NC: About the what?

VB: About the stars, the film stars.

NC: Oh yes.

VB: Yeah. 'Cause another thing I was going to ask you about was, erm, I remember you telling me about how you used to try and look a bit like the stars. And you were saying you tried to look a bit like Ginger Rogers!

NP: Yes, yes.

VB: And I find that very interesting. I mean, did you do your hair like Ginger Rogers, do you, I always think of her with beautiful, erm...

NP: Well I suppose so, yeah. We used to copy the film stars.

NC: I was going to say we used to copy the film stars, with the, you know, 'cause they used to have a shingle length, didn't they, the very short hair.

NP: Short hair and then it came the semi-shingle.

VB: Ooh.

NC: Yeah.

NP: Then it came the long hair again.

NC: Yeah.

NP: And then it came the semi-shingle again.

NC: That's right.

VB: What, what, I don't know the term a semi-shingle, what was that like? The semi--

NC: Well, it was taken in to the neck, like a boy, wasn't it more?

NP: Yes it was cut in close to the back.

NC: And taken in to the neck at the back.

NP: Yeah, yes.

VB: Aah.

NC: Similar to what they've got now, some of the short styles.

VB: Yeah, I think I know what you mean!

NP: And then there was the Eton crop. [pause 2 seconds]

NC: Oh yeah!

NP: [laughs] The Eton crop!

NC: Do you remember the Oxford bags the boys used to wear?

NP: Oh my God! And do I!

VB: [laughs]

NC: Big bags, weren't they!

NP: The legs, each leg used to be about this wide.

NC: Yeah.

VB: About a foot wide? [laughs]

NP: Honest!

NC: Ever so wide.

NP: As wide as that, each leg.

NC: Then what was that other style that the boys used to wear, oh dreadful it was. What was it called? [pause 3 seconds] Something Boys, it was called, the Whatsisname Boys. [pause 2 seconds]

NP: I don't know.

NC: Oh, they used to look dreadful. [laughs] But it was fashion.

NP: What was, erm, what was it like?

NC: Erm, oh it's weird, I don't know now. I think they had short cropped hair and, eh. [pause 2 seconds]

NP: Did you know?

NC: Oh, it was called the something boys.

NP: Did you know Len [surname redacted]?

NC: Who?

NP: Len [surname redacted].

NC: No.

NC: What about him?

NP: Didn't you know him?

NC: [shakes head]

NP: Well he used to live Walgrave Road.

NC: Yeah.

NP: And the men had a, a phase of wrapping their coats round them.

VB: Mhm.

NP: And, do you remember?

VB: I know what you mean, I've seen, I think, Humphrey Bogart with that, they draw the belt right, right round.

NP: Yeah, and they used to walk like this... And my friend Judy and I, we called after Len [surname redacted] and he got Judy, you know she was very small. [pause 2 seconds] He was going to hit her, and I think I kicked him in the back or something.

VB: [laughs]

NP: But, erm.

VB: Is, is.

NC: I didn't give you a serviette, would you like a serviette?

[all decline]

NC: Are you sure?

VB: I'm fine. 'Cause I was thinking when you said that, of something like, when you were doing the walk, like the gangsters, like George Raft or something.

NP: Well, they used to walk along like this. [gets up and does swaggering walk] Their coats, they used to hold their coats round them, the men, Len [surname redacted], and they used to walk like this!

[all laugh]

VB: I'm sure they thought they looked very sophisticated.

NP: Sophisticated? They looked, oh, I dread to think!

VB: [laughs]

NC: Do you remember Les [surname redacted]? He used to do eccentric dancing, wasn't he good?

NP: Oh, marvellous, marvellous.

NC: When you think that we're all now, probably in our eighties, some have gone haven't they. Doesn't seem possible. [pause 2 seconds]. The good old days, they were.

NP: I've been with, you've heard me talk of Madge [surname redacted], haven't you?

NC: Who?

NP: Madge Lawrence?

NC: No.

NP: I used to work with Madge and Amy [surname redacted].

NC: Well, I've heard you speak of them, but I've never met them.

NP: Well that's where I've been this afternoon, yeah.

NC: Oh is it?

NP: Yeah.

NC: How are they?

NP: Madge is erm, wait a minute, I think she's three years older than me. She's marvellous!
Absolutely marvellous.

NC: Did you start your job, Nicholas?

GP: I did thank you, yes, on Monday.

NC: Yep, all right

GP: It's good. I mean it's good. Because I'm a complete technological buffoon.

NC: You'll have to speak a bit louder! I can't hear you.

GP: I'm very bad with sort of, you know, technology.

[NC mentions trying to get through on the phone to NP and Debbie letting her know about snow in Canada]

NC: They played a hymn for me in church.

NP: What for?

NC: They gave it out. I was eighty-five that day.

NP: Eighty-five.

NC: And erm, they played 'The Lord is my Shepherd', which I asked for.

NP: Oh lovely.

NC: So it was lovely, really, you know. So I've had a great time, really.

NP: Do you feel eighty-five, Nancy?

NC: I don't feel it, no. [pause 2 seconds]

NP: You go about as though you're five!

[all laugh]

NC: I went up this morning to get the cake. I bought twenty-three rolls, and, when I saw the girl, I gave her the ticket, so she said, "Ooh." She looked round and I saw a cake there in the box, so she said, erm...

[End of Side A]

[End of Interview]