

Disclaimer: This interview was conducted in 1994 and concerns memories of 1930s life; as such there may be opinions expressed or words used that do not meet today's norms and expectations.

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\* Transcript ID: NM-92-005AT001

\* CCINTB Transcript ID: 92-5-19a-aa

\* Tapes: NM-92-005OT001, NM-92-005OT002

\* CCINTB Tapes ID: T94-1, T94-2

\* Length: 01:45:09

\* Glasgow, 17 November 1994: Valentina Bold interviews Norman MacDonald

\* Transcribed by Valentina Bold/Standardised by Julia McDowell

\* NM = Norman MacDonald/VB = Valentina Bold

\* Notes: First of two interviews with Norman MacDonald; Sound Quality: Poor; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner. The original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection; please contact Lancaster University Library for more details.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB introduction to tape]

**VB: ...about the experiences of going to the cinema in the thirties, given that quite a lot's been written about the films themselves, but nothing really about the actual experiences of cinemagoing.**

**NM:** Mhm.

**VB: So, I don't know if that helps to clarify it a bit for you, or...?**

**NM:** Aye, it does. In other words, you don't want a critique of what the films were about, or anything?

**VB: Well, I'm very interested, interested in what you thought of the films yourself...**

**NM:** Yes. Em, would you like milk or sugar in it? [offering coffee]

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

**NM: Right.**

**VB: So it's really about, em, finding out what the experience of going to the cinema was like for people, rather than...**

**NM: Mhm. [laughs]**

**VB: So your responses, of course, are very interesting.**

**NM: Is this [indicates tape recorder] in operation?**

**VB: Yes, I just put it on just now, while I remembered. Mhm. So I'll just leave it there [places between, but nearer NM] while we're talking. Em. I mean the first thing I really wanted to find out was a little bit of background information about yourself.**

**NM: Mhm.**

**VB: Em, So, obviously I know your name is, em, is that your full name: Norman MacDonald.**

**NM: [spells out MacDonald]**

**VB: And is Norman, is that your full name?**

**NM: Norman? Yes, that's who I am.**

**VB: Right. [both laugh]**

**VB: And your date of birth?**

**NM: Eh, [day redacted]...**

**VB: Yes.**

**NM:** [month redacted] 1915.

**VB: 1915. And, were you born in Glasgow?**

**NM:** Yes.

**VB: Right. What, wh, was it in the West End you were born?**

**NM:** Yes, just beside the hospital, you know, the Queen Mother hospital?

**VB: Oh yes.**

**NM:** It was the Sick Children's hospital then, in the old days.

**VB: Aw, I'll put that down [both laugh] as a bit of extra information!**

**VB: Eh, that was the Sick Children's Hospital?**

**NM:** Sick Children's Hospital.

**VB: In Queen Margaret?**

**NM:** No, Yorkhill.

**VB: Oh, of course. Right, Ah I'm with you now.**

**NM:** Would you care for a biscuit? They're digestives?

**VB: That would be nice, thanks. And, what was it your father did?**

**NM:** My father? He was a... he was an official, I think, of the old Glasgow Corporation.

**VB: Right. [writing] And did your mother work?**

**NM:** Yes, she had a business! Very modern, aye! She had a dressmaker's business, a dressmaker she was.

**VB: Interesting.**

**NM:** And she carried this on at home while I was very young. But as soon as I was at school age she got herself a shop in Queen Margaret Drive, just up from the BBC.

**VB: Right!**

**NM:** And she had that shop for, oh, about ten years.

**VB: That's interesting. As you say it's quite unusual for a...**

**NM:** Aye! I look back with astonishment on her. She was one of, eh, a large family of girls, her mother had six daughters and, eh, all of them went into business, all of them, and they were all of course, during the first war, they took full part in the affairs of the nation, as it were, but they got involved in all sorts of things connected with it, and they took in the First World War, and they went into higher education, one or two of them became school teachers, my mother was a dressmaker and a businesswoman, the others had various talents, opera singer, or operetta you call it, not the opera, but you know, aw, a very, an astonishingly modern, progressive family for the 1910s to '20s.

**VB: Was that the same case with your own upbringing then?**

**NM:** Yes, well I was encouraged, you know, education was very important and, eh, with the school, we were sent to school at Woodside, and that was then at its best, it's away now, it moved from the sole location, [pause] it became a teacher's training college after a time, in the 1960s, and is now, the modern Woodside School is now, kept, down into, now, then I went to the University of Glasgow.

**VB: Can I ask what you studied there?**

**NM:** I studied law.

**VB:** Law.

**NM:** Yes.

**VB:** So, does that lead me on the next question, [smiles] were you a lawyer then?

**NM:** I became a lawyer, more recently, yes.

**VB:** Yes.

**NM:** After the war, well, before the war, I got...

**VB:** So, were you in the forces during the war?

**NM:** Yes, oh yes. And, em, [pause] overseas.

**VB:** Was that with the army, or the...?

**NM:** In the army, yes.

**VB:** Mm.

**NM:** I went to India, to Burma.

**VB:** I know, mhm, talking with other people, I believe that quite, a lot of the forces from Glasgow did go over to the India, or Burma - was that...?

**NM:** I suppose, going to India in the forces, probably more in the population, perhaps warranted it, a large Scottish contingent involved in it, I would think. Both in the army and the navy and the Air force, of course.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** I don't know if that'll be audible on this machine?

**VB: I'll maybe move it a little closer to you, actually.**

**NM:** Yes.

**VB: So it does pick you up. But it's quite good at, eh...**

**NM:** Yes. I'm not very, very, not very clear voice, it's apt to be slightly, less than perfect! [laughs]

**VB: So you came back, after the war.**

**NM:** I was away for six years.

**VB: You were away for six years.**

**NM:** So, March 1940 to March 1945, '46, sorry.

**VB: Right. [pause] It's a long time.**

**NM:** It's a long time.

**VB: Did you have any leave at home during that period?**

**NM:** Well, I wasn't abroad all that time, I was only two or three years abroad, but, the rest of it was in Britain. Mhm.

**VB: So, you came back 1946?**

**NM:** Mhm.

**VB: And you say you qualified?**

**NM:** Oh, I was qualified before the war.

**VB:** I see.

**NM:** In 1938.

**VB:** Right.

**NM:** That's, I had really been serving as a lawyer for a couple of years before the war.

**VB:** I see.

**NM:** Before I got involved in the war.

**VB:** I see. **Did you work mainly within Glasgow? Or...?**

**NM:** No, eh, I went down to Ayrshire. [pause]

**VB:** I see. **Do you have any strong political affiliations? Or...?**

**NM:** Eh. [pause] Is all this necessary? [laughs]

**VB:** **No, not absolutely, I mean you don't need to answer these, it's really just to get a sort of background about yourself.**

**NM:** Yes, yes.

**VB:** **And to tie in with...**

**NM:** Well, my politics are of the left and I'm a Scottish Nationalist into the bargain! So how you [string?] that together, [you can?] work out!

**VB:** **Are you actually a member of the Scottish Nationalist Party?**

**NM:** Yes, yes.

**VB:** I see. [pause] A longstanding member or...?

**NM:** I've always been sympathetic to the Nationalist 'cause but I've only recently become a member in the last five years.

**VB:** That's interesting, and, are, do you have strong religious beliefs as well? Or...?

**NM:** No. I am irreligious!

**VB:** Right, I'll put that down! [laughs] I like that phrase! [both laugh] Em, have you always lived here, or...?

**NM:** No, I lived in Ayrshire until I retired [pause] in 1980, I retired.

**VB:** Right.

**NM:** I came to live in Glasgow.

**VB:** And before then, that would be your family home in the West End?

**NM:** Oh, no!

**VB:** It sounds like it's complicated! [both laugh]

**NM:** Up to, you're talking about a gap of fifty-one years after, from the 1930s to the 1980s! My wife and I lived in Glasgow but not in our previous homes, of course.

**VB:** Right. So you've lived in various places in Glasgow and also in Ayrshire.

**NM:** Yes.



**VB: Right. And, when were you married?** [NM counts; both laugh]

**NM:** In 1941!

**VB: 1941. And, did your wife work?**

**NM:** Mhm, well, she was a, they called them, a Physical Instruction, P.I. teacher [sighs] and, in accordance with the [pause] grim laws of yesteryear, she had to give it up when she got married. She was told that she was no longer required, believe it or not. And this is in the wartime.

**VB: It's amazing you would think, with her qualifications.**

**NM:** That's right.

**NM:** [cups clanking] Obviously there was a need for physical education in those days just as pressing in war, if not more so, than had been previously.

**VB: It's strange. And do you have any children?**

**NM:** Yes, I've got four.

**VB: How many girls and boys is that?**

**NM:** There's one boy and three girls.

**VB: One boy and three girls.**

**NM:** My son.

**VB: That's done, that's the official form. The other thing that I would like to ask you to sign, either now or later, is, em, an archive form that obviously when we're making these tapes we're going to be storing them in the archive, em, so we need some sort of statement from you to say that it's all right for us to keep them there, basically, and, em, unless you have any strong**

opinions to the contrary, that it would be all right for us, for scholars in the future, to have a look at some of the material that we collect.

NM: I see.

VB: There is a standard release form which I can let you see just now. Em. [VB hands over archive form A]

NM: This'll give you permission.

VB: And if, if you decided after we'd talked, that you'd rather put some sort of restrictions on it, you know, if you think I'd prefer no one to listen to these for a certain period of time or something.

NM: Mhm.

VB: We have got other forms that can say that. So, if you like I could just leave you copies of these and then you can have a look at them and decide, eh, which one you think is more suitable. They get progressively more restrictive. [hands over forms B and C]

NM: I see.

VB: But, I'll leave that entirely up to you but that's sort of official thing, so that's that side of things. I was very interested, looking at the letter that you sent to Annette with all the information about -

NM: I gave it to her personally.

VB: She mentioned, in fact she sent her regards.

NM: That's right.

VB: I spoke to her this morning and she said to say hello. So, em, obviously you have the most extensive knowledge of this area.

**NM:** Mhm. [pause 2 seconds] May I say one of my daughters is actively involved in the cinema industry.

**VB: Really?**

**NM:** Yes, she's an editor.

**VB: I see.**

**NM:** Of films.

**VB: That is interesting. Obviously your own enthusiasm, maybe?**

**NM:** Well, I don't know but, em, so that... [laughs] She works from Edinburgh, she lives and works from Edinburgh.

**VB: Have your other children got interests in films as well, or...?**

**NM:** Not really, no, not actively. They're not into films.

**VB: Em, well one of the things that I wanted to start off was to ask you a bit about the cinemas that you attended.**

**NM:** Mhm.

**VB: I mean, you mentioned quite a few. [both laugh] in your letter.**

**NM:** Mhm.

**VB: I mean, you mentioned the Gem. Was that in Great Western Road?**

**NM:** Yes.

**VB: Could you tell me a bit about some of the cinemas?**

**NM:** No longer there. Well where it is now, it's a shop. Well it was one of the smallest cinemas, it was a very small cinema and a very unpretentious place. And, eh, along that way at St George's Cross end, towards a couple of hundred yards from St George's Cross, and it was a very second-rate sort of place, largely frequented by kids and I suppose other people are too, it was a very favourite place for youngsters to go. [laughs]

**VB: Was that the first cinema you really went to?**

**NM:** No, long before I lived in, originally I lived with my family beside the hospital up at Yorkhill, so until I was about twelve or fourteen. And before that, while I was at Yorkhill, the nearest cinema was at Partick Cross, it's also no longer there, so it was the easiest and quickest to get to and, eh, that's where I went when I was. The first cinema I went to was at, I can't remember what the name of it was, but it was at Partick Cross anyway. [referring to Western cinema?]

**VB: What was that one like?**

**NM:** That was the same as the Gem, it was very much... [pause 2 seconds] there were no refinements, a basic cinema with, I think, wooden benches seats. It might have had. I vaguely think that there were long wooden benches. And it was usually crowded with kids, all screaming and shouting. [both laugh] But it was just a very plain, ordinary little building and very cheap, of course!

**VB: How much was it?**

**NM:** Well you're talking about pennies, thruppence maybe, fourpence, which was, I suppose, six or seven p nowadays, seven pence.

**VB: I've heard people talking about using a jeely jar.**

**NM:** Yes, well I've heard that too, I never actually did it, and I can't remember ever seeing anybody else do it but it was rumoured or talked about as if it was common practice.

**VB: That's interesting.**

**NM:** So it must've been, of course, I'm talking about middle and late 1920s in this connection, films had already been operating for many years before that [pause 2 seconds] certainly since 1918 they started public cinema shows, it may have been between 1918 and 1920s, '25 or '26, but eh, getting in for jam jars was a practice which no longer was common when I went to...

**VB: I remember, eh, in your response to the questionnaire, you mentioned going to a Charlie Chaplin film as your first real cinema recollection. Could you say a bit more about that?**

**NM:** [pause 3 seconds] Well, that wasn't at the Gem. Where it was I just do not know. My mother took to the... do you want some more tea?

**VB: Yes.**

**NM:** [pours out more tea]

**VB: That's great, thanks.**

**NM:** Mother took me to the pictures and, eh, the pictures they were called, not the cinema, not the films, it was the pictures. And she took me to see this Charlie Chaplin, because Charlie Chaplin was a household name, even to infants then, in the 1920s, and eh, although my memory of it is very, very dim, I remember Mother telling me that, eh, the manager or someone in charge had [laughs] come along during the course of the performance and he, "If you don't keep that child from making so much noise, he'll have to be taken away!" [both laugh] And of course I was screaming with laughter at what was going on, on the screen! [both laugh] So that was my first, first contact with the authorities was being put out or threatened with being put out! [both laugh]

**VB: Is Charlie Chaplin someone that you...?**

**NM:** Oh yes.

**VB: Always liked?**

**NM:** After that, you saw - Charlie Chaplin was a tremendous draw for all, including myself. I don't remember seeing him in all that many somehow or other but, em, he was extremely popular so I must have seen more than I remember.

**VB: Was he particularly popular with children do you think?**

**NM:** Oh yes. Oh yes. [pause 2 seconds] And of course the earlier films were totally unsophisticated and then afterwards they began to, eh, develop, eh [pause 2 seconds] you know *The Great Dictator* and that sort of thing, themes which were no longer in the [pause 3 seconds] no longer simple comedy. He departed from that [he'd given up?] [laughs] and he was trying to tell people something and make a point.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** And I always thought that that wasn't what he built his fame on.

**VB: I mean, I was interested when you were talking before the way that children behaved during the movies, you were saying a lot of noise and I mean were there particularly films you would associate with that period of your life with 'children's movies'?**

**NM:** Well you see, prior to the introduction of sound [pause 2 seconds] there was no sound, there was no, well let me put it another way, prior to the introduction of sound from the screen, there were only two sources of sound. One was the music provided by a pianist who would sit there and, on her piano, and produce appropriate music for appropriate parts of the film, and the other was the sound which came from the audience and, where children was concerned, there was no question of trying to subdue the sound, they were quite at liberty and probably encouraged to make as much noise, to shout, to scream, to advise the actors on the screen how to behave and what to do next and, "Look out, because there's somebody behind you!" you know? And this went on all the time and it was accepted as part of the theme.

**VB: So that carried on past, when sound came? Or...?**

**NM:** No, no I would think that it quickly died out when sound arrived, because that was not going to be popular with anybody, [laughs] you couldn't hear what they were saying on the screen, wasn't much fun to have to listen someone else creating a noise.

**VB:** Did children respond in certain ways, though, was there a difference in response if they were enjoying the film or...?

**NM:** Well.

**VB:** Or if it wasn't very good, or...?

**NM:** Well, yes indeed the reactions were, eh, very significant because, eh, you see the majority of the films at that period were what you would describe as cowboys and Indians or goodies and baddies and, em, the children cheered the goodies and booed the baddies vociferously. But there was also another category and that was the, the intrusion of love, which was highly unacceptable. I mean, if, if, a man got involved in showing tender feelings to some female, he would probably get hissed and booed and expressions of disgust would be registered. I'm not saying that that was general but, eh, you, you could denote the fact that, at least the boys part of the audience thought this was an unwarranted intrusion and [laughs] the general atmosphere what films should be about.

**VB:** I mean, I mean I'm interested when you say that, that the boys part of the audience. I mean, were there different responses from boys and girls to the films then?

**NM:** Oh, I would think so. Not, only on this respect - the boys created most of the noise, being stupid little boys, they thought it was clever and smart - they'd make noises and I think the girls were not quite so demonstrative, but certainly the oohing and aahing when someone kissed a girl, for the boys anyway that was totally unmanly! [laughs] And obviously, they pretended to think that it was... [laughs] it was a convention, I'm talking about little ones, I mean, ten, eleven, twelve, maybe, that age when they were self-conscious to this, about the other sex. And, eh, probably pretend to think they're just an intrusion in the whole scheme of things and that, eh, [if they could] tolerate or ignore on the screen [at least?] they were doing something useful, for the man to stop what he was doing and show affection to a girl - that was weak, a sign of weakness.

**VB: That's really interesting. Were there other aspects of films that led to a response like that? Or was it mainly the romantic?**

**NM:** No, it was just good behaviour and bad behaviour that would get a response. I mean if the bad character was doing something which was [obviously?] unacceptable he would get booed, and if a good character comes along to stop him doing it he gets cheered! And that was standard practice.

**VB: Can I ask as well, em, you seem to be suggesting that, you know, boys' and girls' different behaviour going to the movies. Is that something that carried on into later life? Do you think that were certain movies that appealed more to men than to women say?**

**NM:** [pause 3 seconds]

**VB: I mean, yourself, what sort of films did you prefer? I've seen a list of some of the films that you...**

**NM:** Well, I was rather inclined to be a wee bit on the intellectual side, I mean a wee bit pretentious, because I was a student you know, you know you're not just meant to be [laughs] going along with the crowd and, eh, I was rather, a bit wary of sentimentalism on the films and I didn't go for them. [pause 2 seconds] I wouldn't say I resented it but I preferred not to, shall we say, choose to go to many of these, and that's why, when the Cosmo appeared on the scene, you know the Cosmo cinema appeared, I mean, it really opened up the eh [pause] the gates to the introduction of foreign films which, em, could be regarded as to, to a certain extent, based on thoroughly intellectual ideas about, about people, about countries, about problems, about war and peace and so on. And I thought that was wonderful.

**NM:** And also, of course, human problems, the [sharp crack] foreign films, eh, introduced, I think, this population, in this country to the idea that, eh, human problems were suitable material for film. I think that earlier American films were more concerned with not so much human problems as human behaviour, did you behave well, did you behave badly, did you make a lot of money, or did you not?, but, eh [pause 2 seconds] the kind of psychology of being human didn't really come out too much in the British and American films, but the foreign films seemed to present that side of life. That's why, in my opinion, most of the films I saw in the Cosmo were enjoyable from that point



of view. But, I must say, in addition to that, I did see all the big, popular American films, or most of them, and enjoyed them very much, though, I think I preferred the thoughtful films to the spectaculars.

**VB: Mhm. I mean, I was wanting to ask you, ask you some more about going to the Cosmo, because I've seen some of the things that they have now in the Transport Museum...**

**NM:** Mhm.

**VB: I mean, the, ehm, 'Mr Cosmo'.**

**NM:** Mhm.

**VB: What was the Cosmo actually like as a cinema ... to go to?**

**NM:** Well it was, it was just, it was quite a large cinema, it was all in one piece I think, originally, in one big cinema, and eh, being it was the most recent cinema in Glasgow in the 1930s, it was one of the last to become open to the public, and it was very nice to go to, it was a nice atmosphere. An attractive place and, eh, it had the obvious advantage of showing films that nobody else showed. It really was very popular with the young students, you know, [people of our age and so on?] For us, it was nice place to go.

**VB: 'Cause I was interested as well, looking at those, the list of films you had, I brought a photocopy of it with me, some of them were very unfamiliar to me, some I knew but not all of them. Em, [pause 3 seconds] I mean, things like, I notice one of the ones you have for the Cosmo was *We Live Again*, *Tolstoy's Resurrection*. I mean, are there specific films that you particularly enjoyed there?**

**NM:** Well, I suppose I enjoyed that one! But, eh, you see that was a Russian film made by, in Russia, in the 1930s and they had the, one of the most impressive film industries in the world at that time, not what you'd call an industry but film production or [state production really?]. Great actors and they were regarded as being, leading directors of the whole film industry on a world-wide basis. And Eisenstein, Pudovkin, their films were regarded as being great films.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** In a way that Western films weren't. Western films were regarded as being great films but I think the Russian ones were regarded as being more important great films than Western ones, because they were saying something which had significance both as regard to what the Soviet Union was about and what the world political systems should be thinking about and doing. You know, big themes. And, of course, they were strong on Russian classics, and Russian classics are amongst the most highly thought of in the world literature.

**VB: Is that, I mean...**

**NM:** Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and all these people and all these writers.

**VB: I was going to ask you that, leading on from that, I mean was there a sort of literary reason behind your enjoyment of these, of the Russian literature?**

**NM:** Yes, yes, the Russian literature was, I was very impressed by Russian writers.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** At that period. [pause 2 seconds]

**VB: Yeh. I mean, I [stutters] like Russian films of that period as well, not, for all the reasons you're saying and, also visually, they're tremendous aren't they...**

**NM:** Yes, they have a depth and an intensity and a purposefulness, a significance that rarely appears in other Western films of the same type. Not fair to say that they were essentially better or more valuable than the Western films, but they were different, and they were treating things that the Western films avoided, [inaudible] avoided anything which could be raising questions involving social problems and questions. [pause 2 seconds] But there was more than that to be found in Russian films, anyway. Although I must say, in all fairness, American films did treat serious themes from time to time. The unions and the sort of...

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** Battle between the unions and the employers and the end product that they were showing at times.

**VB:** Were there particular movies that you...?

**NM:** I can't remember any--

**VB:** Yeh.

**NM:** Particular ones but, eh. My impression was that you could sometimes see aspects of American life which weren't...

**VB:** Mhm.

**NM** ...weren't normally advertised too much, like the suppression of labour, [inaudible] the unions and socialism and so on. Mhm. [pause 2 seconds]

**VB:** I mean, like when you were saying that, I was thinking of something like *All Quiet on the Western Front* which is quite, I mean that's 1930 I think.

**NM:** About Germany.

**VB:** Was it? Yes.

**NM:** Yes.

**VB:** Looking at it from the German perspective.

**NM:** Was that an American film?

**VB:** I think it's an American film, yeah but...

**NM:** It's a German book, by Remarque, Erich Remarque [inaudible] 'All quiet on the Western Front'. Well of course there were lots of good films in the 1930s on the theme of war and peace from France and Russia, ah [inaudible]

**VB:** I mean, just looking at your list here, that film, *The Battle*.

**NM:** Uhuh,

**VB:** Which was Russian. That's...

**NM:** Well, I can't honestly remember anything about what *The Battle* scene was. Whether it was a historical or whether it was contemporary history, I'm not sure, I can't remember.

**VB:** It seems, as well, just looking at your list, that there was quite a range of material at the Cosmo, 'cause I see you've got another one here that's a nature film.

**NM:** [reads from list] *Sequoia*, a nature film. Yes.

**VB:** Did they show quite a wide range of material?

**NM:** Yes, yes, yes. That was the charm of the Cosmo, was that you could get so much, eh, depth and variety of films, because they weren't restricted to the normal sources, that is American and Britain, and British films, which [inaudible] [distributary?] in British films didn't seem to me to be...

**VB:** Really?

**NM:** Didn't seem to me to be, eh, serious works at all [laughs]. Well, I know what it was, but perhaps, eh, it was because of the domination of the English film by London people. And eh, actors who acted and behaved and spoke in manners which were totally different to Scottish and Glasgow people. [laughs] There wasn't any idea of [laughs], the idea of what was funny, [what we would think in Glasgow?] their humour and comedy was, impressed me as being rather stupid. The Englishman was sometimes proud to be appeared as a silly ass kind of thing, doing silly things and thinking he was very clever [inaudible]. Or being a toff and behaving, the lower orders ought to know their place; it was something I'd find, anyway, it didn't go down well with me as a kind of

Scottish intellectual! [laughs] Or would-be intellectual! In terms of Scottish reticence, and Scottish intellectualism, it prepared you for some of the stupidities which passed for humour and behaviour in the English film scene. [laughs] Maybe it was just because, I was a little bit conceited or, this wasn't quite as [attuned?], that these were people who didn't measure up to my standards.  
[inaudible]

**VB: What about the English, English actors, was that, was it the film generally? [pause 2 seconds]  
Did you find the actors...? [pause 2 seconds]**

**NM:** There was a language problem. You see the English, and this was in the 1930s, if you've ever heard the old BBC recordings of the way they spoke, I mean they spoke in a strangulated form of speech which... [pause 2 seconds] which went down very badly in Scottish ears. Well, of course, the Scottish people speak very badly too but this was a different kind of badly! [laughs] Eh, the English largely, it was largely this Oxford and Cambridge type domination, and on the other hand of the scale, of course, the Cockney, the Liverpudlian and so on. But these were not really acceptable.

**VB: Is that something, eh, you say for yourself you felt like that? Do you think other people in Glasgow, em, felt like that towards English films...?**

**NM:** Yes, I think a lot of people in Scotland generally thought that that sort of primitive BBC type of pretentious, eh, speech was, was, offensive. You know, they didn't like it. They got used to it, because they had it thrown at them, all the time from films and from the radio. [pause 2 seconds] I think it's improved a lot since then, of course.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** I think they've realised [pause 2 seconds] natural speech is to be accommodated rather than pretentious speech, which seems to indicate that you're of a certain class.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** Or of a certain position. There's a percentage of people who don't speak that way. Ah, in England of course, Manchester and Liverpool [right old place?] [inaudible] along with what's left of

the old Oxford/Cambridge people who have more or less sunk out of sight. I don't think they would be tolerated in England.

**VB: I mean, just leading on from that.**

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**VB: As I say, just leading on from that [adjusts tape] what about the way Scotland was represented? 'Cause I'm interested in your opinions of that as well.**

**NM:** Yes well. [pause 2 seconds] Fortunately we had some people who knew Scotland and who were able to represent Scotland properly, people, but there were very few and I mentioned John Grierson, who was a master of the cinema, and was highly regarded for his films which are always, basically, informative about Scotland and its industries and its people, and that was great. But they were not commercial films and they weren't, in a sense, so far as the commercial film industry was concerned... [pause 3 seconds]

**VB: [checking tape] Sorry, I was just seeing we weren't on that same side. No, you were saying about the commercial film industry?**

**NM:** Yes, well the commercial film industry didn't know how to treat Scotland. I mean, they had no, little direct knowledge, there were few directors who, from Scotland, who could exercise any influence, and London Elstree, I think when they come to Scotland there's a curiosity, the people are curiosities, most of whom come dressed in kilts and behave rather oddly and so on. But there wasn't any serious attempt to bring film into Scotland and represent the people of Scotland and their real life and industry. [laughs] And the behaviour of some of them - there was a lot, quite a bit of stupid misrepresentation went on as far as Scotland. [pause 2 seconds] I can't remember the name of any films, particular films; the only one I could remember was an American one [sharp crack on tape] with Laurel and Hardy, they did a film called *Bonnie Scotland*. And, eh, it was a comedy of course, and I think... maybe they tried to be serious about what they were doing, but they couldn't because they really didn't know what they were dealing with. It was like, going to a foreign country.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** And pointing a camera at, em, people dressed up in a certain type of costume and saying, "Well, that's Scotland!" but it wasn't. And then there was another one, called *The Ghost Goes West*.

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

**NM:** That was typical.

**VB: Robert Donat?**

**NM:** Robert Donat, yes. That's right. But... [pause 2 seconds] They were obviously very, very well done these films, extremely well made and acted and all the rest of it, but as for being Scotland! There was very little authentic, it just had to pass for what it pretended to be, there's no way you could alter that.

**VB: Mhm. Yes, it is an interesting area as you say, the sort of representations there. Eh...**

**NM:** You see, the great problem with the kilt, in the idea of the English and the Americans, there's a fixation you see. It's as if there's some germ that had gone into their mind, the attitude that associated Scotland with kilts. And, eh, of course whisky and porridge and haggis and things like that. And, eh, aw it's stupid, these notions preoccupied them very largely and made it impossible for them really to be serious about the people they're dealing with. I mean, here we had Scotland in the 1920s and 1930s, one of the most industrial nations in the world producing the biggest and the best ships in the world, the Queen Mary and all the big warships were built on the Clyde. Its engineering was world-wide famous. [pause 2 seconds] And, of course, it had taken part in the great wars and [plotted what it had done?] and what its people had done, and yet when it comes to the [pause 2 seconds] film industry, it finds that no place really where anything in that deep assessment of what these people were all about. There was a lot of nonsense about their behaviourisms and drunkenness and folk wearing so on, which err, very misleading, [inaudible] to the Scottish people because [pause 2 seconds] it seemed, it didn't seem to bring out a good reaction from them, it just made them [sorry to say?] a bit sorry for themselves that this is how they should be seen by others. But perhaps they were responsible for it themselves, people like

Harry Lauder and so on, [laughs] [inaudible] [Everybody?] made their own mistakes. [pause 2 seconds]

**VB: You said, though, that you did enjoy some of the Hollywood movies. Em, what were your particular tastes in that area?**

**NM:** Well, em, [pause 2 seconds] you see they were very impressive in the sense that, em, even the musicals, you know. there were such brilliant displays of, eh, stage management and, eh, and people like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. They were such brilliant performers, they, you couldn't very well come away from these shows and say "I don't like this" or... It was brilliant in the best sense of the word, there was dancing and singing and behaving and, highly professional and it was beautifully executed. And, em, it was impressive. You had to say that they had put on a brilliant show, but I suppose that's as far as it goes, a brilliant show; it didn't send you away thinking of anything in particular, I mean the performance of a physical nature, you wouldn't say that it didn't do anything for you. I rather have the feeling, looking back on the 1930s, with the American film industry thumping out these wonderful, spectacular films that they did do, that, em, the people were living at the same time under the shadow of the cloud of war.

**NM:** From 1933 until 1939, until war broke out, Britain was living under the shadow of Hitler's forthcoming war which he was telling people about, don't forget, and that, people heard but didn't want to understand that this is something which was very likely to happen to them in about 1939. And it, in a way, going to see spectacular film shows, all the glitz and glamour and interesting things which came with them, was one way of putting a screen between you and, eh [laughs] and, eh, the awful possibility that you were going to be confronted with another war, 'cause mind you [remember] this was the second one. The first one had only been over for fifteen years, only fifteen years, when Hitler appeared on the scene. So the people knew all about the horrors of war. And, eh, they didn't want to believe they were going to see that sort of thing again. They didn't want to believe it, and I think American films fulfilled a useful function, at least a function, of taking their minds off the dreadful things which might be coming to them. [pause 3 seconds]

**NM:** And I suppose, so we're talking now about [inaudible] people being interested in something which is soothing and comforting when they feel that they have to face something so tragic as another war. But it happened all the same. And then the film industry more or less shut down.



[pause 2 seconds] And I don't know what happened because I wasn't here to see it but I think films  
[pause 2 seconds] just carried on while... [pause 2 seconds]

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** Because there was really no British film industry in those days. American films was all that was available.

**VB: Do you think, um, there was a change in the films then, from say 1930 to 1939?**

**NM:** [pause 2 seconds] In what respect?

**VB: Well, I'm just, I'm just, I think what you're saying is really, really interesting about, em, the period.**

**NM:** Yes.

**VB: You know, between the wars, as you're saying, and film as a, em...**

**NM:** Film as a soothing...

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** ...medicine.

**VB: And I wondered if there was some way that you thought that films had changed. I don't know.**

**NM:** I don't know whether it was deliberate [sound of saucer clanking] that this was happening or not, you see.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** Because they came from America. And the United States, during this period of the 1930s, I don't think was a bit concerned about the possibility of another war, really. Eh, there weren't really likely to be involved, put it that way, it was all, it was something which was going on in the middle of Europe which was a long way from them, and they really [apparently not?] likely to be affecting their prosperity or way of life or whatever. They were more concerned about various things like prohibition and gangsters and all the rest of it. So [pause 2 seconds] it just so happened that they were producing these, eh, very [pause 2 seconds] impressive, eh, entertainment films at a time when people in this country were being faced up with a dreadful situation which they couldn't unders... really appreciate and didn't want to know about. And such films were a release, and made life seem worth living.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** And you could see all these marvellous things happening on the screen.

**VB: Actually that reminds of something I meant to ask you more about before, earlier on, when you talking about, em, the piano and music in the cinema.**

**NM:** Mhm.

**VB: Eh, I, I've heard other people talk about turns between films, is that something that you remember?**

**NM:** At the age..., not except for the cinema organ.

**VB: Right.**

**NM:** And that came in, I think, that came in at the end, not till the middle of the 1930s, later, but eh, possibly by the end of the 1930s the cinema organ had appeared and that was an interlude when the films, between the films. And the organ appeared and, eh, for about ten minutes played the popular music, various tunes and so on, and then the organ disappeared out of sight. You see, it came up from below and, eh, the organist sitting playing and it came up and the lights would go up and the screen, and do about a five or ten minute performance and then it would sink down below the level you could see again. It was... [both laugh]

**NM:** Regarded as, there were one or two sort of famous organists. I mean, och, with a nation-wide reputation for, for performances as cinema organists.

**VB: Really?**

**NM:** Oh yes, oh yes, there were, I forget some of the names now but there were a lot of them, people whose names were readily recognisable because they were... Of course it was not every cinema that had an organ, it was only the biggest and best city centre cinemas that could afford--

**VB: Ah.**

**NM:** That, because it was a very, very expensive operation [pause 2 seconds] in these days to install these organs. They had to put in machinery to raise them and lower them and so on, the organs themselves were expensive. There were only a certain number of cinemas throughout, well I don't know how many, one or two in Scotland.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** A few dozen in any case, as far as I know. Sandy McPherson, I think he was one who played in Glasgow, and I recollect the name which I think may be right. He was, em, the organist at one of the city centre film studios, very popular indeed. But apart from, as for other types of entertainment during films.

**VB: Mhm. [pause 2 seconds] I mean you mentioned going to a number of, em, we've talked quite extensively about the Cosmo, and you mentioned going to some of the other cinemas in town as well. Was that something you did regularly or...?**

**NM:** Yes, yes. Well you see.

**VB: Yeh.**

**NM:** I don't know how I did it, you know, because I wasn't that well off for one thing, and where I got the money from I don't know. I must have had indulgent parents!

**VB: [laughs]**

**NM:** Because I wasn't, well maybe I was earning a little money when I started work as an apprentice [laughs] lawyer but, films, going seemed so cheap in those days. I mean, you're talking in terms of about a shilling which was five p [pence]. Well it seems ridiculous now but in those days a shilling was, it was something which could buy you something. It could certainly buy you entrance to probably a not very [pause 2 seconds] good seat in many, most of the picture houses, I suppose. During the thirties, a good seat might cost two shillings. The circle, back stall, or something like that. But in the earlier times, as far as the local cinemas were concerned, it was pennies.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** However, and the thing was, that it wasn't just going to see an, a picture, you had a programme. Well, unlike modern times (the programme seems to consist of trying to sell some goods, washing machines and so on, advertising is the story it involves now) but in those days there was nothing except film and you got two. You know, there was always a main feature and then a second film. And, eh, there was never any intervals, nothing of that, you'd just carry on one to the other and then the news and the next big picture would come round again. You could sit on if you wanted. It was really common to go to pictures any time you wanted to, not just at a certain time, because that's the time the film started, you could go in the middle of the film, and just wait till the film came on again and see the bit you'd missed and then go out. It's a funny way of behaving, I suppose, but I remember doing that quite frequently. Going at a time when it was suitable, you'd [tend to?] go right in the middle of something and say, "See the bit I missed...

**VB: [coughs]**

**NM:** ...when the film comes around again!" [laughs] And that was quite frequent. So there's always, or was, a lot of people, em, coming in and out and people would come in, in the middle of the film, they all had to let them pass [laughs], and they'd go out when it came back around to the same bit that they had come in at, make their way out through the [inaudible], so we all accepted that was part of the way things were.

**VB: That's really interesting. Were there particular times, for yourself, you tended to go to the pictures or...?**

**NM:** [pause 2 seconds] Maybe, the big problem with being at school and studying at university was that you had all sort of unusual, time off during the day and so on, but, eh, in particular your university classes, although I think it must have been mostly after tea.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** I mean, what would we call our tea, about six o'clock, from six, seven, eight, six till eight or something like that.

**VB: So was it mainly on weekdays you went then or...?**

**NM:** It would be mostly weekdays, I think so.

**VB: How about, I mean, were you interested in other forms of entertainment as well, or...?**

**NM:** [pause 2 seconds] Not really, although I [pause 2 seconds] used to go out, when I got a job, when I left school I used to go to the theatre as I put down on that paper, I used to go to plays, in town, and, they were very reasonable prices [inaudible] the gallery for a student, and see a good play, where I went to occasionally, maybe once a month or something like that. But it all depended on who you were most friendly with at the time. Girl or boy, you went to a show, and eh, I don't know how it compares with present theatregoing but there were a lot of theatres in Glasgow in the 1930s, more than there are now I think. And it was always easy to find somewhere to go to the theatre, for some kind of play, which was [inaudible].

**VB: It sounds like you've got quite strong preferences for films. I mean, was, was there a certain type of play that you were particularly attracted to, or...?**

**NM:** Well, Shaw, of course, was a great favourite of mine, [tapping noises] Bernard Shaw.

**VB: [adjusts tape] You were saying, Shaw?**

**NM:** Yes, Bernard Shaw. He was a very popular playwright, you got these crazes for... [pause 2 seconds] these plays would be patronised by a lot of people because, eh, they were so provocative, they were always good for an argument, because they were dealing with social affairs, social comment, and socialist ideas and so on. So that was some [I'd like to look at?], and em, Shakespeare which was...

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** Obviously, if I can think of it. Somerset Maugham. J.M. Barrie, Brendan Thomas, he was one who, he was a producer. John [Bandrew?] eh. [inaudible] I think it was a question of what was available rather than what you wanted to see. What was showing when it was suitable time for you to go.

**VB: Mhm. [pause 2 seconds] [loud tape noise and clicking]**

**NM:** 'Murder in the Red Barn', that was a Victorian melodrama which was played in a theatre called the Queen, the Queen's, what was the name of it? It was called the Queen's Theatre, near Glasgow Cross, which was a very old Victorian theatre. And this play was a melodrama, played in the traditional melodramatic style, [inaudible] and all done in a highly dramatic, melodramatic way, and I put on, the seats at the Queens at Glasgow Cross, I think I paid sixpence, and it was most entertaining because the style of presentation was quite over the top [laughs] to a unbelievable [inaudible], it was one of a kind, [inaudible] you could go there [inaudible]. I remember that one particularly because [inaudible]

**VB: Did you like going to dancing or anything like that or...? [pause 2 seconds] The other thing Glasgow's famous for, of course, is the dancing.**

**NM:** Yes, it was. I can't remember. Yes, I did go, a girlfriend and I used to go to dances and, not very frequently, but we did go to [town?] [inaudible] [laughs], getting to places and back. I was quite [inaudible] but we didn't go all that often. It was more or less, a kind of, an occasion, when we went, [inaudible] occasions, we were always, of course, going to weddings and the like, [Christmas?] parties and so on, there was always dancing and so on, but, em, I wouldn't say I was a very frequent visitor to the dancing.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** On occasions, [I enjoyed it very much?]. The one at Charing Cross was a very nice one, [inaudible] [referring to the Locarno?] Very fine ballroom there, it was quite a night out too.

**VB: I mean, was going to the pictures an occasion for you, or was that...?**

**NM:** No, no. That was a kind of readily available form of entertainment which required no great planning. There was always a cinema within very short distance, there were so many cinemas in those days, Hillhead, Byres Road, Great Western Road [inaudible] cinema. Every part of the town had its cinemas in those days, because the centre of the town, [inaudible] [pause 2 seconds]. And if you felt like it you just went.

**VB: Mhm. [pause 2 seconds] But, I mean, were there certain times of year or anything? Did that affect how often you went 'cause I noticed, just looking at that, there were quite a lot over winter and it seemed to tail off a bit during the summer. Was that something...?**

**NM:** Yes, I suppose in the summer I used to play tennis, I think it was [pause 2 seconds], quite attractive to play games, children's games. I think the sun shone in those days. [laughs] Eh, I remember a tennis club [inaudible]. That's why, I think, there was less, in the summer than there was in the winter. [laughs] When it was cold you wanted to go in. They were awful nice except for the little local ones that I've mentioned, the Gem, and one or two others on the outskirts of the town. They were very attractive places. You were going into an atmosphere, a real atmosphere. There was that [pretension?]. I mean they hadn't just painted over - they were stylised interiors, especially the ones that were built in the twenties and...

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** ...thirties. They were architect-designed. The foyers were really attractive places, nicely designed and decorated and so on. You thought, you know, you felt you were going into something of real worth about it. Real worth [inaudible] it wasn't just a building to [see?] films in. And some of them were called picture palaces because of the average person in the average house, the wealth of these people. And that's, of course, another reason why they were so popular, because people

who lived in tenements in Glasgow, Gorbals and other parts of the town could get immediate entry to an atmosphere which was, was outwith their normal experience! [laughs] It was nice.

**VB: I brought along, I don't know if you've seen this book by T. Louden?**

**NM: No.**

**VB: 'The Cinemas of Cinema City'. But he has quite a lot of photos of, you know, interiors of cinemas and I thought you might be interested. [passes over book] if you haven't seen it before.**

**NM: No.**

**VB: Em. [pauses while NM looks at book]**

**NM: Cosmo.**

**VB: The Cosmo.**

**NM: Yes, [inaudible]**

**VB: Sorry?**

**NB: That wasn't in Glasgow - that's not in Glasgow, is it?**

**VB: That's the Olympia, Bridgeton. Em, but I mean, as you say, the numbers of cinemas is...**

**NM: You can see the buildings [looking through book].**

**VB: I don't know if there's any, the Grosvenor.**

**NM: The Grosvenor, yes, I know that. That's still there but it's not got the frontage.**

**VB: That's right.**



**NM:** Enter from the back way?

**VB:** Yeh. Do you remember going to it when it was in that sort of state?

**NM:** Oh yes, yes.

**VB:** What was it like inside? Was it as it is now or...?

**NM:** Aw naw, naw, it was much bigger. By about three times.

**VB:** That sounds right because it's divided into two screens now. Maybe it was the one?

**NM:** Yes, oh yes, that's probably it.

**VB:** 'Cause I know you mentioned the Salon as well which, of course is...

**NM:** [inaudible].

**VB:** Yes, it is. [continuing to look through book]

**NM:** See that, one wouldn't normally go to a district.

**VB:** Were they quite localised then, the cinemas?

**NM:** Oh yes, yes, I mean each district had its, more or less its own cinema.

**VB:** That's interesting.

**NM:** See Shawlands there, that's just up the road, Shawlands had a big cinema which  
[pause 2 seconds] I can't remember what it was called but, eh, that would definitely serve the  
Shawlands area and so on. It wasn't all a question of going into town to the pictures. You'd go to  
your local cinema, and you'd see things, films there a week or two later.

**VB:** Did the programmes change quite...?

**NM:** Yes, oh yes, they changed [pause 2 seconds] frequently, quite a lot of them changed three times a week.

**VB: Really?**

**NM:** The films changed.

**VB: As much as that? [sound of page turning] I don't know if you remember the Kelvin?**

**NM:** Kelvin? [I can't remember where that was?]

**VB: Certainly, what you're saying about the grandeur.**

**NM:** Yes.

**VB: I mean, this one, was that quite common to have a cinema based on a theme? Like a sort of Turkish theme, or...?**

**NM:** Yes, yes. As I say they were, the design was, all, eh, very impressive and carefully thought out and presented and, the, general effect was one of impressive and grandeur, you might say.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** And I suppose various themes. I mean, this one's Turkish but... [laughs]

**VB: I don't know if I've got - here's the Salon anyway.**

**NM:** Oh yes.

**VB: Was the entrance in the same bit?**

**NM:** I think so. Yes.

**VB: Yes.**

**NM:** I think so. I don't know what's happened to it recently. Is it? [Note: at the time of the interview the Salon had been recently closed down by CAC leisure; a controversial issue]

**VB: It's still closed up anyway, I don't know if it's been...**

**NM:** It's a shame.

**VB: Yes.**

**NM:** I used to go there quite frequently, actually, I had a friend that I went with, he had a book of tickets, I remember. He bought a book with so many tickets, he [gave?] them up, but I couldn't afford a book of tickets [both laugh], I, just eh went with him. [inaudible] sixpence for the particular performance that we went to.

**VB: Did you go mainly on your own or with friends or...?**

**NM:** I went a lot on my own actually.

[noises of plates banging on tape]

**NM:** Sometimes with, in company, with friends, a boy or girl, but, eh I think a lot of it was on my own, just on em, as I say, it wasn't pre, prearranged.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** It was just a question of, you'd go to the pictures! [laughs] It seems strange, because I was a student.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** And I can't understand, to this day, how I could've got through all my university work and gone to so many films. It's just that, perhaps the fact that they were so accessible, you could go, on

almost [no distance?], as I say you could wait till it came round the second time or you could leave if you thought it wasn't worth waiting ... [inaudible]

**VB: Yeh**

**NM:** When it was so apparently, cheap, it wasn't getting... [pause 2 seconds] it didn't seem to be a drain on the purse.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** That's because...

**VB: Yes. One thing I meant to ask earlier, and I don't think I did, was if you had brothers and sisters, and did they...?**

**NM:** No, I didn't have any brothers or sisters.

**VB: You were an only child.**

**NM:** Yes. And perhaps that's one reason why I got so much spending money! [laughs] I'd got no competition!

**VB: Yeh.**

**NM:** [pause 2 seconds] I had one or two things that I noted down here. [refers to paper] A system was introduced, somewhere about the late twenties or thirties whereby you could, eh, see a film in colour which was merely a black-and-white screen.

**VB: Really?**

**NM:** Yes. [pause 2 seconds] I can't remember whether you paid for this, you maybe paid a few pennies to get an eye-piece, a coloured, which had the effect when you looked through it, to the screen--

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** Of producing colour, or the impression of colour. I'd never thought about it since, but since you wrote to me, I thought, well I wonder if that was commonly, a common practice. It certainly was something which I came across on at least one occasion in a cinema. You obtained this [pause 2 seconds] spectacles which you put over your eyes, looked at the screen and you could see in colour. [inaudible] how on earth it worked or what the colour was even, but it was sufficient to [pause 2 seconds] at least 'cause the impression that you were seeing something which wasn't there.

**VB: Were these sort of paper things or...?**

**NM:** Well, no it was like something you put over or in front of your eyes, or held in front of your eyes--

**VB: Ah...**

**NM:** And when you looked at the screen--

**VB: I think...**

**NM:** It might have been, I can't think, you know what a negative, a film negative, looks like. I'm not sure whether that's a reasonable comparison or not but some, some kind of, eh, material, which in itself had some sort of colouring on it, when you looked through the screen. Obviously it wasn't eh very effective or, or any real value [inaudible], if it had been, it would have been much more widely in use, perhaps it would have lasted longer but eh, it's just a--

**VB: It's interesting.**

**NM:** A phenomenon which I've never heard of since. [pause 2 seconds, looking at own notes] And the fauteuils, have you heard of them, fauteuils? Fauteuils were bench seats, eh which accommodated two people, I think it's a French word, fauteuils were a kind of couch, so instead of sitting side by side [with your friend?] [laughs], you occupied this fauteuil and it was very convenient [both laugh] because you could get there in close contact and [inaudible] [both laugh]

you were altogether. The only place, I think they had them in two places when I was [inaudible], expensive of course, and I don't think I ever graduated to that [laughs], but I knew about them, they had one at the La Scala, they had one at [Queen's Square?], but I don't know whether they were abolished or whether they've gone out of [laughs] practice. [pause 2 seconds, looking at own notes]

**NM:** You know, the other thing was prices.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** The prices were so low in modern terms as to be laughable. I mean we're talking about sixpence, a shilling, which is like 2, 4 or 5p [pence].

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** So it's unbelievable that that's how it was in those days. And it had the, effect, of course, of ensuring that the prices were, that those who wanted to go to the films could go, without regard to price because there wasn't, there wasn't many people who couldn't afford to raise sixpence to go to the films that they wanted to. But, em, I look at the film prices now, they're several pounds.

**VB: Yes.**

**NM:** You know, which I think is certainly not likely to lead to, everybody, it must be a deterrent to some extent?

**VB: Absolutely. I mean, going to the amount of films that you're talking about.**

**NM:** I mean, I, I was just somebody with a little or no money.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** I can't remember having much money, as I say, but the prices were so low, so trivial. You didn't have to have much money. [both laugh]

**NM:** These days will never come back again, and I don't suppose.

**VB:** More's the pity actually! [laughs]

**NM:** [pause 3 seconds looks at own notes] Cranston's, that's been converted into an office block now, that's in Renfield Street.

**VB:** Was that one of the big...?

**NM:** It was a big, big cinema, yes. [pause 2 seconds, looking at own notes] The Regal, that's now in Sauchiehall Street, that's now got a different name. [inaudible] It used to be a circus, it was called Hengler's Circus, marvellous cinema anyway, it had shows indoors. It wasn't tents or anything, it was on stage and when I was a youngster, [inaudible] a circus, to see Hengler's Circus Show on Christmas and New Year, there'd be horses on the stage, a waterfall. [both laugh]

**NM:** It was an...

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

**NM:** ...I suppose horses, and at one point in the show, water starts cascading down from through the four [rivers?] onto artificial rocks, as it were, you know, a very realistic waterfall on a stage [with emphasis] and I mean the noise! [both laugh]

**VB:** That's amazing. And that's before it was a cinema, was it?

**NM:** That's was before it was a cinema, yes, some years, Hengler's was the, from the turn of the century, I suppose, up to 1920 or [the Regal cinema?], that was a beautiful cinema, the place to go to the circus, a very impressive place to go to.

**VB:** Were there other cinemas with like cafes, or did you ever go to the cinema...?

**NM:** I can't remember eating there, except maybe somebody would have a tray of sweets they would sell but even that wasn't very common, I don't think. Most people were too busy seeing the film, I would think [both laugh] than eating sweetie pokes [pack] and bags of sweets and generally creating havoc! [pause 2 seconds] Well, [I wish I would know how, but I can't?]

**VB: Oh, you've a wonderful memory!**

**NM:** We're talking about nearly sixty years ago, it's not easy to sort of recollect all the things that [inaudible], they're somewhere at the back of my [head?] but they just won't come forward.

**VB: Not at all. It's been really interesting.**

**NM:** I don't know, nowadays is there much queueing? I don't go to the films much, maybe once a year 'cause there, is there much queueing now?

**VB: There is actually at the weekends, sometimes, I mean, was that, did you queue for a long time to get into films?**

**NM:** I don't think so. [pause 2 seconds] I'm trying to remember queueing. I can't remember queueing for [inaudible], you see, when you've got continuous performances...

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** ...you'd go in any part of the film. You could go in at any part of the film.

**VB: Right, right.**

**NM:** But when you say the film begins and ends at a certain time, you've all got to be there at the beginning. Therefore, the tendency to form queues obviously becomes much more likely. So that when the [queues?], decides to come in at separate times, perhaps one way of getting rid of queues. It doesn't do much good for people outside [inaudible], as I say [inaudible]. Well, unless you've any further questions?



**VB:** I'm sure I will have further questions when I go away. That's usually what happens to me, I was wondering if it would be possible, once I've had a chance to think...?

[NM gives VB phone number. VB asks if she can call and NM agrees. NM apologises for being "so vague" and VB says "far from it". VB thanks NM for showing list and NM explains he kept a diary for the thirties. He didn't note opinions of films, just kept a 'small diary'. 'Just a matter of putting a note of the times I went to the films'. It was 'just a small pocket diary'. VB thanks for help and the fascinating information NM offered]

**NM:** Perhaps it was because I lived in such a central position with reference to the city and all its [inaudible], same applies of course to thousands of other people. But in my particular case, in a way, it made access combined with the old prices something which made it just a part of daily life. [inaudible] I haven't been to the pictures very much outside of Glasgow in Scotland. [inaudible] I went once or twice in India.

**VB: Really?**

**NM:** Yes, during the war I was in one or two cities in India and, eh, I saw *Gone with the Wind*! And, in another city I saw Deanna Durbin, what was the film? One of her films anyway.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NM:** And, eh, the real, another reason for going to them was, one of the cities was Calcutta and another was Delhi, you see they were so hot! [laughs] And you had to find somewhere to go out of the heat, and some of the cinemas were, they were all air-conditioned.

**VB: I see.**

**NM:** In 1940 which was [inaudible] and you went into the cinema and watched it in cool, it was absolute heaven! [inaudible]

[both laugh]

**NM:** So the cinemas were, they had a medicinal function, or they did for me!

**VB: How did it compare with the cinemas here? Were they as grand?**

**NM:** They were very nice. The only other cinema was in Burma, where they occasionally brought films to show to the soldiers, they just put up a screen [pause 2 seconds] outdoors.

**VB: Really?**

**NM:** Outdoors. It was an army unit, army film unit or something like that. They came along, stuck up a screen, and got their camera working and then we just sat around on the ground, and, em, watched this, eh, it was so warm. [laughs] I've seen some of these drive-in cinemas in other countries, drive-in cinemas. [inaudible]

**VB: Yes, I lived in Canada for a while so I saw these there.**

**NM:** I didn't think much of it, sitting in a car watching films.

**VB: No.**

**NM:** It had no atmosphere at all, none at all.

[NM thanks VB for coming; general conversation]

[End of Side A]

[End of Interview]