

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

- * Transcript ID: OS-95-190AT001
- * CCINTB Transcript ID: 95-190-9a-ak, 95-190-10a-ak
- * Tapes: OS-95-190OT001, OS-95-190OT002
- * CCINTB Tape ID: T95-80, T95-81
- * Length: 02:00:04
- * South Harrow, Middlesex, 6 July 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Olga Scowen
- * Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Julia McDowell
- * OS=Olga Scowen/ VB=Valentina Bold
- * Notes: First of two interviews with Olga Scowen; Sound Quality: Good.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

OS: Two doors from us was Mr Straker the architect [probably referring to A.P. Starkey]. And he was a conscientious objector during the first war.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And eh, I don't think he got much work. His wife gave music lessons or something. And they were pretty poor. And then suddenly he designed that and he got on the Board of Designers, I suppose, for all the Odeon cinemas. And he moved up the road into a posh house and suddenly they were rich, you know.

[clock begins chiming]

OS: And it was all a result of--

VB: From that Odeon.

OS: From that Odeon.

VB: Yeah.

OS: It was a funny little theatre, the one down here. It was eh... [pause 2 seconds] well it used to be a big hole in the ground. Where I went to school. We used to walk down through there. And they built this Odeon in the middle with the shops wings and flats above them, you see. Well the shops are still there. But they've taken the cinema out and put sheltered accommodation for the erm, the flats for the elderly, you know.

VB: Ah I see.

OS: Erm, I don't know if you're likely to go down there, but if you do it's opposite Sainsburys. There's a big Sainsburys--

VB: Uhuh.

OS: And it's right opposite that. And eh, when we first saw it we thought, funny little place. Because it didn't have a balcony as such. It just had a raised area. I think they called it the, did they call it the balcony? But there was nothing underneath it. It just had seats at the front and then a barrier. And people sitting up at the back a bit.

VB: Ah, I see.

OS: Think it only took about nine hundred altogether.

VB: Uhuh.

OS: And we'd been used to bigger places than that. 'Cause we'd always had to go further afield in Harrow. I mean it was wonderful for us to have one on the doorstep. But there were nearly always queues there because [laughs] it didn't take very many. And I suppose that's why they pulled it down.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Although the other one, one at Rayners Lane. I'm not even sure what they call that now. Erm, that's more than a cinema. I'm not sure if it's two cinemas. Or whether it's got a snooker room or something. It's been broken up.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And the same thing has happened to the Granada in Harrow. That's two cinemas, I think. And now the big ABC, the Dominion in Harrow is, has been bought by an Asian.

VB: Mhm.

OS: To show Asian films. There's a lot of fuss about, but nobody minds that but there's a fuss about the Granada because it's, it's a listed building, I think. And it's got an organ that comes up out of the floor and that, you know. Although now they've split it up I don't even know where the organ is 'cause I haven't been back there to see. But there's one man in Harrow, I deliver leaflets to him. I work for the Conservative Association. And erm, he's always on about the Granada. And will I mention it to my son as he's councillor, you know. We've got to save the Granada, whatever else.
[laughs]

VB: It is a beautiful cinema. I had a look at it. I was down in eh, January and went into to look at the--

OS: Which is that?

VB: The Granada.

OS: Granada. Yes. I haven't been in it.

VB: It's a beautiful building. But, divided.

[pause 27 seconds; paper being shuffled]

VB: I was just erm, when I was down in January I picked up a few adverts and things from the papers.

OS: Oh yes.

VB: And, I think some of the cinemas, just when you were saying that, I think some of the cinemas you mentioned erm, I picked up some stuff on.

OS: There was another one we used to go to. The Embassy. That's gone.

VB: Right.

OS: That was at North Harrow.

VB: Yes.

OS: It's a bowling alley and a supermarket now. Taking up the whole area there. No cinema.

VB: Yeah.

OS: People stopped going, I think, when television started.

VB: Yeah.

OS: But I think they're going again now. There's rather, I find, unpleasant films that are about.

VB: I think that's right. It's coming back but as you say--

OS: Not the sort of films that I used to like.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I used to love the old Greta Garbo and Clark Gable and things like that. That [laughs] that was my pleasure! Then they had the war films. They were very interesting. Just after the war. And my husband wanted to see those 'cause he was a prisoner of war all through the war.

VB: A-ah!

OS: And eh, he didn't know what had been [laughs] going on really. And then to see those films was most interesting to him. But erm, first cinema we ever had was the Coliseum. In Harrow. Now when I was, I think I was eighteen months old when that was opened. And our MP at the time was Oswald

Mosley. And my father was the editor of the 'Harrow Gazette' which was owned by Oswald Mosley. So, when the place was opened, my father and my sisters went. Erm, I had two sisters. The older one was supposed to present a bouquet. But she got measles or something. I think she still went. But the other one had to present the bouquet. And she was a little fat thing. And she fell over going up the steps apparently.

VB: Aw.

OS: And I was being taken by car. My father had a car at that time which is surprising. And eh, I got to the bottom of the road and I was screaming the place down. They had to bring me back. I wouldn't go. So, anyway, that was our sort of first cinema. A most impressive place. It's now the Iceland supermarket [laughs], in Harrow. Erm, there's been several Mac Fisheries supermarkets there. But, it was a cinema while I was at school. And during the war, I think. And at one stage it became a theatre. And we had quite good people there. You know. Peggy Ashcroft and folk like that. Kenneth More, is his name? Erm, it was all right for a while but it didn't, couldn't keep enough people, you know. It wasn't viable apparently.

VB: Right.

OS: So then they pulled it down. And it was attractive. It had great sort of turrets on the top, you know. The old-fashioned idea of a cinema. And when I was at school, I was at school not far from there. Just round the corner. Eh, they used to take us. We went to see *Ben-Hur*, you know, as a school outing. And I remember seeing my first colour film there, *Rio Rita*. Erm, I think it was Bebe Daniels in that. I can't remember. I think it was. But I mean, my friends and I used to spend our holidays going to the cinema. And when we weren't doing that, we were going to, there was a market in Harrow where they sold film books. A lot of them were American ones. And we bought them second-hand. And we came home and cut out the pictures of all our favourites--

VB: [laughs]

OS: And stuck them in albums. Using all my mother's flour to make the paste stick! And erm, then the war came and I was sent away to Blackpool with the Ministry of Health. And when I came back everybody was sleeping downstairs and all the albums had been thrown away.

VB: Aw dear.

OS: Even the erm, the Christmas annuals. What were they called? Picture Po, no. Picture, Picture something or other. There were two or three of them anyway.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Of the film.

VB: Was it not the 'Picturegoer'?

OS: 'Picturegoer'.

VB: Yeah.

OS: And Film something or other. But two or three of them.

VB: Yeah.

OS: An we gave them to each other for presents at Christmas, you know. But, came the war, I came back from Blackpool after a year up there. It'd all, [laughing], gone!

VB: Aw dear.

OS: And everybody was sleeping under the stairs. Or, great big table thing we had in the front room with a metal top which made a eh, sort of shelter, you know. And so, things like film books just got lost.

VB: Mhm.

OS: It's a pity 'cause they would've been quite interesting, you know.

VB: Mhm. Very much so. I mean were your family as interested as film as you were? Say your parents.

OS: Well my mother was. Erm, my father, she and my father were separated much of the time. And we lived with my grandparents. We moved further down the road to live with my grandparents. My sisters went to the cinema. The younger sister always had boyfriends. She used to go with them. And

the older sister never had boyfriends. And she used to go with other friends from work. And I used to go with my mother very largely. And erm, in fact at the end my mother was pretty frail. And after I was married we were living with her. Or she was living with us. Eh, we'd go to the cinema, she'd go off down the road before us so that she could get to the bus at her own speed. [laughs]

VB: Ah!

OS: And then we'd meet her down there and go into the cinema. My mother and I and my sisters for that matter, never worried about what time we went to the cinema. We were ready to go at six o'clock so we went at six o'clock. And it might be right in the middle of the main film. But that didn't matter. You saw the end and then you very often [laughs], saw the whole thing all over again afterwards. But when my husband was around he wouldn't have that. Oh no. He didn't mind going in the middle of the supporting film perhaps. But he would rather be in at the beginning. And of course the trouble with that then, you very often found more people wanting to go in! You know, you'd left it an hour later or something.

But erm, no we used to go and during the war I went quite a lot on my own. Because I came back from Blackpool in 1941. I got transferred back 'cause I didn't like it up there. And erm, my mother wouldn't always go. She had very bad legs and she didn't like the air raids. So I used to go on my own. You'd be sitting in the cinema and then suddenly a thing came across the screen, 'Air Raid In Progress'. Now what do I do? Do I sit here and hope it doesn't drop on this or do I go out and take a, [laughing], chance, you know. I took my mother once to Rayners Lane which is one station down the line from there. To the Rayners Lane Odeon and there was a warning. And she said, oh, we'd better get home. 'Cause her parents were at home on their own. They'll be frightened. So we came home. We came back by train. And getting out in a hurry, she put her leg down between the train and the platform. And she had varicose veins. Bad legs. And you could hear flak falling too from the eh, guns. And she said, "I'm sure it's bleeding, I must get home!" And we went past the air raid wardens post down the road there and they wanted to stop us. She said, "No. I must get home." It wasn't bleeding at all, actually! [laughs] But it was a miracle.

VB: Goodness me!

OS: Because she literally went between the platform and the edge of the train! Just in desperation to get out and get home, you see. You hear the stuff falling round you, you worry a bit. But I mean, I can remember we used to go to the cinema and come out and there'd be tremendous queues for

the buses if you stayed till the end of the programme. But in those days people queued. And you were able to get in, eventually, you know. In time you'd get there. These days, nobody bothers. You just all push and shove and get on when you can. Which I think's a terrible shame. But erm, as I say, I don't go to the cinema now.

VB: I remember you mentioned eh, a free cinema bus that went. Was it the Cosy?

OS: Oh yes. The Cosy was a funny little place on the hill and it was completely flat. So if you sat at the back you got heads all in front of you. You weren't up above them at all. I think it was an abattoir, eh slaughterhouse before that. I'm not absolutely certain of that but it was something funny. Because Harrow-on-the-Hill in the old days was the centre. Erm, we had the fire station up there. We had the, my father was working for the newspaper up there. And there were shops up there. Nowadays it's pretty dead because the, well there is a bus service over the hill now but there wasn't for a long time. And erm, so anyway, when you wanted to go to the Cosy Cinema, you either had to walk or go on this little bus. And when we walked it was pretty steep up the last bit. And I can remember my sister pushing [laughs], my mother.

VB: [laughs]

OS: To get her up the hill. [laughs] I mean we were that keen to go to the cinema that we'd do that. Because we didn't have anything else. I was thirteen, I think, before we ever had a radio. Friends at school were talking about programmes that I didn't even understand because we hadn't got one. And erm, so all the news we ever got was the Pathe News and things like that at the cinema. And that was interesting. You saw the Queen doing something. You saw people you'd never even heard of! Amy Johnson flying to Australia and back. And that was part of the attraction.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But this blessed bus that went up the hill was a terrible old thing. And you used to get halfway up the hill and change gear. And I used to say, 'Huh! We're going back! We're going back!' [laughs] Back down the hill! I preferred to walk.

VB: Aw.

OS: But it's a heckuva long walk actually. Not too bad coming back 'cause you're coming down but erm--

VB: I was going to say because I was actually, I was not far from you yesterday and I walked up to the hill.

OS: Oh yes.

VB: And it is quite a distance.

OS: Oh yes. It is.

VB: Yeah.

OS: An it's, I mean it's a beauty spot. Well not a beauty spot. There's a great deal of fuss made of the hill. There's the 'Harrow Hill Trust'. And anybody who wants to do any developing up there, eh, has an awful battle to get approval. 'Cause at the moment there's a theatre, I think it's finished now, being built by Harrow School. They built it on fields that they own. But eh, nobody wanted it there 'cause it spoils the view! And the houses nearby, they've taken the houses down but built new ones. And they've changed the whole aspect up there and while they've been doing it, the traffic's been awful for people who are living up there, you see. But there's a theatre. But it's not going to be used by anybody but the Harrow School as far as I can make out.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And there's no cinema up there now. In fact the, where's my nearest cinema now? Oh, the Granada and the Dominion in Harrow, I suppose, are the nearest. The Embassy's gone. There used to be a fleapit in Harrow. That was a funny little place! And that's been gone for years. And erm, what else did we have? Oh the Majestic at Wembley we used to go to. And that's quite an effort. You had to go by train for two stations and then a bus. But that was a gorgeous place. All full of Italian or Spanish, I don't know which it was, gardens, you know. Trees and things and stars on the ceiling. It was worth going just to look at the [laughs], cinema!

VB: Ah!

OS: And that was the place I mentioned where we used to have the Malcolm Sargent concerts. It was Robert, Robert Mayer, I think. Who died not long ago, about a hundred. He, he organised all that for the benefit of schoolchildren, you see. Give us the chance to hear good music. Because not many of us went up to town to the Proms or anything like that. We couldn't afford it. You've got train fares and then you've got the Proms. When I was young we were terribly poor. When we went to the cinema we only sat in the ninepennys which was about the first five rows. And then on top of that, if you went into Granada you got to pay fourpence bus fares. Erm, so you... [laughs] You couldn't, you really couldn't afford to go up to town to anything. I never went to a theatre. I did go to Chiswick to see *The Singing Fool*, the [clock chimes] Al Jolson film.

VB: Mhm.

OS: The first talkie that I'd ever seen. And we went all the way to the Chiswick Empire. And I don't know whether that still exists. I doubt it. Erm, but otherwise it was really the Majestic, the Embassy, the Cosy on the hill. It was called the Elite at one time. They had a competition for somebody to suggest a name. And somebody suggested 'Cosy'. Well I would never have [laughs], called it that.

VB: [laughs]

OS: [With a] Flat floor. Erm, but I mean that was useful. I used to go to school the other side of the hill.

VB: Mhm.

OS: In Harrow County. And we'd walk up over the hill. My friends and I. And we'd go into the cinema and come on home afterwards, you see. Sometimes. So, that's why we patronised it a bit. And, Harrow Coliseum, as I say, we used to go to that with school parties. Erm, can't remember any more. Oh yes, there was another Odeon at Sudbury Town. Sudbury Town Odeon. I remember that. That was fairly near Sudbury Town station which is two stations along. So it wasn't too difficult to get to. But erm, we went all round. Don't think we ever went to Ruislip. Don't think there was one at Ruislip. But eh, yeah, we went about. [drinks from cup]

My sister, my middle sister who lived in the house on the opposite corner. She died just before Christmas. Erm, she used to go to the Granada on her own. She went one night and she came home, walked home. It was a long walk. In the dark. Course we didn't mind about walking in the dark in

those days. And erm, when she got home, she hadn't got her purse and she'd been paid that day. Purse had disappeared. So my other sister came, was at home. "Come on, we'll go back just where you walked." And they found it under some leaves.

VB: Oh-h!

OS: Another time my sister went to the Granada and she walked home again. Came past a pub called the Kingsfield Arms which is between here and Harrow. And she found a man sitting on the kerb with his head bleeding. He'd been to the, we used to have a racecourse at Northolt. He'd been to the races. Gone to the pub afterwards and boasted about having backed the winners, you know. And they'd robbed him, knocked him out and left him on the kerb. My sister was a timid soul. She was only about seventeen. But she thought, she couldn't leave him there. So she got him on the bus. Brought him down here and there's was a doctor's house further down the road. And when she got there he wouldn't see him. He said, "Oh, take him up to the hospital."

VB: Mhm.

OS: It was right near our house. I don't know why she didn't bring him home. But she didn't. She took him up to the hospital. And as they were going in he said, "Oh I don't want to go in there! Get a taxi for me. I'll pay you tomorrow. I'll meet you tomorrow." And he'd got friends at Kenton. He went to stay with them. So she paid for the taxi. And she hadn't got much money. But she paid for it. And he didn't turn up the next day.

VB: Tch!

OS: So she got in touch with the relations at Kenton and they got it all sorted out. And that was the end of that. Now her son is a journalist. And he was working [pause 2 seconds] I'm not sure what paper it was then. But erm, he said to my sister, "Oh there's old Glynn [surname redacted]! Drunk as usual." She said, "Who?" He said, "Glynn [surname redacted]." She said, "Well that's the name of the man I rescued when I was seventeen!" And it was the same man! In the same office as her son.

VB: [laughs]

OS: And she went up there and met him again. And, you know, extraordinary!

VB: That's amazing.

OS: To pick it up like that. And that was all from going to the Granada in Harrow. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: And coming home and rescuing him. He said, "I've told everybody about that. That wonderful woman who helped me." He was lucky she did help him. 'Cause she was very nervous. She couldn't stand thunderstorms.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Even to her dying day. And air raids were terrible for her. But she picked him up [laughs], bleeding all over the place. [laughs]

VB: Adventures on the way home from the cinema. Mhm.

OS: But erm, I've lost touch with cinema. Because I used to know all the stars, you know. Bette Davis and people like that. And eh, I had to go and see their films. Bing Crosby and whoever. But now they talk about people like Hugh Grant. I've never even heard of Hugh Grant! Till he got an, well, he got an Oscar the other day.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I read about that. But erm, these people are complete strangers to me. My allegiance now has turned to sport. If I'm watching television, I'd rather watch sport than films.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Because if I go to sleep in the middle of a tennis match, well it really doesn't matter too much. But I go to sleep [laughs], in the middle of a film! It does. The trouble is we don't go to bed in this house until three o'clock. It's usually three o'clock when I put the light out. Because council meetings can go on till after midnight, you see.

VB: Mhm, I'll bet.

OS: I've been sitting here all the evening on my own. I'm not jolly well going to bed as soon as he comes here. I'll sit and have a cup of tea and a chat, you know. Finishes up with us both going to sleep in the chair usually.

VB: [laughs]

OS: But eh, then in the daytime when I'm here on my own and nobody to wake me up. At the moment I'm watching Wimbledon every afternoon. But I do miss quite a lot of it, there's no doubt about that. [laughs] But the films, no. I do watch some of the old ones. We have a series of old Garbo films. Because in my mind Garbo was beauty.

VB: A-ah!

OS: The most beautiful woman. My standard of beauty, you know. There were lots of others like Norma Shearer who weren't really very beautiful at all. They were very much made up. But eh, Garbo I thought had a lovely face. So I watch all hers when they replay them. Or suddenly somebody dies and they show some of the old films.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Bette Davis and that sort of thing. I've watched them but, erm, cinemas, as I say, Granada really is the nearest.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I've got a car but I wouldn't want to bother with... I wouldn't want to walk to the car park afterwards in the dark to collect me car. And that's the sort of stage we've reached now.

VB: Mhm.

OS: It's frightening to go out at night. Not that many people do get attacked round here. But you've always got that horrible feeling that you might be.

VB: Yeah.

OS: Mind you, in the old days of cinema you used to have some funny things. I had a man sitting next to me once doing this to my leg, [demonstrates], when I was a schoolgirl.

VB: Really!

OS: I said, "Scuse me. Do you mind!" [laughs] And he still went on doing it and my friend and I moved away from him. Another time a man put his hand through the back of the seat and was squeezing my ankle! I was there with my mother. That was pre-war!

VB: Mhm.

OS: So, it isn't all new but... [laughs] There's some unpleasant people about. [laughs]

VB: Yes. 'Cause I was interested there when you said about erm, Garbo. Eh, I think there was a film on of hers yesterday. Which I missed. It might've been *Mata Hari*, something like that.

OS: Oh she was in *Mata Hari*.

VB: Yes. I think it was on yesterday.

OS: Was that on? I didn't see it. I remember it.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I remember it very well.

VB: Or late, maybe it was late at night. Around 4 or something.

OS: Yes. But I mean she played the part of *Mata Hari* as a beautiful spy. But if you ever see pictures of the actual Mata Hari, she was nothing! How she lured all these men, I don't know. She was plain as a pikestaff, I thought... [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: Yes, I think I've seen every Garbo film. I notice one on this week. Marie Dressler. 1933. *Tugboat Annie* or something.

VB: A-ah.

OS: I saw that when it first came out. But erm, well, she was quite a good actress but I didn't feel I wanted to bother to look at it [laughs], again, you know. But the Garbo ones. Oh yes. I must see her. She was so beautiful.

VB: I saw one of hers quite recently. In Glasgow they were doing a series of silent films with an orchestra, accompanying them.

OS: Oh yes! We used to have that. And pianists.

VB: Ah!

OS: Oh yes some people made a living playing the piano for silent films. I mentioned this fleapit in Harrow. That was silent films and somebody playing away. More often than not you're listening to the music. When I think, how the hell we put up with those films, you know. Everybody sort of rushing about at great speed and the sort of flickering scenes. The camera work wasn't very good. And erm, then you got to read all these... well there used, was a lot of sentences going again and about two words came up at the bottom. [laughs] It was like seeing some of these operas where they give you erm, footnotes about it.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I don't watch films these days. The foreign ones that have got subtitles. Because, very often on television you can't read the subtitle. The light behind it upsets it.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And erm, anyway, I find it hard work sort of looking up and down. The old silent films, it did at least show the scene. And then have the words on a blank screen. And then go onto the next screen. It gave you time to read them. But if you read them here, you don't see what's going on.

VB: No.

OS: I don't erm, I don't really care for, well I don't watch foreign films at all.

VB: Did you go to the, to Saturday matinees at all? When you were a child.

OS: No. They're really post-war.

VB: Right.

OS: And by that time I was too old, you know. I was born in 1918 so when it came to 1945 I was twenty-seven, wasn't I? Twenty-seven, yeah. Erm, I was too old to bother with Saturday matinees. Anyway my husband came, well, my fiancé he was then. Came back and we got married and we had, he was a great sportsman. He was very keen on cricket. So Saturday morning he was devoted to getting ready to go to cricket in the afternoon. Or football in the afternoon, you know.

VB: Did you ever go with him while you were courting?

OS: What to the cinema?

VB: To the cinema.

OS: Oh yes. We used to see a lot of the erm, erm Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire films. In town very much. Because he lived in erm, Muswell Hill which is north London, you see, and I was living here. It was easier very often when we were both working in London. We'd very often go to films up there. Bit expensive. I remember once I was so excited. He took me to the cinema. We had nine shilling seats! Now for somebody used to ninepennys, this was wonderful. They were little bucket seats, you know. It was in erm, Lower Regent Street or Pall Mall. I'm not sure which. And erm, I really thought we'd! He hadn't got any money. I mean he was only a clerical officer in the Civil Service in those days. So, I don't know how he afforded it. But erm, that's what we did. And then we used to walk, very often, from Piccadilly or somewhere like that as far as Hyde Park! Walk either down Piccadilly. Or walk through the park of something. I'd get home about midnight. My mother wondering what the heck had happened to me. And she hadn't met him before the war. This is the part of the time we were doing that. And erm, actually before the war I didn't work in London. I worked at Acton. I used to meet him in London. 'Cause he was in London. I came back via Piccadilly. I didn't worry about coming back on the trains! I wouldn't do it now on my own. I may be more nervous perhaps. But erm [pause 2 seconds], it does bother me. You're frightened to go out wearing anything. Wearing a diamond ring or anything!

VB: Mhm.

OS: In case somebody has a go at you. Huh!

VB: Yeah. 'Cause I mean, as you say if you were going into London, obviously by the time you got there and the time you came back, it must've been quite late.

OS: Yes it was. And as I say we very often walked from the cinema, walked along talking. 'Cause you don't talk in the cinema, you know. And eh, during the war I didn't have anybody to go, well I did latterly. I used to go to the cinema with a cousin of mine. He was in the airforce and he used to come over. But erm, otherwise, if my mother wouldn't go, I just went on my own.

VB: Mhm.

OS: There was nothing at home. There was no television. There was radio. But if you've got the radio on and you're trying to listen to it, somebody else starts talking. My grandmother was living with us then. You sort of lost the thread of the thing. Go to a cinema, you shut yourself away in a strange world, you know. And eh, we learnt a lot about America which we wouldn't have known otherwise. 'Course it seemed a wonderful place from the films but I don't think I'd want to live there. But [pause 2 seconds], and then you move on. Television comes and... I didn't even want television. Because my sister was ill. Erm, she lived further down the road with her husband. And while she was in hospital, he and his little boy came to live with us. And brought the television. And stuck it on the sideboard. And every evening we had to have all the lights out! And sort of a sit in a row as though we were in a cinema.

VB: [laughs]

OS: And I was so glad when the television went! Because they weren't very good pictures in those days. They were small. And eh, no sort of, no programmes or anything. And I was glad when she came back and they took the television away. My mother was saying, "I don't think much of that television." And then in the next breath, "Would you like to have one? I'll go halves with you if we have a television." And I said, "No! I don't want television. I've had enough of that." Which was a bit selfish of me 'cause she was on her own more than I was. And she would've liked it. But erm, in fact we didn't have one till 1955. And I gave up work to have a baby. Which was stillborn. So I had three

years at home before my son was born. And the television then was valuable. I used to watch the skiing and things like that in the winter.

VB: Uhuh.

OS: I used to enjoy that. But I hadn't wanted television. Erm, we used to watch it a fair amount. But the trouble was it made us late to bed. You know, you wanted to see the end of a programme or something, then you were late to bed. And it's worse now because a lot of it goes on. My son wants to see 'Cue The Music' or something. It's going on about one twenty-five in the morning. As I say...
[tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: Were the stars people that you got to know? Or were they very much a part on the screen?

OS: Oh I didn't feel I got to know them. But I know I, I just, we sort of learnt about these youngsters who had their own cars, you know. Mickey Rooney driving around and things like, children here or youngsters here didn't have cars. Very few of us had cars in those days. Erm, and then the prison films were quite interesting, you know. And how they treated them. The Chain Gangs and things like that [probably referring to *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*]. But [pause 2 seconds], it was a different world. And of course beautiful scenery too, we saw in some films which we hadn't got here.

[clock chimes]

VB: Oh!

OS: Oh shut up! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: I don't know. You just suddenly realise that, of course, having the same language. Although somebody said, I think it was Churchill. The only division between us was the common language, you know. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: But erm, I mean I suspect that French films and German films would be just as interesting, if you didn't have the language problem. I mean I've just been to Switzerland. We've just come back. Erm, we've been six times now since my husband died so, getting used to Switzerland. But the language problem is annoying. You want to discuss something. You get somebody who doesn't know any English. I always thought most of the Swiss did but they don't. And erm, so you got television there, you don't watch it because you can't understand what's going on! Whereas with anything American, and I think that's why the English language is becoming the accepted main language rather than French. Because the American films have spread it through Europe.

VB: Mhm.

OS: As I say, it's slightly different from ours but eh, it, it interested me. I'm quite happy to see American films. I didn't like English films because in the old days they were dreadful. They had, they had to have a quota. The cinemas. They had to show a certain number of English films as the second film. And they were ghastly, some of them. Until the war. I mean after the war they had good erm, producers and directors and started making war films that were very interesting. Things that we knew had been going on but it was nice to sort of see a story built round them. And then I think British films like the erm [pause 2 seconds], that dam thing, dropping the bombs, I can't remember the name of the film now. Erm, *The Dam Busters*. That was it. They were all extremely interesting.

VB: Mhm. 'Cause when you say that eh, I mean quite of the few of the English stars ended up going to Hollywood, didn't they?

OS: Yes. Aw they were different. I mean there was Herbert Marshall for example. Now he used to make films in England with his first wife Edna Best. And oh dear, they were dreary. But then he went to Hollywood. Although he got a wooden leg. He managed very well. And he wasn't much to look at. But he became quite a heartthrob. Edna Best also went there and she was in a film with Leslie Howard erm, and Ingrid Bergman. She was a pianist. Can't remember the name of that now [probably referring to *Intermezzo*]. Eh, but Edna Best was still Edna Best. She was dreary, uninteresting.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I don't know how they ever got into films.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But erm, Herbert Marshall. I always quite liked him. And Leslie Howard was another one. I thought he was marvellous. Perfect English gentleman. But he wasn't English. He was Hungarian!

VB: Really? I didn't know that.

OS: Yes, he was a Hungarian.

VB: That's amazing.

OS: Mhm.

VB: 'Cause as you say he's the sort of quintessential Englishman.

OS: Absolutely! Yes. And you think of him in erm, *Gone with the Wind*, you know.

VB: Ye-es!

OS: But he was Hungarian-born. There were two or three, his son was, no was it his son or his brother? Ronald Howard. [pause 2 seconds]. I think it was his son. And there was another one. Arthur Howard. He used to be in British comedies quite a bit. But Hungarian background. I suppose they'd all been educated here. I mean he spoke the most beautiful English.

VB: Oh!

OS: Didn't sound like Zsa Zsa Gabor or anybody like that.

VB: No.

OS: But eh, oh I liked Leslie Howard. I was heartbroken when he disappeared. Very sad.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Oh he was erm, nowadays English stars, well, they've got to America.

VB: Mhm.

OS: There aren't many film studios here. I went to the Elstree Studio once for a garden party. I had an uncle who used to make scenery. [sound of cup on saucer]. Plaster scenery and what not, you know. And he got me a ticket, no two tickets to go to Elstree Studios. And we saw, oh dear, what was his name, Michael [pause 2 seconds]. Oh! Married erm, oh dear, I'm terrible. Elizabeth Taylor's first husband. Or second husband. [pause 2 seconds]. Can't think of his name now [referring to Michael Wilding]. He was the perfect, he used to make films with Anna Neagle, dancing films, yeah. And eh, saw him there and one or two others, you know. We thought, oh, this is wonderful, seeing all these famous people. And it was quite pleasant there. We were able to look round the studios and see how things, the sets were prepared there, you know.

Now down the road here we have a young lad, about the same age as my son. And he went into the film business. Oh, I think his father was a cameraman. That's right. He always looked terribly [laughs], pale. I think he spent his time in the dark room. And eh, the son, he was adopted. He went into the film business. And he can't get work here now. He went over to America and they thought he was going to stay there. But he didn't. He's a bit erm, well he hasn't got a lot of personality. A lot of drive, I don't think. And I met his mother not so long ago. So they're moving to Harlow. She said, "Well, perhaps he'll get more chance of film work there." But I don't know whether there's anything there.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But erm, this uncle of mine. For years eh, he lived in Wandsworth. Had to get out to Elstree an Denham and places like that. [pause 2 seconds] It was Denham I went to, not Elstree. Denham. Denham Studios. And erm, he used to build enormous plaster columns and all the things you... [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: Sort of Ben-Hur type [laughs], films. He enjoyed it, I think.

VB: Mhm. I mean did you have any particularly favourite types of films? I mean, we've talked a bit about musicals there.

OS: Oh I loved the musicals. Most of them. And erm, and the romances. I mean Garbo and Norma Shearer. And Judy Garland and people like that. They were mostly musical. Erm, one or two dramas. Erm, *Mrs Miniver*. That I enjoyed. With Greer Garson. Walter Pidgeon was in that. For some unknown reason Walter Pidgeon attracted me. I can't tell you why 'cause he was always quite old. But he was my idea of a nice man, you know. Erm, yes, I saw *Mrs Miniver* several times. I've seen *Gone with the Wind* I can't imagine how many times. I saw it in Blackpool when I was living up there. And I've seen it every time it's come on round here. And every time it's [laughs], been on the television. I mean I know it almost by heart. And I read the book. So erm, *Gone with the Wind* is a, was a film that I like. 'Cause that was a mixture or romance and drama and wars and things like that.

VB: Did you like erm, Clark Gable as well?

OS: Oh I loved Clark Gable. Yes. Particularly in *Gone with the Wind*.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I didn't like him in his early days. Before he had a moustache and he was rather stiff and starchy and, not, I didn't find him at all attractive. But as he moved on, he made a film with Claudette Colbert.

VB: Oh.

OS: What was that called?

VB: Oh-h.

OS: Something night or,

VB: *It Happened One Night*.

OS: *It Happened One Night*. That's it, yes.

VB: Oh! It's wonderful.

OS: That was when, I think, I first found him attractive. 'Cause he showed a sense of humour and eh, when he smiled, you know, he was attractive. Yes. I never liked her. I could never understand why Claudette Colbert was so popular. She struck me as [pause 2 seconds], well, lacking in sex appeal, completely. Although she sort of put it on but I didn't think much of her. Rosalind Russell was another one. I quite liked her. I remember all the old films. Erm, *7th Heaven* with Janet Gaynor. Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell. They were a working partnership, you know. They did quite a few films together. And erm, who else did I particularly go to see? 'Course I liked all the war films. I mean they were, they were some of them quite unpleasant in a way. But erm, if they were well made. Quite a lot of the aircra, erm, things for the erm, Battle of Britain thing, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: They were very interesting. 'Cause I'd lived through the Battle of Britain and I liked to see [laughs], what we'd lived through.

VB: Yeah.

OS: But it was erm, the war I suppose altered everything. [pause 2 seconds] It speeded everything up. I mean we got greater technology for making better films. And erm, more sort of themes to write about. But I could have done without it for all that. [laughs] And of course I liked ones with erm, the German Nazis and that. Because we'd seen the Nazis grow. I used to have a German correspondent. And she wrote to me. And I wrote to her. And my letters always came back terribly altered 'cause my German was dreadful. Though I'd been learning it at school. And she married erm, I think he called himself a tax officer or something. But he was always in uniform. Nazi uniform. And I was invited to the wedding. But we couldn't afford for me to go all the way to Berlin. I didn't want to go on my own, so I didn't go. And erm, he was taken prisoner at the end of the war, somewhere in Holland. And he wrote to me, saying he wanted this and he wanted that. He would need erm, some clothing. Socks and food and whatnot. And I thought, 'You can go to hell!' You know. My husband had been a prisoner of war and had just got back. So I didn't answer the letter.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And then a couple of years after that I had a letter from their son who was in Manchester. Could he come and see me? And I ignored that too. And since then I've moved so if he's written any more, I haven't heard about it. But erm, when I was at school, we used to eh, learn a lot about the League

of Nations. And those of us who had learnt German were involved in the, what did they call it? Not the ring. Anyway it was designed to encourage us to think the way that Hitler's lot were thinking, you know. And erm, we used to see the news films and Hitler talking to all these masses and masses of storm troopers and what not. And I thought, oh, well, what a man, you know. Never occurred to me we were going to have a war with him. So when the war did come, I was particularly interested, you know, in the films after it. Showing how it had all developed and that. And erm, I mean we have quite a lot of films on television now. Erm, documentaries about the war which I find extraordinarily interesting. I suppose it's only because you've lived through it that you do want to know how things went on. But erm, I'm sorry in a way that I don't go to the cinema any more. I don't go to the theatre either. Can't afford the theatres! The theatres in London, I mean, the seats are a tremendous price. Eh, it doesn't cost me anything to get to London. I have a bus pass. Which means I can go on the trains and buses free.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But erm, time you've had a meal up there and paid for a seat.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I'd just as soon sit at home [laughs], and watch it on television.

VB: Yeah.

OS: We go up to the erm, Albert Hall, to the prom concerts. That's about the most we do, you know. And even that I'm finding a bit of an effort 'cause it gets very hot sitting in there.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Then you've got to get home afterwards! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: Well if my son goes from here with me, we go by car so we come home by car.

VB: Ah, I see.

OS: Otherwise, if I meet him up there, we come home by train.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But erm, no that's really all we do now. And watch the rest on television. [pause 2 seconds]
Without which I'd go stark raving mad, I might tell you. I'm here all day on my own. Well! I'm going out shopping and I work for the Conservatives and I work for the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship. And eh, that gives me a bit of a break. But otherwise I'm mostly here. And I'm here all the evenings. I could cook him a dinner and off he goes. And I'm left with all the washing up. And eh, then the television. Then I sit down, oh how lovely! And then I go to sleep and miss it! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: But the news, I mean, that was the great thing about the old cinema. We did see the news. And if you hadn't got a radio at home, all you had were your newspapers. And in those days, when I was at school, my mother used to take the 'Daily Mirror' and the 'Daily Mail'. Well, I wouldn't take either of them now if you gave them to me. At the moment I'm thinking about not taking the Telegraph any more because I'm very cross with them. [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

OS: They were unkind about John Major and I like John Major. So, I do the crossword. So, really, I sit here in the evening. I used to knit. I've given up knitting. So I sit here doing the crossword and watching whatever's on the news mostly. And having seen the nine o'clock news, I then go over and watch the ten o'clock news. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: But erm, I like to know what's going on. And, as I say, when you went to the cinema you used to get that. But erm, that was our only way really of seeing anything!

VB: Mhm.

OS: And that's why it was so important. When I was in Blackpool, for example, we were terribly poor up there because we only had what we earned. And it wasn't very much in those days.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But even so, in the winter they used to let us into the cinemas cheaply. Not in the summer because that was the season. And Blackpool was very popular then because nobody could go to the south coast. It wasn't safe.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And so, we didn't go to the cinema much in the summer. But we used to go in the winter I think for about sixpence. And eh, saw quite a lot of films there. And there was a cinema right near us, used to go to even on a Sunday afternoon! Sunday in those days, they allowed it.

VB: Mhm!

OS: But erm [pause 3 seconds]. I don't know what we'd have done without that. Because you can't just sit around all evening talking to each other. We were living in billets. You know, two or three girls in one. All got different interests in life and, so we used to go to the cinema. Trying to think of the, [clock chimes], the film we saw there. The erm, little dummy, what was his name? [pause 3 seconds]

VB: Not Pinocchio.

OS: Pinocchio. Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I can remember seeing that there. And eh, *Gone with the Wind* and [pause 2 seconds], I think I saw Leslie Howard, Ingrid Bergman film, the name of which escapes me.

VB: Oh erm--

OS: I know she played Grieg's Sonata in it.

VB: I was thinking of *Brief Encounter* but it's a different one, isn't it? Is it not *Intermezzo*?

OS: *Intermezzo*.

VB: Yes.

OS: That's it! Good.

VB: [laughs]

OS: Obviously you've been doing your homework. I've forgotten. My memory's absolutely dreadful now.

VB: Yeah.

OS: That was a lovely film. That was another one I saw several times.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And that was the one that Edna Best was in. She was his wife. And eh, he fell in love with Ingrid Bergman, you know. And the daughter was killed I think, in the end. Run out under a bus or a car or something. And I can see Edna Best now. [laughs] Different expression on her face, she had all through the film, you know. But oh, they got work. And the other people you used to see British films of that really as films they weren't much. But it was Cicely Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert. They were married. And he was a dancer. He was a very ugly man. Long chin, you know. But a beautiful dancer. And she was very ugly too, I think. Face like a horse but erm, I used to like their films. They were light and airy, you know. They were British films and one of the few that were worth watching.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Erm, [inaudible] in one of our cinemas they used to put on a stage show. Between the two films! That was the Dominion.

VB: Ah!

OS: On the way to Wealdstone. This is now going to be Asian. And erm, oh you didn't pay any more to go. But there was one chap had an orchestra there. And I can't remember his name but the orchestra did one or two turns. The dancers and that. Or, erm, people who'd throw balls up in the air.

VB: Right.

OS: And erm, they didn't have an organ there. At the Granada they had the organ, so we had the organ instead. But I mean that made a nice break in the programme. To sit and listen to some music. And eh, as I say, without a radio. My mother was a very keen pianist actually. She was very very good. And my sister over there, middle sister who died, had a good singing voice. And so, when we went home we used to sing round the piano, 'cause we'd nothing else to do. And then when we went to the cinema and heard some of the music on the organ, you know, it was a sort of a link and it was interesting. But erm, I think they had an organ at the Embassy. Pretty sure. John Stewart! That was another favourite of mine in English films. And he made a personal appearance at the Embassy in North Harrow. I remember we all went along to see John Stewart. He wasn't much of an actor when I think back but eh, he was attractive and I quite liked him.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And erm, other people I liked in films were Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald. And we saw Jeanette MacDonald. She came to the Dominion in London. Up in Tottenham Court Road.

VB: Ah!

OS: As a personal appearance, you know. I was quite pleased to see her. Because, as I say, without television, we only ever saw them on the screen [and if weren't on the screen it wasn't on television?]. Erm, they were rare. And for them to come over and sort of, a personal appearance, you know, it was very good. [laughs]

VB: I just saw erm, *Maytime* quite recently.

OS: What?

VB: *Maytime*. With Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy.

OS: Oh yes! Yeah, yes. Mhm.

VB: Which I really enjoyed.

OS: Yes she did lots of films with Eddy. I never thought a lot of his singing voice. It was very ha-ard. But erm, he was fine looking man and eh, particularly when he was in the Mounties, you know. And the red uniform and that. And Alan Jones. That was another man. He was the father of the, Jack Jones, you know.

VB: A-ah!

OS: The jazz singer. And his father had a very good voice. And he was with her in one or two films. And erm, I liked him. Good looking, you know. Nice voice. Those were the sort of musicals--

VB: Mhm.

OS: That I quite enjoyed. You know. They weren't the accepted ones. I mean *The Sound of Music* was another musical that I liked very much. I thought Julie Andrews was very good.

VB: Uhuh. Jeanette MacDonald made a film, a couple of films with Maurice Chevalier, I think, as well.

OS: Yes, that's right! Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I liked Maurice Chevalier until I heard about him, you know. Apparently, he wasn't all that nice sort of person.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Very conceited and, more or less, but eh, I liked him. I liked the act he put on and his straw hat and what not. Erm, and there were one or two other opera singers. What was her name? Eh, Moore. Grace Moore! She made a, she wasn't much of an actress--

VB: Mhm.

OS: But she was a wonderful singer. And she was killed in an air crash. But I saw her in two or three films. They were very interesting. Well interesting if you like music and I like music.

VB: Did you like the American gangster films?

OS: Not very much.

VB: Mhm.

OS: They were a bit too bloody. And what's his name, erm. Hhm! Oh the little chap. He was a dancer as well.

VB: Oh, Cagney.

OS: Cagney!

VB: Yeah.

OS: I didn't like him until he, he made a musical. And I liked him in that. He's a wonderful dancer. Tremendous, I thought. But he was such a funny little chap. He didn't really appeal to me. Pat O'Brien used to be in a lot of those gangster films. And he was nice. And erm, I used to like Bing Crosby in the films where he was a clergyman, you know. [laughs] I like Bing Crosby very much actually. Well again, after he died, he didn't get a very good write up.

VB: Mhm.

OS: They all said Bob Hope was the nicer one of the two. And he, course he's still going! And he must be in his nineties now.

VB: Yes.

OS: I used to see their films. The Road ones with Dorothy Lamour. Another woman who I thought couldn't act for toffee. She was... [laughs] I didn't even think she was all that wonderful to look at. But she had a good figure. I didn't erm, care very much for the other blonde, erm. [pause 2 seconds]. Betty... [pause 2 seconds]. The pin-up girl during the war.

VB: [coughs]

OS: Betty Grable. She was another one who... she just stood about looking pretty, you know.

VB: Yeah.

OS: Was about all she had going for her.

VB: 'Cause you mentioned Bette Davis as well.

OS: Oh she was very good.

VB: Yeah.

OS: Again she was a funny looking woman. She was not my, she didn't look the heroine type. She was always better where she was being bitchy, I thought.

VB: Yes.

OS: It think she was naturally like that.

VB: Yeah.

OS: Well according to her daughter she was! But erm, yes I used to see all her films. And Tallulah Bankhead was another one I used to like. Now that's going back in the past. I remember her in eh, what was it? The sea film and they all finished up in a lifeboat. I think it was called *Lifeboat* or something. Yeah, all deciding who should throw who overboard and that sort of thing. And I remember her with her deep voice and always glamour. But it turned out that she was a lesbian so. [laughs] Oh dear. A funny lot.

VB: 'Cause it's interesting when you were talking about reading the film magazines. Eh, a lot of them had information about the stars, didn't they?

OS: Oh yes. They did. But it was always pretty, it was information put out by the studio. [phone rings] Oh gosh! I'll take it outside.

[OS talking on phone; tape recording resumes 0:54:40]

OS: [comes back into room] Being deaf, we've kept the, we originally had our phones changed. We kept the extra bell in here.

VB: Ah.

OS: We've not only got the warble there but you've got the bell there. And eh [laughs], I ought to be able to hear it. But otherwise you can't hear it upstairs. But we've got one upstairs as well now, so. Sorry, I interrupted... the phone was--

VB: Erm, I think we were talking about Bette Davis and then we got on to something else. Eh--

OS: Tallulah Bankhead. Mhm.

VB: Tallulah Bankhead! Yes.

OS: Yeah, she was, when I look back on her I think she was rather masculine looking. She had a strong face and this very deep voice. I liked her. I used to go, very often in the school holidays I'd go to the Harrow Coliseum. I remember seeing her there. And if it was an A film, you see, I couldn't go in on my own. So you used to wait for somebody to come and say, "Please, will you get me a ticket?" [laughs] And the people behind the cash desk knew very well what was going on but they never stopped you. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: So I saw quite a lot of A films when I shouldn't have done.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But of course A films in those days were, they were harmless. In those days they had the Hays Office in Hollywood. Erm, and you weren't allowed to have a couple in bed together unless they got one foot on the floor! Or something, something stupid, you know. So really there was nothing very harmful about them in these days. The films. I mean, there are things on television I don't like to see. And if I had children about the place. They say, "Oh, you can always switch it off." But you can't! It's happened before you realise it.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And so with the cinema you can pick and choose what you let your children go to. My mother used to let me go and she didn't know what I was going to see, very often, I don't think. Well I'd tell

her I was going to the Dominion or the Harrow Coliseum. And she would, I doubt if she would even look up in the paper to see what it was. She was rather glad that I got something to do, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But erm, no, it was, the cinema was really the centre of our lives in those days. Certainly, during the thirties. When I was, what was I? Twelve, when I went to the county school. And my friends and I were all interested in films. Nothing else to do.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And I think that's the trouble these days. A lot of youngsters are hanging about because, even if they want to go to the cinema they probably can't afford it. And eh, they don't want to stay at home with mum and watch the television. Even my son doesn't want to stay at home if he can get out. And he's thirty-six! But erm--

VB: Mhm.

OS: [laughs] Youngsters, I can understand them, you know, wanting to be with their friends and that's when they get into trouble! Drugs erm, sniffing erm, petrol and things like that.

VB: Did you used to talk about films with your friends?

OS: Oh yes. I think so. Yes, I imagine I must've done. I mean I used to work in an office where we were, part of the year, addressing insurance cards. Literally writing. I mean, that's why there's no work for youngsters leaving school now. Because in my time, you went into the Civil Service. There were always plenty of menial tasks and you worked your way up. And we used to sit there, had to write four hundred cards a day. Well, doing that, you were just chatting, most of time. There were some pretty funny addresses went out sometimes too. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: And erm, we would talk about what we'd been to see the night before. We had one girl there who belonged to a theatre club. And she used to get cheap tickets. And every so often she'd hand one out to somebody and we'd go to the theatre. Erm, at a cut price. But otherwise it was mostly the cinema.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And we'd talk about it and who we liked and. There were three friends. Myself and two others round here. And my great favourite was Garbo. The other friend liked Marlene Dietrich. And the other one liked erm, mhm! The English girl dancer who was in a lot of films. Jessie Matthews.

VB: Ah.

OS: So when we were cutting pictures out of books, I'd pass Jessie Matthews over to her and she'd pass Garbo over to me, you see. [laughs] We'd have books of Garbo. Books of Dietrich and that.

VB: That's very interesting.

OS: And it was strange how we reacted to different people. I didn't like Jessie, well! She was a good little dancer. But she was so frightfully, frightfully, and she'd been brought up in a very poor area, you know. She used to sing in one of the London markets, I think, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: As a child. Eh, but she'd learned how to speak and how to sing. It was always a little bit unnatural. Mind you she lived round here.

VB: Oh!

OS: And we had a friend of hers, or somebody who'd done her biography, came and talked to us at one of our Civil Service meetings that we have once a month. And it was quite interesting, what she told us about Jessie Matthews, you know. She was another one. She had a daughter, and I got a feeling it was an adopted daughter. I'm not sure.

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

[clock chimes]

OS: I think you see this in all these film people. They go off for months on end on location. Leave the children with somebody else. They can't expect the children to relate to them in the same way.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I mean I gave up work when I was going to have a baby and I've never worked since! And we've been pretty hard up at times. But eh, having an only child, you can't just go out and leave them and say, oh, well your tea'll be in the fridge, or something when you come in. I couldn't do that.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And erm, course these film people, they do. They make vast fortunes so they can pay nannies to look after the children. And they come home occasionally and say, "Hello, darling. How are you? I'm just going out," you know. And erm, and then they wonder, well they don't wonder 'cause they've died but--

VB: Mhm.

OS: We all wonder, when they've died, how the children react.

VB: Yes.

OS: Making money out of the. I mean, Joan Crawford, another actress I quite liked, although she was a bit of a bitch in a way. I mean her children, her daughters really went to town on her. And Bette Davis the same.

VB: Yes.

OS: But erm, I think it's a pity.

VB: Mhm. 'Cause I heard erm, that Jessie Matthews's marriage was quite difficult as well. Was it Sonnie Hale?

OS: Yes. Eh, he was originally married to Evelyn Laye.

VB: A-ah.

OS: Who I think is still alive. And she's in her, she must be ninety! I went to a hotel in Bournemouth. When? Immediately after the war. Before my son was born anyway. Went with my mother and my husband. And there was an old lady there, Mrs Laye. Who was Evelyn Laye's mother.

VB: Huh!

OS: And she got no time for her daughter. She used to moan about her like mad. I think the daughter went down there occasionally to see her.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But she lived there all the time, you know. As a regular resident in the hotel. A tall woman. Rather like Evelyn Laye. But Evelyn was certainly married to Sonnie Hale.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Till Jessie pinched him. But I think Jessie had another husband as well. Evelyn Laye certainly did. She married Frank somebody. An English actor. I can't remember his name [referring to Frank Lawton]. But he died some years ago and as far as I know she hasn't married again. But she was another one. I liked her singing voice. She was quite a beautiful woman really. But she never had films that were worthwhile, you know. British stuff it was [pause 2 seconds]. I mean the first things I enjoyed in American films were those wonderful dance scenes. You know. What was his name? Erm, Bus, Busby Berkeley or Bus Berkeley. Something like that. There used to be the most tremendous scenes of masses of dancers and legs all meeting in the middle, you know. Oh, astonishing patterns they made!

VB: Yeah.

OS: And we didn't get anything like that in British films because nobody had the sense to do it. The best we could do was people like Jack Buchanan. [You've heard of?] Jack Buchanan. He had a terrible voice. Erm, he used to sing and he sort of changed key, right in the middle!

VB: [laughs]

OS: He was a good dancer and I liked him but erm, the films again were, well, I suppose in those days I liked them all right. But when I look back on them eh, they were pretty poor.

VB: Mhm.

OS: He was more, they were stage people and they acted like stage people. They had the eh, stiffness and there wasn't the naturalness about them the Americans had.

VB: I see what you mean. Yes.

OS: Mhm. Yes the Americans no doubt, I mean there was no doubt about it, it was the mixed blood in the American films. The Italians and the Jews. Erm, English people aren't like that. They had more sort of passion, more sort of rhythm or urge. And, I mean the coloured folk, they bring the rhythm in.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Some coloured films. I mean, pretty good. Because they, you only got to see coloured people dancing, even in the streets. And it's so natural to them. None of us do that. Well you may. I don't!
[laughs]

VB: [laughs] Ah, 'cause when you were saying that I was thinking of erm, Robeson. As a singer.

OS: Oh, I love Paul Robeson.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I think he had the finest voice of anybody. Even now you hear recordings occasionally and I love the. Now he was another funny man. He was a Communist. Got himself into big trouble.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And Charlie Chaplin. I mean, I never really laughed at him. He didn't appeal to my sense of humour. But he was supposed to be such a wonderful actor. And he was Jew. But I suppose that's what made him what he was. He was different. But of course he upset the Americans and he got pushed out.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Didn't get back again. [pause 2 seconds] Erm, John Wayne's another actor that erm, he's quite good! But he was always the same, wasn't he? And eh, I quite like western films. They're quite interesting because we didn't know anything about the westerns. It was all quite new to us. And before films came around my sister used to read all the Zane Grey books which were about the western world, you know. A lot of those were made into films. And John Wayne, course, could ride a horse and he looked tall. And he got a good voice. But he was always John Wayne!

VB: Mhm.

OS: I don't think I ever bothered to go to watch his films particularly. Any more than I would Clint Eastwood.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I don't like the look of Clint Eastwood, you know. Another one, he seems to be the same in everything he does. [pause 2 seconds] But erm, I can't think of any other types of films that we particularly liked. Oh, I liked, there was one about the Titanic. [pause 2 seconds] I can't remember who was in that now. But erm, it was interesting because the Titanic was a true story and of course they altered quite a lot of it. But erm, even so, it was interesting to see what happened there. [pause 3 seconds] The sea films could be quite interesting.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Particularly the war ones. I'm trying to think of the Nicolas Montsarrat one. What was the called, erm? *The Cruel Sea*. That was interesting because it was air raids at home and battles at sea. And the other Noel Coward one. Erm? Mhm! *In Which We Serve*. That was a film that I enjoyed very much. I was always interested in Noel Coward. Because I had a cousin who was erm, a very good cricketer. Because he was a good cricketer he got a job in Ceylon. They wanted somebody who could play cricket. And he became a tea merchant. I don't know whether he did the actual growing but he was involved in tea and he knew Noel Coward's brother.

VB: A-ah!

OS: Eric. I think it was Eric. He subsequently died of TB. But because of that, and the fact that this cousin came from Clapham Common and erm, so did Noel Coward's family. He went to school somewhere round there. But we were always very interested in what Noel Coward was doing. There was another film of Noel Coward's. Now what was that called? Erm [pause 2 seconds]. One word, began with C [probably referring to *Cavalcade*]. Erm [pause 2 seconds]. He wasn't in it but he was erm, it was his work.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I can't remember now. And that was a British film. And that was interesting. But erm, *In Which We Serve*, Noel Coward was actually in it himself. Oh, very stiff upper lip type, you know. Ah tchee! [laughs] He was another one who wasn't a very nice person as far as one can make out. He used to be seen taking the Duchess of Kent to the theatre. And everybody knew he wasn't interested in women anyway but he used to take her 'cause it looked good, you know. Noel Coward with the Duchess of Kent. And she died, oh years ago now. It's not the present Duchess.

VB: Ah.

OS: The present Duke's mother.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Erm, and what else did we see? It's silly I can't remember the name of this Noel Coward film because my grandmother always pronounced it wrongly. And I can't think what her pronunciation was and what the real name was. But it went through the ages. I think it went as far as the first war. Yes, and days before the second war.

VB: Mhm.

OS: No. I can't remember it. I'm sure it began with C. It'll come to me later. In the middle of the night quite possibly.

VB: [laughs]

OS: [laughs] It's funny how that happens. You can't remember.

VB: Very much so. Yes.

OS: And suddenly, of course it was that, you know.

VB: Yeah.

OS: And then it's too late then to tell anybody. [laughs]

VB: That's right. Especially with films and titles and names of actors. [laughs] Things like that. You just--

OS: Yeah. [laughs] I'm terrible. I mean when you get older your memory goes anyway and mine, mine's certainly gone. My son's swears he'd told me something. I know damn well he hasn't but he's playing on the fact that, [bursts out laughing], my memory's not very good.

VB: [laughs]

OS: "I told you that last week." Didn't hear it. Huh! [laughs] Oh dear. What else did we see? [pause 3 seconds] Trying to think of any other musicals. Who was the chap who used to dance with erm, Anna Neagle? Michael, trying to think of him just now.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Married Elizabeth Taylor at one stage. And they did quite a series of films. [pause 2 seconds] English films. And they were good. Well the dancing was good 'cause Anna Neagle's dancing was good. And of course she did some good films. The erm, spy ones. Erm, can't remember the name of the spy now.

VB: Yeah.

OS: The woman who was tortured by the Germans. She died the other day. *Odette!*

VB: *Odette.* Yes.

OS: Yeah she died the other day.

VB: Yes. That was wonderful.

OS: But erm, yeah Anna Neagle I thought was quite good. There again she was a stage star. And I think she had a bit of a job relaxing. [pause 2 seconds] Oh, I can't remember his name. I know it so well! [pause 4 seconds] It's gone now.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Elizabeth Taylor's another one I quite like. I haven't seen all her films but erm, another one who's beautiful.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Who's nice to look at. It's nice to see something that's beautiful. And she still looks pretty good, doesn't she?

VB: Mhm. Wonderful. Yes! [laughs]

OS: Eh, Joan Collins. I mean--

VB: Yeah.

OS: Perhaps not so good at close quarters. I gather they put erm, egg white on their faces.

VB: Oh really?

OS: Yes. That tightens up all the wrinkles. And eh... [laughs] Unpleasant.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Frightened to smile in case it cracks! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: Yeah I'm not very keen on Joan Collins. Not that I've seen her in cinemas.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I've seen her in erm, was it Dallas? Was it Dallas she was in or the other one?

VB: The other one.

OS: The other one.

VB: Aye. Dynasty. [laughs] As the Americans say.

OS: Yeah. Yes, well I think that's about all I've seen her in. Looking gorgeous in wonderful gowns.

VB: Mhm. Was that part of the attraction of the films?

OS: Well very often, the dress.

VB: The dresses.

OS: Particularly to us during the war when we had nothing.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And I was only thinking the other day that in all the old films, they wore hats. The heroine would come in a gorgeous hat. 'Course, these days, nobody wears a hat. Or very few. I go to the mayor's garden party every year and we always wear a hat to the mayor's garden party. And I hate it!

VB: [laughs]

OS: I buy one at a charity shop of something 'cause I'm never going to wear it again! I'm certainly not going to pay forty pounds for some of these great, anyway, they'd dwarf me.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I'd look ridiculous in a great big hat. But eh, in the old films, I was thinking of Lana Turner who's died this week. She used to wear fancy hats and furs all round her neck and that.

VB: Mhm.

OS: 'Course, these days you're frightened to wear a fur. You mustn't do that any more. But erm, oh no they had some wonderful clothes. Remarkable. Think what it must've cost to put on some of those films.

VB: Mhm.

OS: The outfits they wore.

VB: You mentioned Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and a flash came into my mind of a scene in *Top Hat*.

OS: Yes.

VB: Where she wears that feather gown that--

OS: Oh yes. It was just lovely.

VB: Mhm.

OS: She was another one that erm, she always looked rather common I thought. If that sounds a bit erm, superior. But she, she wouldn't have passed for a lady I would've thought. And eh, course Fred Astaire was really rather superior. He used to dance with his own sister. And she suddenly gave up. Married into the aristocracy here and Fred went over to America and danced with, well Rita Hayworth at first. Remember her. She died of Alzheimer's disease.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Terrible the way she suddenly faded out. But she was quite a good looker. Acton! I used to go to the cinema in Acton. I remember seeing her there. 'Cause I worked in Acton. And erm, I went to the cinema there. Something down to Rio [probably referring to *Flying Down to Rio*]. That's what the film was called, she was in. Ah, I think that was Ronald, Fred Astaire! But she was a good dancer. 'Cause her father was a dancing teacher. Cassini. Somebody Cassini or some such name. And eh, he taught her presumably. She was very good. [pause 4 seconds] I wasn't very keen on terribly long films. There were one or two. Like *Gone with the Wind*. I liked *Gone with the Wind* actually. But

there were one or two others that, [clock chimes], they probably only had the one film on the programme, didn't they?

VB: Mhm.

OS: So long as they had an interval in the middle of it. I wasn't very keen on that. But erm, it's all in the past now anyway. 'Cause I shan't go to a cinema again unless something extraordinary happens. [laughs] I'd just as soon sit and watch it there if I'm going to see it at all. [pause 4 seconds]

VB: Yes it's certainly a completely different style of film to the ones we've been talking about.

OS: Yes. You remember when they brought those great big ones in. Erm--

VB: Oh.

OS: And you had the sound coming in from the side of the cinema. What were they called? Erm. Elizabeth Taylor's husband. [Mike] Todd, Todd-AO [film format] was it called? It was erm, wide screen--

VB: Mhm.

OS: And different sound. At one stage we had some films where they gave us coloured glasses to wear.

VB: Mhm!

OS: Red and green erm, plastic things. Erm, to pick up the colour. And there was the, the sort of, was it called monochromed? Brownie. Not colour, not black and white. It was a sort of brownie colour. I wasn't very keen on that. I remember seeing some films where you felt you were going down the erm, ski slopes, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: With them. You were part of what was happening. But of course there were only certain cinemas could do that.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And we've had some of those on television and you'd get a funny effect on television. You'd get a curve at the top and a curve at the bottom. And the picture in the middle.

VB: Yeah.

OS: They weren't made for television and they don't fit. [pause 2 seconds] I don't know. Don't think I've seen anything else of any great moment. But certainly it was two or three times a week. If I hadn't got a cinema to go to, you know. As I say we were poor but ninepence, we found that somehow.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I mean when I started work I was doing well. I started at twenty-eight and six a week! And a lot of friends were starting at fifteen bob a week, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I went into the Civil Service. And then I got a rise. I started in August, got a rise on my birthday in December. Put me up to thirty, what was it, three and six rise. Thirty-two bob a week! Well that was, that was money! My train fair I think was four and six a week. To get to work. And then there was a bus at the end of that. So there wasn't a lot of money to spare. And then when we went up to Blackpool. I was sent up there. I was earning forty-five bob a week. And we were living in digs up there.

VB: Mhm.

OS: You had to pay your rent. I think we had to pay thirty bob a week for the digs! It had to be a sixpenny do at the cinema,

VB: Mhm.

OS: Else we couldn't go.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Anyway my parents, well, my parents were separated. My mother couldn't afford to send me any money. I just had to make do with what I was earning.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And find the money to come home from Blackpool. Wasn't cheap. Coming down by train. I'd always wanted to come home. Although the air raids were going on down here. It was a little bit frightening coming down.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I came down once from Blackpool and there were air raids all the way! We came down in the dark all the way. And the train was going to Euston. It wasn't supposed to stop at Wealdstone. Which of course suited me, Wealdstone. But suddenly we did stop at Wealdstone. No! We stopped at Watford.

VB: Mhm!

OS: And I heard voices going through the train. "Anybody here with the name of, Smith, Green," and something else. Well I was the Smith. And it was my sister! She'd got on the train at Watford. And we all walked home from Wealdstone. They got the train stopped at Wealdstone and we all walked home. Still the air raids going on, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I mean we... [laughs] It was an extraordinary time to live in really. I don't know why she was there! Why she thought she'd come and meet me. I think it was expected to stop at Watford and then we were going to get a train from Watford to Wealdstone. That was it. And she came to meet me at Watford and the train came in, about four hours late! I mean this was midnight.

VB: Uhuh.

OS: There were no buses. It was too late for buses. And erm, I hadn't had anything to eat! I'd been on the train all that time. There were only little lights on in each carriage. Just enough so that you could see other people. But it didn't have proper lights on. Air raids all the way down! I got back from Blackpool as soon as I could. But it was a bit silly because I came back into trouble here. You

know, with the raids. And I wanted to go to the pictures and I had to go on my own or not go at all. My grandmother used to say, "You don't want to keep going to the pictures." And I thought, "Well, I don't want to keep sitting with you here!" [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: So I used to go. Aw dear. It was all right when it was the Odeon down here because we walked back. But the others in Harrow, 'course we had to wait for buses.

VB: Mhm.

OS: All the flak. There was quite a lot of flak flying around. [pause 4 seconds] But it was worrying when the notice came up on the screen. 'Air Raid In Progress'. What do I do now? [laughs] [pause 3 seconds] When we were in Blackpool we had all the erm, famous musical comedy people up there. We had a whole series of Gilbert and Sullivan. We had Richard Tauber up there! And so, we found the money somehow to go and see them. We even had Sir Henry Wood up there with his orchestra and I went to that. Eh, but otherwise it was cinema. I don't think there were any more than two cinemas in Blackpool centre, but there was one near us when we were on the outside edge. Erm, but we used to go. Used to go, used to meet a lot of RAF up there while we were there, you know. A lot of romances started up there. [laughs] [pause 2 seconds] Funny life. [pause 4 seconds] It's funny, you're from Glasgow University. I had somebody here this week from Stirling.

VB: Ah!

OS: He lives in Kenton. He's a friend of my son's. They used to go to the same church. And we'd been in such a state of chaos here. All the council papers had been piled up behind that sofa. And I couldn't even move it!

VB: [laughs]

OS: I've moved it this morning. I've hoovered under it. But, I just couldn't, all this paper about the place. And as I say, this friend of his is on holiday from university. And he's always looking for a job so my son paid him to come and sort through all the papers. And my son owns a flat up the road which he lets out. But he doesn't let out the garage. And the garage is used to store paper. And we had all this paper and I said, "Where's the garage key?" He said, "Oh Keith's got that. He's going to

come and look at the roof. It's letting water." And we couldn't find Keith! And there was all this paper, got to go up there. But fortunately this lad, he went up and picked the lock. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: You should see the pile of paper there! The two television sets as well. That garage over the road, back of my sister's garden, my son used to use that. He's been using that for 20 years nearly. And now she's died, they've sold the house, he's lost the garage! But he couldn't use his up the road because there wasn't room for a car and the paper!

VB: [laughs]

OS: So his car gets left out in the street now. Poor old wreck anyway.

VB: Aw.

OS: But erm he's hardly been to the cinema. I took him to see *The Wizard of Oz* once and I had to bring him home. He gets migraine. And there was a lot of noise in it--

VB: Mhm.

OS: He got such a headache. I had to bring him home from there. And *Sound of Music* he liked. And erm, oh dear the famous film that erm, Julie Andrews made erm, Mrs [pause 2 seconds] Oh! She made things happen. Erm,

VB: I know the one you mean but it's gone. The title's gone.

OS: Yeah.

VB: Erm--

OS: Anyway, he saw that. He liked that. And when we were in Bournemouth we booked to go and see *The Sound of Music*. Oh he didn't like that. That wasn't how he'd seen her in the other film!

VB: [laughs]

OS: [laughs] He was about eleven I think then. And he's been to one or two other films. I think he went to see *Gandhi*.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And something else with some friends of his. When it came to the Granada. But erm, he doesn't even want to watch films on television.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Entirely different--

VB: Yeah. That film you mentioned. Is it *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*?

OS: No, no, no! Well we did see that.

VB: Yeah. It's on the tip of my tongue as well. The one where she's up and down on the--

OS: She comes down on an umbrella.

VB: Yeah.

OS: What's it called?

VB: *Mary Poppins!*

OS: *Mary Poppins*.

VB: That's it.

OS: That's right. *Mary Poppins*. We saw that at Rayners Lane. I took him over there to see it.

VB: Yeah.

OS: And he liked that. I don't know, I suppose he was about eleven or twelve then. He liked that. And he liked her in that but he couldn't accept that she was the same person in *The Sound of Music*. That wasn't right. He was absolutely grouchy about it--

VB: [laughs]

OS: We hadn't told him. We'd booked it up. And when we got there he was, "Mhm, don't want to see that," you know. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: And he never really has been a cinemagoer. Whereas, of course you don't have to be when you've got a television.

VB: Mhm.

OS: In my day you had to be to see anything different.

VB: Yeah.

OS: To have a different interest in life. If you couldn't go to the theatres, whether you go to the theatre. Erm, I used to read quite a lot. I used to sit, book on the chair and some knitting and the radio in the background. But the radio was so poor. We used to have one with erm, it was really a portable one. It opened out.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And it had an accumulator and what's it? Dry battery. High tension battery. And the accumulator of course had to be charged about once a week.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And I'd be out for the evening and I'd come back and my mother would say, 'Course that damned accumulator would run out when I was here on my own, wouldn't it!' you know.

VB: [laughs]

OS: And we were always carting these things up and down the road. I think they charged sixpence a time to recharge them. And then it was tragedy when a high tension battery went because they were 12 and six each!

VB: Mhm.

OS: And we had to find 12 and six to buy a new tension battery. And when you got it all the sound wasn't all that wonderful. But, used to have spelling quizzes and things in those days. Spelling bees and my mother used to like to listen to those. And I would listen to those if I was there. But really that was all. To read or listen to the radio. And you didn't want to come in the middle. And, those days, we had the telephone in the living room.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Well we have now but that's new. Erm, so if you wanted to speak to anyone on the phone, the radio had to be switched off regardless of what was on. Eh, I'm not surprised. My parents didn't get on. And my father used to spend most of his time in the pub. He wasn't an alcoholic. But he loved to go and talk. There was nothing at home, you know. He got fed up with that.

VB: Mhm.

OS: So he'd go out to the, well most of the pubs in town. Because he worked in town. And erm, really we had nothing. We used to play cards a lot. Erm, my friends used to come round and my sisters and my mother and I used to sit playing cards. And we'd talk about films probably then. Erm, but without that I don't know what I'd do. There's always, there's somebody else in the room.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Somebody living. Even if it's not a programme I want to see, I have it on, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And erm, the films took the place of that I suppose. They kept us up to date with things. Course we all got high and mighty ideas, you know. We wanted to look like the film stars which of course we couldn't.

VB: A-ah!

OS: [laughs] Tried to do fancy things with your hair. Never succeeded. Erm, 'course in those days we couldn't even get decent stockings during the war. We used to be walking about with stockings with darns in the heels. And see these nylons in the films, you know. You wanted them [laughs], but you couldn't have them!

VB: Of course if you wanted to look like Greta Garbo I think most people [laughs], would have problems.

OS: [laughs] Yes. I mean when you look at her when she first started--

VB: Yes.

OS: She didn't look anything very startling.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Quite a pleasant face. But the make-up they devised for her, highlighting the cheekbones and things like that.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I thought she was lovely. She again was a bit masculine in a way. Deep voice and deep laugh. I think of her with John Gilbert. He was supposed to be the great--

VB: Huh!

OS: The great lover.

VB: Oh yes.

OS: Golly! He was sort of stary-eyed. He had a poor voice. That's what finished him. His voice wasn't good enough for talkies.

VB: Yeah.

OS: Erm, but she was supposed to marry him I gather and she back out at the last minute, and never married anybody.

VB: I remember seeing them in *Flesh And The Devil*.

OS: That's right! Yes. Yeah.

VB: Yes.

OS: That's going back a bit, isn't it?

VB: Yeah.

OS: I remember old Harold Lloyd climbing up buildings. And he only had one hand, I think.

VB: Did he?

OS: I think he had a false hand. Though how he, well the stunts were fiddled obviously.

VB: Mhm.

OS: He wasn't up at the top of a building although it looked like it. But I didn't care for him. And Buster Keaton. Eh [pause 2 seconds]. I think I was too young for people like that. I couldn't understand their humour.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And he had an expressionless, unsmiling face which was his trademark, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: As I say, Charlie Chaplin I didn't like. And I didn't much care for the erm, oh the police erm [pause 2 seconds]. Something cops [probably referring to the Keystone Kops]--

VB: Mhm.

OS: Yeah they used to go rushing about all over the place!

VB: Mhm.

OS: Laurel and Hardy I liked. They were always the same. It was just different situations but they were the same. I saw them once at the Ideal Home Exhibition. And he was huge! Old Hardy. Massive great man. Erm, don't know why they were over here but they were. 'Course Laurel was English anyway. I quite liked them. Used to see a lot of shorties. Their films were quite short. Which was just as well. They wouldn't have been able to sustain it for a long film. [clock chimes]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: It's interesting that you say that, that you were a bit of a buff. I mean, were you aware of that at the time? Did you think you were unusual in the number of times you went to the cinema?

OS: I don't think I was unusual actually. As I said we were all in the same situation. We didn't have television. We got bored at home. And that set you in another world.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And it sort of passed the evening. Been at work all day. Go and have an evening there. And if I didn't go three times, about three times a week I felt something was missing, you know. I used to stay home as I said, knit and read sometimes. But I got bored with that. Particularly during the war. My sisters were both fire watching or something up at the office. They used to work at the office up the road, the government office. Erm, and I worked in town. So having come home, erm, the friends I knew in town didn't live in Harrow necessarily. There was one that was in Edmonton. And all over the place. Unless you went to the cinema with them in town, you were on you own.

VB: I see.

OS: And I didn't like going to the cinema in town because of air raids. You felt you needed to get home. But erm, I would sit there. If my sisters were there it wasn't too bad. But if they weren't and very often they weren't, there was only my mother and my grandmother. I was very fond of my mother but eh, you just get bored after a while.

VB: Yeah. 'Course.

OS: I used to stay at home and mend my stockings! As we had to in those days. And, cut things down, you know. Take the sleeves out of a jumper or something and make a waistcoat. [laughs] Knitting things. Even in those days we used to buy knitting wool from a shop down the road. And you'd say now I want eight ounces for this particular jumper. And they'd keep seven ounces and you'd buy one. About sixpence an ounce. You couldn't afford to buy the whole lot at one go in those days. And I don't think people these days realise how hard up we were. I never smoked fortunately so I didn't waste money on smoking. But, I mean I know money went a lot further than it does now but to live on forty-five shillings a week, away from home, which is what I had to do in Blackpool--

VB: Mhm.

OS: I wonder how on earth we managed. As I say we had to mend stockings [inaudible] 'Course there wasn't any rationing when I was in Blackpool but after that the clothes rationing came in. You couldn't, you couldn't keep buying clothes because you hadn't got the coupons.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I had an aunt who never spent money on clothes and occasionally she'd sell me some coupons. If I could afford to buy them.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And erm, otherwise if you were at home you were busy doing a few bits of washing and mending. Generally keeping yourself busy. But it wasn't very exciting. And my husband, he was a prisoner of war for five years so, I had other friends whose boyfriends were coming home on leave. And I didn't have anybody coming home on leave. And, well I joined, I was an air raid warden. I used to go out in the evenings, well, once or twice a week to do that. I was a first aider at the office and I had to stay up there and I didn't like that. I didn't want to be a first aider--

VB: Mhm.

OS: But they made me do it. So I had to stay there. Erm, sometimes when we were on first aid at night, we'd go to a cinema in town during the evening before our duty started at night. So, I

remember seeing 'Me And My Girl'. That was theatre, that was. Lupino Lane. The Lupino family were a great film and stage family. And they lived in Brixton and my father knew them 'cause he'd lived in Brixton. And, so I always used to take in interest in that family. There was Stanley Lupino and Lupino Lane and, I think there was another one too. But erm, I remember going to the Victoria Palace, I think it was, to see that. But as I say, they have since made a film of it but I haven't seen the film. But eh, I saw the stage. [pause 2 seconds] I was trained as a despatch rider too during the war. I was lucky. I was never called up. They always got near to leaving and I never got called up. And I didn't want to go into the forces. But the Home Office ran a despatch riding party group erm, to go out to sector offices. I was in the Ministry of Health and we had a sector office out at erm, Stanmore. Another one, I think, at Uxbridge. Or somewhere else. And they used, these despatch riders used to have to take stuff from Central London out to there. And during the air raids a lot of them got killed or put out of action anyway. And so they asked all round the government offices for volunteers to learn to be despatch riders. And I was always terrified of motorbikes. I had a friend who'd lost her leg. Well she wasn't a friend but somebody I knew down here. Lost her leg in a motorcycle accident and I was frightened of it. And then they asked for these volunteers and I thought well, I might not be so frightened of it if I learnt how to do it. And I did learn and we had quite good fun. But I never acted as a despatch rider--

VB: Mhm.

OS: 'Cause we were never needed. Because the air raids stopped. But erm, that gave us another interest, you know, and met a few more people. Sometimes I was late home. I mean one night we had to go right down to Rochester in the dark and in those days you didn't have proper headlights. You had little sort of erm, shutters over the headlights. And when you were driving along you saw these strips of light in front of you which were really off-putting, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: You couldn't really see what you were looking at. And we came back in pouring rain. Erm, so that was another evening taken up. But that was the difficulty. No boyfriend. And, well I had a cousin at the end of the war I used to go out with a bit [but he wasn't a boyfriend?] His wife left him and he was on his own--

VB: Mhm.

OS: So we used to go to the cinema. In fact we were at the cinema in Southall. In 1944. And eh, we didn't hear anything. But when we came out we were told there'd been a tremendous explosion. A gas main had gone off. And what it was the V2s [ballistic missile]. It was the first V2. And I think it was somewhere near Chiswick.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Which isn't all that far from Southall. And we'd been in at the cinema and hadn't heard it, thank goodness. But when we came out we heard people talking about it. And eh, his father had heard it. A gas main exploded somewhere. And for a long time it was referred to as the flying gas main.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And 'course the government were trying to keep quiet about it, you know.

VB: Yes.

OS: Oh they were terrifying things. I mean you could go to a cinema and you never knew when one of those might drop on it.

VB: Mhm.

OS: It was the same here at home. If you were coming here on the train. So you sort of tried to lead a normal life, do what you'd been doing. Go to the cinema. In those days there was nothing much else to go to. I mean nowadays we have, as I say I work for the Conservatives. We have suppers and erm, even those are fading a bit. There's the mayor's garden party and things like that. Those things didn't happen then. I suppose I could've belonged to the Conservative Association but I didn't.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But anyway, people were being called away to the war. There was no one around to be with. Everywhere you went you saw men in uniform which seems extraordinary now, when you think of it. I remember in Oxford Street one day erm, when Doug Fairbanks Jr. [referring to Douglas Fairbanks Jr.] walked past me in his naval uniform.

VB: Ah!

OS: Ooh he looked a smasher! I always used to think he was attractive. I don't remember his father very much. Erm, he and Mary Pickford. I think I did see one or two of their films. He was great swashbuckler.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And Errol Flynn was another swashbuckler. Another nasty bit of work apparently. Extraordinary these people, when you find out what they were like. And David Niven! He was another favourite of mine. And he died very sadly, very tragically. Motor neurone disease.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But he used to have nasty parts to start with. He was always the, rather unpleasant erm, not exactly a villain but erm, he wasn't nice. But then 'course gradually he became more popular and he got the nice parts. And being English, I suppose, I liked him. He spoke nicely. I got a bit tired of the American twang.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I didn't like people like Burt Lancaster. Although recently I've seen films of him when he was older and I have quite liked him. But when he came to fame, he wasn't my type at all. Didn't fancy him. [pause 4 seconds] But, there we are that was my one interest. Certainly during the war when there was nothing else to do. [pause 3 seconds] I mean these days there are voluntary things to do like working in charity shops or working in some of the hospitals.

VB: Mhm.

OS: You can do voluntary work. Didn't know of it then. I suppose it was there. I don't know. I broke my ankle during the war. And erm, it was the Harrow Hospital in those days. And I was taken there and erm, thrown out as fast as they could get rid of me. The very same day, you know. They set the ankle and it was very bad. I was twelve weeks in plaster which is heck of a long time. And erm, even then I went to the cinema. I went to the cinema called the Essoldo. Now where was that? Kingsbury? Queensbury? Somewhere like that. I remember going by bus. With my plaster and sticks. And that was a James Cagney thing erm, he was the erm, caw silly! He wrote music. Erm, he was a famous

[pause 2 seconds]. Famous music writer, can't remember his name. 'I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy'
[referring to *Yankee Doodle Dandy*].

VB: Oh yes, yes.

OS: 'I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy', that was it. And I remember going all the way in my plaster to the Essoldo.

VB: [laughs]

OS: And I don't know what that is now or whether it's even there still. I think it was at Queensbury. And one bus from here went there. So I only had to go on one bus. But I enjoyed it. I liked him so much in that.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I didn't like him as a hoodlum or whatever. Some of those erm, Chicago things were, well they were true, very largely. Saint Valentine's Massacre and things like that. That got into the films. But I didn't like them. [pause 3 seconds] These things happen, I suppose you've got to accept it but erm, pretty awful. But I've never been to see things like the *Clockwork Orange*. I didn't fancy that. And that again has been since I've more or less given up cinemagoing. [pause 3 seconds] We actually got my grandparents to go to the cinema I think about three times.

VB: [laughs]

OS: This was a new thing to them. They'd never heard of cinemas. Theatres, yes. Because they lived in Charing Cross. And they knew all about theatres. But cinema, no. Didn't sort of accept them. But they did go about three times. I think they reacted, they didn't want to spend their money. But eh, they went. Erm, my mother and I went most I suppose. Until I got married and then the three of us would go. My mother and my husband and myself. [pause 6 seconds] Well there it is. [pause 4 seconds] [laughs]

VB: [laughs] Well I've thoroughly enjoyed sitting listening.

OS: [laughs]

VB: It's been amazing.

OS: Well I really can't think of anything. Trouble is, as I say, I can't remember names of things.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But erm, ooh I wish I could remember the name of that Noel Coward film.

VB: Ah. It's so frustrating that when you--

OS: Went right through from the Victorian days to the First World War. [pause 3 seconds]

VB: As you say it'll probably come--

OS: In the middle of the night. Yes.

VB: Some other time. Yeah.

OS: [laughs]

VB: I mean I was thinking actually just now erm, I know what will probably happen is I'll go away and I'll think about things you've said and I'll think, "I wish I'd asked her about this.. [laughs]

OS: [laughs]

VB: Or asked her about that!" Would you mind if I maybe--

OS: No, I don't mind.

VB: Came round again. 'Cause that would be great.

OS: Mhm. [laughs]

VB: That would be wonderful.

OS: [I can think of something?]

VB: And the other thing I was thinking as well is, I brought down with me a couple of erm, movie books from the thirties that you might enjoy having--

OS: Couple of what?

VB: Of books. Erm, from I think '35 and '38 that you might like to--

OS: We probably would've had those.

VB: Have a look at [laughs]--

OS: Yes.

VB: And remember them. [laughs]

OS: Yes, I suppose really, when I think of it, my life circled around films. We had film books. We stuck pictures in books. We went to the cinema. I was never a sporting type. Erm, some of my friends used to go and play tennis or [clock chimes] they used to go and learn dancing.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I was not allowed to do that. My mother didn't consider that was the right thing to do. Erm, I wasn't good at games. I wasn't at school. Strangely enough I married a man who was absolutely wonderful at games. Didn't matter what it was. If he got a ball he played it well, you know.

VB: Yeah.

OS: And he had a son who's useless! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: Give him a bat and a ball and he can't co-ordinate! We even bought erm, a shuttlecock and a badminton bat, you know. Thought, well that's slower, he can hit that. But he couldn't. No good at all. When he went to school he couldn't play games. He gave up. He used to go round helping old people. Arranging for some of the boys at school to go and paint the kitchens for them and things like that. He had to do something [laughs], but he couldn't play games.

VB: Mhm.

OS: He obviously got that from me. And I was always a keen card player. And so was my husband. Because he was my age and he'd been playing cards with the family and that. Before the war. But my son won't. He's very religious and he thinks it's almost the hand of the devil--

VB: A-ah.

OS: Almost. When you're playing cards.

VB: Yeah.

OS: He won't look at the lottery on the television when that's shown.

VB: Mhm.

OS: He'll walk out of the room. He thinks it's an awful mistake, the lottery. But eh, he's political, he's religious. He doesn't play games. He's not interested, really not all that interested in television although he keeps telling me I ought to have a video because sometimes there's something on the other programme I want to watch.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But erm, people round here get robbed of their videos.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I had a burglary here, what? Last November.

VB: Oh dear.

OS: I went to one of my Civil Service meetings and I came back in the afternoon. I came down in my car and I found a police van across the road. And I looked and the front door was open. Lights on, policemen coming out. And my sister was standing in the middle of the road with a man who lives at the back of me. And he'd been sitting in his living room and then three lads suddenly came climbing over his fence and through his garden.

VB: Ah dear.

OS: And he had a burglar alarm going so he came round and realised it was mine. They'd climbed through the larder window, broken the larder window.

VB: Tch!

OS: Onto a high shelf, and then dropped down into the kitchen.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And came to open one of these doors, presumably to pinch the television. And set off the burglar alarm.

VB: Ah.

OS: And so then they ran for it. They had to go back out through this broken larder window. And he came, he alerted the police. They never did find them. And I've still got my television. But my sister had hers stolen. She used to come over to dinner with me of an evening and she went back one evening and found the kitchen window forced. One that opened up had been broken. And her television had been taken out. It was on a stand like that.

VB: Uhuh.

OS: It had been taken out through that little window. And you know very well, that's all they seem to want.

VB: Yes.

OS: Televisions and videos. My son had a nice watch actually but erm, this was some years ago we were burgled. And my father helped a policeman once that was being attacked. And they awarded him a watch with a, a, it's written inside. Can't think of the word I want. And erm, when he died he left it to my son. And that was upstairs in his bedroom and they pinched it.

VB: Aw dear.

OS: It wasn't worth anything. I doubt if it was even solid gold. It was probably only gold plate or something. But my father had it for many many years--

VB: Oh that's terrible.

OS: They pinched all my rings. I had a five rings in a jewel case.

VB: Yeah.

OS: They took the lot. And erm, necklace with erm, a big, oh thing you open up with photographs, locket on it.

VB: Yeah.

OS: Eh, they pinched. But they didn't touch little radios. And in those days they didn't touch television sets.

VB: Yeah.

OS: And they couldn't get out. Again, they had to break the back door. There's a door with wood at the bottom, glass at the top. They climbed up through the glass bit. I suppose they might've got it, oh I don't think they'd have got it out there because it's a porch and it's awkward.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But eh, they weren't interested then. But nowadays, it's television and videos that are going.

VB: Yeah.

OS: And it's frightening really. We've just had a new burglar alarm. We had the old-fashioned sort but once it starts ringing it goes on.

VB: Yeah.

OS: Go on all night if you're not here!

VB: Yeah.

OS: Now we had to have one that only rings for ten minutes. And then flashes. But it's enough to frighten a burglar off apparently.

VB: Yeah.

OS: Though if they realise it's only going to be ten minutes they might wait for it to stop and then come back in. But erm [pause 2 seconds]. Read of people being attacked in their homes. It's awful.

VB: Yeah.

OS: We didn't have that in the days when we went to the cinemas. Didn't lock the doors half the time! [laughs] You have to now.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And I blame a lot of that on television and films. Where the ideas come from, you know.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But you can't turn the clock back. That's what happened. When we go into the country when we were on holiday and I think to myself that when my grandparents were young and they lived in a place like this, there were people here who in their whole lives never went anywhere else!

VB: Yes.

OS: They hadn't got a car. Obviously. Some of them might have gone out in a car to a day's party in the next village. But that would probably be as much as they ever did!

VB: Oh yeah.

OS: And they had to amuse themselves. And you think how they used to sit round an oil lamp. Or a candle or something. They didn't have decent light to do any sewing or knitting. They didn't have any television or radio. I remember when we lived with my grandparents they sort of sat in the front room and we were in the back room. We wanted to give them a radio. Because otherwise they came

into the back room to listen to the news and sort of stayed there and we couldn't move for them. No they didn't want a radio!

VB: [laughs]

OS: All those years, you know. They'd never had a radio and they can manage without it, thank you. Astonishing. I mean we got radios all over the house now! We've got one there. One in the kitchen and one in each bedroom. In fact I've got two in my bedroom. One doesn't work but it's still there.

VB: It's a lovely house. I've been admiring your garden. It's beautiful.

OS: Oh yes. It isn't very good actually because my husband was the gardener.

VB: Ah.

OS: It's ten years since he died and I have a gardener who comes and cuts the grass. But he doesn't do much else. And all the trees have got overgrown. They really need pruning but it costs so much to get it done. My son's not keen on the garden.

VB: Mhm.

OS: He looks after the roses and he plants the bulbs in the winter. And that's about his lot.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Everything else that gets done I have to do. I mean, things that have just flowered have got to be cut back.

VB: Yes.

OS: And I do that. But I'm getting too old to do it. I get lots of backache when I'm out there. But it's nice because the houses are all built round the gardens--

VB: Yes.

OS: Erm, so we've got a square of garden in the middle of the houses, you know. But erm, when we bought the house my husband said, "Oh, little pocket handkerchief of a garden," you know. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: Golly! I'm glad it's no bigger!

VB: Mhm.

OS: We nearly bought one house in Pinner. It had been built by a builder and I think he just added on bits as he thought he would. It was a [laughs] peculiar place. It had an enormous garden. They kept a donkey there during the war.

VB: [laughs]

OS: And it had wonderful fruit bushes. It was marvellous. And we were very interested. We didn't buy it but since then the garden's been sold off--

VB: Ah.

OS: And another house has been built. We were a bit silly. We could've bought that.

VB: Yeah.

OS: And made a profit out of selling the garden. But we didn't think of that. We weren't very bright. And erm, I think to myself if we'd bought that and kept that garden, I don't know what I would've done.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I mean my gardener costs me a fortune. He cuts two lawns and say, oh well, fifteen pounds'll do, you know. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

OS: But I can't do everything. And the housework's more than I want to do. Particularly with my son cluttering the place up like this. It's absolutely awful.

VB: Your collection of glasses is lovely.

OS: Oh I keep buying bits and pieces.

VB: They're beautiful.

OS: Some of them were mine anyway. But erm, if I see something very often in a charity shop.

VB: Mhm.

OS: But I mean there's a moby jug there. My sister's just died.

VB: A-ah.

OS: And that was one of her possessions. And I'd never seen it before. I don't know where it came from.

VB: It's lovely.

OS: The daughter-in-law gave it to me. She said it would match the other one I've got there. But erm, I started off really to make a screen there. Started off with odd erm, paperweights we bought on holiday. The silver there, it's filthy dirty and I really must clean it but I never get round to it. My brother-in-law was a director of Garrards, the Crown Jewellers.

VB: Ah, yes.

OS: And birthday times and Christmas I used to get bits of silver. And I've kept cleaning them. But now my sister has died I've got a strong feeling I'm going to clean them and put them away. Because it's hard work and they're only so-called ornaments.

VB: Mhm.

OS: I've got too much up there anyway now. I keep buying things. I mean that big [blue?] glass, I went to a coffee morning.

VB: That's lovely.

OS: And they'd taken nineteen pounds and they'd just got that left and she said, "Anybody want this for a pound?" And I thought, I don't know if it'll fit in there but I'll have it.

VB: [laughs]

OS: And it fills the gap fairly well.

VB: It's lovely. I like the way they catch the light.

OS: Yes. They're quite good.

VB: It's lovely.

OS: There's a lovely erm, biscuit barrel, cut glass one on the bottom there.

VB: Ah yes.

OS: And that was my sister's but the lid is chipped.

VB: Oh.

OS: And nobody wanted it so I thought, we can't throw it away. I've got boxes of glass. I've got the boot of my car full of stuff that was hers. Erm, pyrex and cups and saucers and things like that. I took one lot to our Civil Service Retirement Fellowship and we had a little sale. Well we had a May Fair. I think I made about ten pounds for them. And then this week we had a Conservative meeting and I took some more and made another five pounds which goes into the funds there. But I've still [laughs], got a bootful of stuff! Nobody seems to want. The trouble is, this Civil Service Retirement Fellowship is obviously for retired civil servants.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And they're people who've got everything!

VB: Yes.

OS: They don't want any more!

VB: 'Course.

OS: But eh, anything that's sort of goes up, I have it. And I've got too much there now. 'Cause every time I want to dust it, that's blooming hard work!

VB: Yeah.

OS: Same with this lot on here.

VB: Yes.

OS: Things at the far end belonged to my grandmother.

VB: Aw, these are lovely.

OS: The little hummel figures came, there was a shop in Swanage. We used to go to Swanage for our holidays. And after the war they had all these hummel figures which I'd never seen before. And my mother-in-law was on holiday with us and she wanted to buy me one. So I chose the cheapest one 'cause I didn't want to sting her. Which is this little one.

VB: Yes.

OS: It was twenty-eight bob! They're about twelve pounds each now!

VB: Yes.

OS: And then my husband bought the little boy to go with it.

VB: They're lovely. My mother-in-law actually collects these. She has a few. She really liked them.

OS: I like the hummel figures. I saw a hummel picture in Switzerland for sale. But it was slightly faded. I think that was probably why it had been taken to the shop. I was tempted but erm, the Swiss rate of exchange is terrible at the moment. One pound, eh, one seventy-seven francs to the pound.

VB: Mhm.

OS: Used to be about four francs to the pound when we originally went. You go and have a cup of tea, it's two pounds, you know.

VB: Yeah.

OS: But we went through the Channel Tunnel.

VB: Oh! Really! [laughs]

OS: Yeah. My son's got shares in Eurotunnel. Not many, but he's got some and that entitles him one free trip through the tunnel. And he was determined to go. At the beginning I didn't want to go to Switzerland 'cause it's a heck of a long trip right across Europe. We go by car.

VB: Right.

OS: And I didn't want to go in the tunnel. And there are a lot of tunnels in Switzerland I don't like. Through the mountains, you know. There's one about five miles long.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And it's horrible. But he wanted to go on the Channel Tunnel so we went. And in fact it was boring. I mean you just drive in takes about five cars to a coach. And erm, depends how many they've got.

VB: Mhm.

OS: There's a downstairs and an upstairs.

VB: Mhm.

OS: If you are a low car you're put in the downstairs. Others have to go upstairs. And they have to balance them out. So if they haven't got a lot there's sometimes an empty carriage between two full carriages. But you only sit in our car or get out of the car and walk round. You can go through to the next carriage if that's where the loo is. Erm, but there's nothing to see. Once you get into the tunnel. That's it. And the other day people got stuck there.

VB: Aw dear.

OS: I'd have gone raving mad! I mean I found that on the Tube when we were held up for long. It frightens me. Particularly during the war when there were air raids. And I don't like it. But erm, the Channel Tunnel is good in the sense that you just get there and drive on. We've always booked to go on the Hovercraft. And we used to stay overnight at Dover so that we could get an early one.

VB: Mhm.

OS: And we did that again this year. But in fact we needn't have done because if we'd left here at eight o'clock in the morning we could have got there by eleven. And you just go straight on. Takes a bit of a while getting on very often. When we got there they hadn't actually started loading. We had to sit and wait for that. But then you get to the other end. You drive straight off. And when you're coming back you're not tied to the time. I mean we used to have a 4:30 Hovercraft to come back.

VB: Yes.

OS: Eh, and I was in a panic. I said, "We're not going to get there. For goodness sake, we're not going to get there!" 'Cause he used to keep stopping to take photographs.

VB: [laughs]

OS: Eh, we always did get there but erm, I was always sort of on edge. [clock chimes] Whereas with this you just drive up and if it's there you get on it and if not you wait.

VB: That sounds good.

OS: When we got there they'd nearly finished loading. But erm, there are just thirty-five minutes travelling. And little notices keep coming up and then they tell you, "You're halfway through. You're

now in France” or “You're now in England.” Which isn't strictly true because you're in the middle of the Channel which is neither.

VB: [laughs]

OS: But eh... [laughs] You don't have to think about what's up above you. [laughs]

VB: Yes. I think I might find that a bit--

OS: [laughs] But eh, he'll never go any other way because he gets sea sick. Even on the Hovercraft.

VB: Yeah.

OS: The Hovercraft's very quick. You can get there in half an hour. But it does tend to bump about a bit. If it's at all rough, you know.

VB: Yeah.

OS: You never know when it's going to be. But of course the Channel Tunnel, you just sail through.

VB: Mhm.

OS: As long as it keeps going. I mean they're very hard up for money. They're going broke.

VB: Yeah.

OS: I still haven't got the proper [inaudible] for the trains that go from Waterloo straight through to Paris. They still can't run them fast enough.

[End of Interview]