

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

\*\*\*\*\*

\* Transcript ID: SM-92-004AT002

\* CCINTB Transcript IDs: 92-4-18a-ab, 92-4-20a-o

\* Tapes: SM-92-004OT002, SM-92-004OT003

\* CCINTB Tapes ID: T94-19, T94-20

\* Length: 1:37:45

\* Glasgow, 12 December 1994: Valentina Bold interviews Sheila McWhinnie

\* Transcribed by Valentina Bold/ Standardised by Julia McDowell

\* SM = Sheila McWhinnie/ VB = Valentina Bold

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

\*\*\*\*\*

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

**VB: Uncomfortable about it! [laughs] but, I'll put it beside you again and it'll pick you up!**

**[discussing lapel mikes]**

**SM:** I hope it doesn't mind all the coughing! Will I put it here maybe, on the table?

**VB: Aye, if you like. I mean, whatever's, whatever's more comfortable for you.**

**SM:** I'm frightened I knock it off. Is that it? OK?

**VB: Aye, that'll be great.**

**SM:** Well, before we go any further, I'll put these up here, no? And I'll show you this. It's nothing much - I'll tell you how this come about. I went up to my cousin's one time and this was her hobby, and she had a list of all the people you could, and - this was before I was in the cinemas or anything -

so she had a list of all these film stars. So she's writing off for hers. Mine's was still Bing Crosby! So I wrote a letter to Bing Crosby, a very short one. I thought, "Nobody'll read all these letters." I said, "I've seen all your films and enjoyed most of them." That was the sum total of my letter. So I got this letter back. This is now 1936, as you can see. Somebody asked me for the stamp in the cinema somebody asked me for the big picture, so this is another story!

**VB: That's amazing.**

**SM:** So that's the letter!

**VB: So it's postmarked 'Los Angeles, California, Hollywood!'" [both laugh]**

**SM:** And I think it's '36 on it, is it? Does it say?

**VB: Yeh, '36. Yeh. That's amazing, isn't it! 'Miss Sheila O'Connor, 4 [street name redacted], Glasgow'...**

**SM:** That was the Gorbals. That's the Gorbals! [laughs] [pause as VB reads]

**VB: Oh wow! That's amazing, and it's on his paper as well! 'Bing Crosby, National Broadcasting Company, New York City', and hand-signed and everything!**

**SM:** Uhuh, aye.

**VB: It's nice, isn't it! Lovely.**

**SM:** And another big picture like this. This is another story about this other picture. Another picture, almost like this.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** And, eh, somebody borrowed the picture, and that was the last of it.

**VB: Aw.**

**SM:** Somebody borrowed my wedding photographs and I never got them back and I cannot remember who they were. And somebody asked me for the stamp and I hadn't the heart not to give them it!

**VB: What a shame.**

**SM:** So there wasn't much left.

**VB: But it's a really nice letter, isn't it?**

**SM:** Uhuh.

**VB: Maybe if I could just read it, so I or would you read it to?**

**SM:** Naw, you read it, you read it, your voice is, I'm very wheezy.

**VB: Well save your voice, anyway, it's:**

Dear Miss O'Connor, (and it's dated November 16th, 1936)

Dear Miss O'Connor,

Glad to hear from you. I appreciate knowing how my efforts are received and I welcome any suggestions. I hope you like *Rhythm on the Range*. My last picture, *Pennies from Heaven*, will be released sometime this Fall. I am on the Kraft Music Hall broadcast every Thursday evening, 7 till 8 National Broadcasting System. The picture is being sent under separate cover.

Best wishes, and many thanks for your interest,  
sincerely yours,

Bing

[both laugh]

**VB: So nice.**

**SM:** That was nice. Somebody, as I say, somebody got the photograph and that was the end of that. Somebody got the stamp and that was all that was left. So, in '76 - I've got two papers somewhere, don't know where I put them - two newspapers, when he died. In '76 - I don't know where I put them - in '76, he came to Edinburgh, he was, I don't know the name of the hall where he was at. He came to Edinburgh, and my daughter, knowing that I liked Bing Crosby, booked seats for us! So, I took, I sent that to the Edinburgh theatre, and said, "Would it be possible to meet him?" And that I had this letter all this time and when I got there and saw the show it was quite good. And his voice was still as good but, stiff, you know, he couldn't, he was in his seventies by this time - is that too warm for you, I thought you were...?

**VB: No, that's fine.**

**SM:** As soon as you want it off, just say. So, eh, I waited for somebody coming to say, I think your seats were all numbered. Nobody came, so I didn't go. And Tricia, I remember said, eh, "Bing's out there, there's people talking. Go out!" So I said, "Naw, I sent the letter. If he doesn't send for me I'm not going out!" So I didn't go out and I thought the letter was lost. And, I heard no more for months. And all of a sudden, this came, this envelope, or that one, ah, maybe the newspapers are in here, this came and the letter was in it.

**VB: Ah.**

**SM:** And, another photograph. You can see the difference, I think it says '76 on it.

**VB: Yes, November 18th it says. Yeh. Mind you, it looks like he's got the same typewriter!**

[both laugh]

**SM:** Uhuh! Typewriter! Probably is!

**VB: It really does actually!**

**SM:** It's probably the secretary! [laughs]

**VB: Aye!**

**SM:** However the letter did come back, wherever it got to. The letter did come back.

**VB: That's lovely. "To Mrs Sheila McWhinnie"**

**SM:** This time it's McWhinnie! [laughs]

**VB: Hand-signed again.**

**SM:** That was, eh, forty years later? Forty years later?

**VB: Right enough.**

**SM:** Forty years later. So where the letter got to I do not know. This photograph was with the letter, came back inside it.

**VB: That's so kind isn't it?**

**SM:** The next year he was dead. That was true he was dead, he died very sudden, he died on the golf course. It was quite a good way to go.

**VB: I mean I like, I like the photo with his golf clubs!**

**SM:** [laughs] My grandson's now a golfer! He likes...

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

**SM:** Valentina, as soon you get cold let me know, because I've got to switch it on...

**VB: I will do, I will do. I notice...**

**SM: The heater's are on, but still not very good...**

**VB: I notice he mentions a couple of pictures in this, "I hope you like *Rhythm on the Range*".**

**SM: Yes.**

**VB: Was that one that you...?**

**SM:** Yes. I do remember going, we went to see that. It wasn't just me that was uh [laughs] a fan! The group I went around with were fans, and we did go to see *Pennies from Heaven* and *Rhythm on the Range*. And you wouldn't believe it. Last Tuesday or Wednesday - the neighbour that gets my pension and my prescription, a very good wee neighbour, I don't know if I spoke to you about her before? She says, "Bing Crosby's on today!" and, eh, "You better watch the paper!" You know when they put him on? Ten o'clock, I think she said 10 o'clock on Mon [sic] - but I wasn't sure. So I looked in the paper, and I just assumed that it was a Bing Crosby picture. Didn't see it, didn't recognise, and "Did you have Bing Crosby on?" I said "No, I didn't have him on." It was all, it was parts from all his pictures, ten o'clock in the morning, Channel 4, I didn't see it and I didn't know...

**VB: Aw, what a shame.**

**SM:** ...she said she'd got it taped.

**VB: It'd be good to see that that. I mean, what, I'm not familiar with either of these pictures, *Rhythm on the Range* or *Pennies from Heaven*. I mean, what were they like?**

**SM:** I'm trying to think what *Pennies from Heaven*. I mean 'Pennies from Heaven', that became a popular tune. *Rhythm on the Range* I cannot mind [remember], because I did see them, because I didn't miss any of them. But I really cannot remember much [laughs] about *Rhythm on the Range*. And I cannot remember the story about *Pennies from Heaven*. It's quite possible that I've got them in there [indicates cupboard] on tape, in keeps. 'Cause we used to see all of them and tape them. But what I've got, the tape recorder's a Beta. And nobody else can! [laughs]

**VB: Aw, no.**

**SM:** I must look and see if I've got them for you Valentina, just to see what I've got.

**VB: Right, that'd be interesting.**

**SM:** Mhm.

**VB: I mean, was it musicals that you mainly liked yourself or...?**

**SM:** Eh, everything that starred Bing Crosby. I wasn't a musical person. My husband was, uh, great for classical music, and this thing there [indicates tape deck/record player stack] cost an absolute fortune. Five hundred and thirty pound many years ago. I had Toshiba, most hi-fi, and I had stuff here! And of course, I mean I'm not musical! [laughs] The only one I did like was Bing Crosby! His voice appealed to me! [laughs] [not that I'm musical?], so, eh, I think it started off with my friends taking me to see him, you know, and then, I don't know why, I did like his voice.

**VB: Aye. I'll give these back now, just in case I do something with them! I mean, you said you went to these films with your friends?**

**SM:** That's right, uhuh.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** We were maybe about sixteen. fifteen, sixteen. And, as I said, it was fourpence to get in when you were an adult! [laughs] So you ask what you would like to know. Well, I mean I'll tell you one thing that, eh, I just thought, I don't know if you knew. Eh, when I worked in the Regal and in the wee Picture House, em, they had what they called Trade Shows in the thirties, I don't know if you ever heard?

**VB: [indicates no]**

**SM:** And they had, you were dead lucky if you got a Trade Show, you got paid double, so you got in somewhere at half past ten. And these cinemas, they had what you called First Run, so they got the cinema, the, eh, the film first and, eh, they had it a week, and if it was good they had it a fortnight, that was as long as it was. And, em, I could never have stuck *The Sound of Music* six weeks, and you'd be, I could never have. But, however, a fortnight was as far as they kept it if it was really good. So the Trade Shows, they would put on a Trade Show in the morning. You took your turn at getting it, because you got double money, and all the, eh, managers from other wee cinemas, all the owners came, saw the cinem [sic], saw the picture and, eh, booked it. But that wasn't shown in the cinema that day. You would get it eventually, but it wasn't shown that day. So that was what was called Trade Shows. So I was telling my daughter - the one that sticks, that I remember, was *Little Nelly Kelly* with Judy Garland! [laughs] I didn't see it! But I remember coming in that day, and this lassie [young woman] had been at the Trade Show, "Aw, it was *Little Nelly Kelly*!" And she starts singing the song, all! [laughs] So *Little Nelly Kelly* was a hit! That was a fortnight! [laughs] [coughs]

**VB: Who was in that?**

**SM:** So that was Trade Shows in the thirties, that they used to, all the managers in so many cinemas, you know? [pause]

**VB: Oh, I see.**

**SM:** Pity I couldn't get that book, what, with these, telling you all the cinemas that were everywhere in Glasgow, that...

**VB: I've a feeling I've seen that. 'Cause when you were telling me about the, you know the cinemas that you worked in...**

**SM:** Mhm.

**VB: And everything. It's not this one [produces photocopy of part of book and shows to SM] called 'The Cinemas of Cinema City'?**

**SM:** Naw, it's another one.



**VB:** 'Cause it has a picture of the Star in Maryhill in it, anyway, so, erm.

**SM:** Oh has it?

**VB:** Just down at the bottom there [indicates on page]. I don't know if it was like that as you remember it, or [pause] it doesn't have a date on it.

**SM:** I don't. [pause] It is the Star at Maryhill, right eh.

**VB:** It may be a bit later than when you worked there.

**SM:** Uhuh. I worked them from [pause] from, up to, '39, '40.

**VB:** Right.

**SM:** The war [referring to Second World War] was on when I worked. The war started when I worked there. But, eh, you wouldn't, you can't make out very well.

**VB:** No, you can't really.

**SM:** If it'd been the other side of it, I'd have known it better.

**VB:** Was it quite a big screen inside or...?

**SM:** The Orient [looking at pictures in photocopy] I mean, eh, that was funny, and what's this other one? The Rosevale, that was in Partick. The Orient and the Star, I think I told you, it was an old Irish man, McMann his name was, and, eh, he had six cinemas in Glasgow? He had the Orient, the Star, the Kelvin, the New Partick, [pause] that's three, the West End in Paisley, and another one in Paisley, [pause] oh God, I can't remember, did I say the Orient, [inaudible]?

**VB:** Uhuh.

**SM:** Well that was, the Orient, the New Partick, the Star, the West End, I'm two missing, surely [pause], I'll think about them! [laughs] So, eh, he had actually, he made his money pig farming in

Ireland, I think I told you. Come over and bought one cinema after another. And, eh, then he used to come in his big chauffeured car and go round all these cinemas on a Saturday night. Can I have a wee look at these, can I go and see the kettle first?

**VB: Aye, of course! Of course!**

**SM:** Then we'll have a look at them. I'll see how the kettle is. I'll just give us saucers for the cakes? Will that be...?

**VB: Of course! Oh, that looks lovely. Thanks very much.**

**SM:** Save us bringing out plates!

[both laugh] [noise of kettle being put on; kitchen noises; general conversation]

**SM:** ... and Trish'll not let me use it, 'cause it's not fancy enough!

[both laugh]

**VB: Oh, this looks really lovely! It's very good of you to.**

**SM:** Ach, it's no.

**VB: It's great!**

**SM:** I'll maybe have a look through these, if you don't mind, while the tea...

**VB: Of course. [pause] I thought you might be interested to see it because that's the one that you worked in and everything.**

**SM:** Aye. It's funny that I don't remember that right.

**VB: I have a feeling that might be a more modern picture, so it's maybe changed a bit inside.**

**SM:** Mhm, it didn't last long, I think it went away in the fifties.

**VB: Did it?**

**SM:** Mhm. Certainly this chap made his cinemas... the Kelvin had the sort of candles, oh it was really nice, on either side, [but, it's difficult to remember?], it's a wee bit fancy for it [the cinema in photograph]. I cannot remember anything about it, funnily enough - they made a lot of effort [inaudible].

**VB: I mean, what were the colours like and things in it? Was it...? [pause] Was it quite bright or...?**

**SM:** They were bright, they were bright, yeh. Uhuh. And that was, that was one of his films. I cannot think who, the New Partick, the Orient, the Star, the West End, five of [inaudible] two, this is annoying! [pause].

**VB: Were they mainly in that part of town?**

**SM:** No, no they were all over Glasgow. Eh, the Orient was in Bridgeton, the New Partick was in Partick, the Kelvin was in Argyle Street, that's three. The Star was in Maryhill, and he had two in Paisley, but I've missed one. There's one somewhere that I keep missing.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** There was two in Paisley, the West End and I cannot remember what the other one was. There was also one I missed out somewhere else.

**VB: He must have had quite a fortune with all these!**

**SM:** Oh, gosh me! He used to have his own chauffeur and his car! [chuckles] I'll just go through these quickly, if that's all right with you?

**VB: Sure. [pause] Did you mix much with the staff from the other cinema and that?**

**SM:** Naw, eh, this was really mean. I remember the manager taking me into the office one day and saying "We're having a staff dance," and this was the only time that we ever, eh, "for all the cinemas," for they six cinemas, "it'll be" he mentioned a sum of money, "ten shillings." Well, I think you, my wage at that time was seventeen and six. So right away I said, "Cannot go." "How can you not go?" Well, it was half your week's wage! Oh, I couldn't pay that kind of money! I mean, you'd to pay your mother for keeping you! Couldn't pay that to the man. "You could pay it up sixpence a week." I says, "Naw, naw, I'm just not going." Couldn't go. So, there was nothing more said about it at the cinema. So whether they ever had, obviously the rest of the staff must have been all the same, because there was no more said. But there was a staff dance because I remember one of the projectionists going. Because his father was a big shot and he was only in there learning a trade. So I remember he went to it. So there was a staff dance for all the cinemas but none of us could. I thought that was mean! Really mean! That they couldn't pay for your tickets! [laughs]

**VB: It's terrible! Yeh, that is. But I mean, were there any sort of perks that you got from working in the cinema?**

**SM:** Well, when you worked in the Regal you could go round to the Playhouse [referring to Green's Playhouse?], you got tickets, you could go there. You could also go to the King's up the stair, own hall, it was away along Sauchiehall Street at Charing Cross. It was a funny wee hall. I don't know what it had been before, but it was just a big old passage with seats. There was nothing on either side. Just one row of seats, you know, a big old passage. And he had tickets for these places. Eh, certain places, not everywhere, you know. Certain places, but that was as far as it went, nothing else.

**VB: 'Cause I was wondering if, you know, if your friends would ask you for free tickets, or...?**

**SM:** Well, you did get, you did eh, once a week, on a Wednesday in the, not in the town, it was a Thursday in the town, because that's where I heard about the Country Holiday. They used to say, "Aw, Wednesday's the Country Holiday." And that's what they'd talk about, to the girls, the Country Holiday, There's no such thing! So you couldn't get a ticket for a Wednesday! But I found the tickets, you got one lot of tickets for a Thursday in the city cinemas, and you got one lot of tickets when I was in the New Star for a Wednesday. That was the, everybody came in and lined the streets to the cinemas on a Wednesday that was our busy night in the city. So, eh, that was our only perks as I say,

we got tickets, that was all. Nothing, nothing [pause]. I'll just have a wee quick look. Do you want to pour your tea, Valentina?

**VB: Aye, I'll do that. Can I pour you one as well?**

**SM:** If you don't mind. Aye. Would you not rather have had coffee?

**VB: No, tea's lovely. [indicates SM's cup]**

**SM:** Eh, just some milk, please, no sugar. I'll just go through them quickly. I remember the Grand Central, that was, is that still there? Is that the dirty picture house now? The one there that shows dirty films! [laughs]

**VB: Mm. [laughs] I wouldn't know about that! [both laugh]**

**SM:** I don't know where Cranston's was, funnily enough. I don't remember that. [flicking through] The Picture House, The [inaudible] [Hillhead?], yeh, I went there quite often. That was rather upmarket we thought.

**VB: Oh, right.**

**SM:** We went to that one, and the one in Burnside, no, Princes, no, see I didn't go to these districts. The Olympia, Bridgeton, that was nice. That was the Orient [inaudible], the Bedford, aye, that was in the Gorbals. Uhuh.

**VB: What was that like?**

**SM:** That was a nice cinema. There was three in Eglinton Street, I think it was Eglinton Street, I'm not very sure of the street. Now the three there were the Coliseum, the BB Cinerama, and this one. And they were really nice. They were really, you know they were dearer to get in than the ordinary wee ones that were all round about your corner, you know? They were really nice. Now there's that one, "The new cinema open", where was that? "Now a bingo hall" but it doesn't tell you which, where it is. Now the Regent was in Renfield Street, is that right? [pause] The Grosvenor was in, I

don't know what street, I know where it was! [laughs] I've never been out for a long while, as you see! I should know where the Parade was. Was that Dennistoun? I've a feeling that was Dennistoun.

**VB: I think it might have been.**

**SM:** The Rio, now that was the Gorbals. Oh, I went in, [pause] that, when I said the Rio in the Gorbals it was probably the Ritz, that was in the Gorbals.

**VB: Right, 'cause I was interested when you were saying that, there were so many cinemas in the Gorbals.**

**SM:** Oh God, everywhere. I could write, as I say, that's the unfortunate, this book's got them all, all the names written, I suddenly don't know what the book was or where I got it or anything, but I could write down as many as I could remember for you. A couple of those, Govan Cross, as I say, I didn't know that either, that's a pity. Although I stay here now I didn't know Govan very well. The Lyceum, that's still there and that's a bingo hall. That still there and that still looks pretty much the same. The Plaza, I remember that, that was in Govan. That was in Govan. It's not there anymore. The State, Shettlestone, I remember reading about that, I'd just moved up here. The Astoria, I just remember that dimly because we stayed in Maryhill but we stayed down at that end. Stayed in the Gorbals, stayed in Maryhill, stayed in Cardonald, stayed here! [laughs]

**VB: What was that one like? [indicates]**

**SM:** The Roxy? Oh see the Roxy? Nobody liked that! That was [laughs] that was the rough, that was the rough one! You know how the Star was a wee bit more upmarket than the Roxy. If you went to the Roxy... [laughs] That was just up the road from the New Star cinema, the Roxy.

**VB: Is that, did some cinemas have that sort of reputation?**

**SM:** Aye. That one did. That one did! [pause]

**VB: Was it cheaper than the...?**

**SM:** It was cheaper. It was cheaper. [pause]

**SM:** [looking at photocopy] I don't know the Bridgeton ones at all. There's not a lot of their names, funnily enough. The Kelvin, that was, that chap, that was one of the chaps, I'm telling you, the Kelvin, the chap that went to, finally got to the dance. But his father was, eh, a salesman for the cinema, films. So he was only in, learning the projectionist, so he was able to afford the dance, which we weren't. And, he was eighteen, he was only eighteen, and the next thing he comes in, "Getting moved to the Kelvin" "Oh, you are?" "Aye" Undermanager at eighteen! Because his father was a pal of this bloke that owned all the cinemas! [laughs] So he was undermanager of, when the war started.

**VB: A responsible job as well, to have.**

**SM:** Mhm. That was one of his, the Star. That's three of his, you've got three there, all in a row. You've only another three to go! [both laugh] The Salon, that's still there, but it's nearly coming down.

**VB: Aye, that's right.**

**SM:** Ah, that's sad.

**VB: It's terrible.**

**SM:** Ah. [pause] Oh well, that's all your [finishes looking through photocopy] Oh, that was interesting!

**VB: Aye, was it mainly...**

**SM:** Well, that's funny, you've got three out of six there all the same! Come on, you're not eating! [laughs] Let's take a wee break! Tricia brought them in specially for you!

[consumption of tea, biscuits]

**VB: Was it mainly the local cinemas that you would go to then?**

**SM:** It was mainly. Aye, that's what I was going to tell you. I was never in the cinemas in the town, because you couldn't afford to go to them, until I worked in them. I was never in them. And where you could get into, the Star, mind you, that was upmarket, that was sixpence, whereas the Roxy was fourpence, and all the ones in the Gorbals were fourpence - so, up town the cheapest one, in the town, when I went in, the Regal and the Picture House, was a shilling. So that was quite a difference from fourpence. I mean, that was, you got three times in for that! [laughs] I mean, you never went in to there, you just couldn't! You never knew what the cinemas looked like up the town until I worked in them. Never knew. And the Odeon now, that was the Paramount, as I told you, and an early got a job in it. The undermanager was giving me the job but the manager must have had somebody else for it and I never got it. [laughs] Didn't get it. But I was nearly! [laughs] And I was so sure I was getting it that I was nearly going in and telling my other boss that I was. But luckily I held back! [laughs]

**VB: I mean, I suppose there wasn't really much need to go into town anyway if there was all these cinemas round about.**

**SM:** There really wasn't. The only reason you went into town was if you wanted to go home and say, "Oh, I saw that, I saw that already" Be the first, because it was the first run. If you wanted to be a wee bit, you know, show off, "Ah, I've seen it, I went to see it!" [laughs]

**VB: So it was a wee bit behind by the time it got to...?**

**SM:** By the time it got to these other.

**VB: I see.**

**SM:** Whereas now they seem to do it all the halls at the one time. And then as Maureen says, they disappear and then it's the video and then you can't ever see them somewhere else again because they're on video and then it's that. So Maureen was telling me. [pause]

**VB: I mean, 'cause you were saying, I mean, as I say, I was quite interested when you were saying there were so many of these wee cinemas in the Gorbals. Did they show the same pictures or was there a...?**



**SM:** Different? You could actually be in a cinema in the Gorbals every night in life and see something different. Except for a Sunday, everything shut on a Sunday. But they had Cinema Sundays, and that was another scam. And there was a Cinema Sunday, most time you were taken in to a Cinema Sunday, and they'd say it was for charity, so you didn't get any money! You were giving your services to charity for that Cinema Sunday and you got no money. So, it was Cinema Sunday. You could even go on a Sunday if you wanted to find out where Cinema Sundays were!

**VB: I mean were the staff, how did the staff feel about that?**

**SM:** I mean, well, they took it that it was for a charity, and were quite happy to do it, you know?

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** There wasn't much grousing or anything like that.

**VB: Mhm. [pause] Yeh, 'cause that's interesting, because it's your day off.**

**SM:** Mhm. It was your only day off. It was your only day off. So you couldn't have a liaison with a boyfriend or anything, he'd to come in and talk to you in the cinema, that was, you know, the ones that stayed round about. But, you just couldn't! You were too busy, too busy! [laughs] And I was in the Regal when I was called up. As I say, that was the first call up age group, and I was called up in the Regal. Had to go to the Labour Exchange and I ended up in the Rolls Royce. Ended up not getting away! [laughs] So I think you've dredged me! [laughs]

**VB: Not, well, there was a couple of things I was wanting to....**

**SM:** You ask! You ask, aye.

**VB: I mean, I was listening to the tape before, I came. For one thing, you were talking about your mother and, you know, how she really enjoyed going to the pictures.**

**SM:** She did, all her life.

**VB: I mean, I was wondering what her taste in films was, or...?**

**SM:** Just anything, absolutely anything. Anything.

**VB: I mean, did she go quite a lot then?**

**SM:** Four or five times a week. And, as I say, you were taken in the shawl when you were a baby. And Maureen says, "Aw, I dimly remember, even in my day." She's forty-six I think now (I've lost count of the ages of my daughters), eh, she says "Coming in, with young children into the cinema." She remembers that.

**VB: So did she take...?**

**SM:** Everybody did, the whole family. Like, once you got to, maybe about twelve, you didn't want to go with them. So you made arrangements to go with your pals. But, quite often if you weren't going with them you didn't get the tuppence [laughs] to go with your pals!

**VB: So, it became a bit, like all children, you felt a bit, didn't want to be seen with your parents?**

[laughs]

**SM:** [nods agreement] [both laugh] That was true, and then you all had, you know, your own wee group when you got there.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** And during the, the news, you sat very quiet while the film was on, but during the news everybody paraded around to see who they could see! [laughs]

**VB: And your father, did he go to the pictures?**

**SM:** He went with us, but I don't think he was so much struck on with it, to the same extent that she was. As I said, that really was her life. I mean, when she'd to come back down to earth, she was very nasty to live with! [laughs] She really was! When she'd to come back to solid earth. Well it was the Gorbals, it was a room and kitchen, seven people in it, and that was quite spacious considering some people's, and, eh, as I say, my father had been through the war at sixteen. He come out at twenty

finished. He'd been wounded four times. He would say, "That's where the bullet came in, and that's where it come out, beside my heart." You know? And, eh, as I say, his first job was sweeping the streets and, after that, no job at all. And, it was what they called the Means Test, and, I think it was a shilling you got for your children and, eh, I suppose life was hard for them, you know? My father, as I said, did knock out money. He would go and buy a box of fish, go round doors selling fish. Go round doors in some street where they didn't know him! [laughs] So, if he got a box for four shillings, he could make eight shillings out of that box. [pause] So I could see a point of you going in there and coming back out to reality, you know?

**VB: Mhm. [pause] I mean, did she have favourite stars?**

**SM:** I don't remember her ever saying, no. Don't remember. Just liked to get out and into the cinema and that was it.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** Don't remember her having favourite films, favourite stars, anything like that.

**VB: 'Cause I was wondering, with going so much, if you talked about films a lot at home, or...**

**SM:** Didn't, didn't, didn't discuss them at all. The places were just there and you went. It was part of your normal life really. For everybody's normal life from you were a child, it was part of your normal life like [pause] even more so than what you'd go to the church, you know? Even more so. Although, I was a Catholic at the time, and you went to the Catholic Church and you had to go to the Catholic Church. [coughs] Eh, you went to the films more! [laughs]

**VB: I mean, I was wondering about that as well, how the church saw movies, or if they ever commented on it, or...**

**SM:** They never ever did, to my knowledge. I used to go, as I say, I was brought up a Catholic, but I have no religion now at all and, eh, it, I used to, they never ever commented on the films, never said "Don't go to this one" or "Don't go to that one", funnily enough they never did.

**VB: Mhm. 'Cause I really was wondering about that.**

**SM:** Mhm.

**VB:** 'Cause it sounded like something they might have.

**SM:** At that time there was nothing bad in the films. They were very, there was the Hays bloke that censored everything, from America, and nothing got past really, nothing that you could blush at. Nothing that you couldn't take your children to really, which they did do. [pause] I can't remember anything. I mean, when we first got the television, the children would sit watching, I would feel embarrassed and I'd get up and turn it off, and the kids would laugh. You know, they'd maybe be about ten or twelve, "Didn't have to turn that off, Mum!" But I was embarrassed for it! And I'd get up and turn, there was nothing like that in the cinema. Nothing that you felt embarrassed for. You know? So, it was very well censored, as I say, which it isn't the day, I don't think is it?

**VB:** [smiles]

**SM:** No! [laughs]

**VB:** No!

**SM:** There was always these ones in, I think it, I'm not just sure of the name, but I think it was the Grand Central, but I wouldn't swear to it. Up from Arnott's on the other side, and it's still there I think, as far as... The people with the dirty raincoats, I don't know why they're all supposed to wear dirty raincoats! There was always these about, latterly.

**VB:** Right, but, I mean, as far as the, you know, ...

**SM:** Naw, there was nothing like that.

**VB:** I mean, did you talk with them about, talk about films with your pals later, when you went, or...?

**SM:** I suppose we must have, but...

**VB: About the stars, or...?**

**SM:** I suppose we must have but I can't really remember, you know, discussing it. You went in and you came out and life started again, and I don't think you really did discuss them much, funnily enough.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** You know? But as I say, unless it was something like *Little Nelly Kelly*, which she was... [laughs] Oh, it was funny.

**VB: Can you tell me a bit more about that? Because, again, it's not a movie that I've come across myself.**

**SM:** I wish I could remember, we did finally, here, she'd been on at the Trade Show and we did finally hire it and it did last for the fortnight. It's been on the telly, I'm quite sure I've got that too, I'm quite sure. I'll look them out.

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**VB: Can I pour you another one too?**

**SM:** A wee half cup please.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** I like drinking tea. That's fine.

**VB: Thanks.**

**SM:** It's a pity. Up until recently my memory was really very good but I've had a rotten year and then I'm out the hospital, but it seems to have knocked my memory back too. I get so annoyed now. Up until then I was, could remember absolutely everything. And now that I suddenly realise, "Oh, I'm

not remembering that." I lost the first baby when I was seven months [pause] and you know yesterday I was saying, "What hospital did I have that in?" And, would you ever have thought you'd have forgotten what hospital? I finally realised it was the Royal Maternity. I don't know if it's still there. But I couldn't believe that I'd even forgotten that. But whatever these illnesses were, they didn't half knock back my memory [laughs]. It's not as good, just not as good!

**VB: I would say you had a very good memory.**

**SM:** Oh, it's not as good as it should...

**VB: I suppose you feel, yourself, it's...**

**SM:** Oh, it's not as good, and it's only this year it's happened funnily enough. So that's a pity, you've got me at the wrong time, if it'd been last year! [laughs]

**VB: Not at all. I mean, another thing I was wanting to ask about was the local cinemas. I mean you mentioned a few more just now.**

**SM:** Aw, I could try and [pause] - if you want to write them down, I'll try. I wish I could remember better. The ones in the Gorbals, are you talking about?

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** Aye, right, if you want to write them down. Mind you, this book names them all.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** Aye, it's a pity, because I'm so annoyed at that. That I cannot remember. It was just a wee paperback thing. Probably it was George - he buys all the ones for Glasgow and the Gorbals and things like that. There was, eh, starting, where will we start? Eglinton Street you got the BB Cinerama, we'll work our way up. [VB writing] And you got the Coliseum. Now, I'm not just sure of the street - it was round about Eglinton Street, but I wouldn't swear it was Eglinton Street. Trying to think - see I'm even forgetting about Gor[bals?] - you came along, there was, this definitely was in Eglinton Street - it was called the EEs, the Electric Cinema and everybody just called it the EE. These

other two, like the Coliseum and the BB Cinerama, I'm not just sure what street they were in, but they were near Eglinton Street. Eh, you came along, and you came to Crown Street and there was the Crownie! The Crown Cinema, [laughs] we called it the Crownie. You came along a bit further, you came to Cumberland Street, and there was the Paragon in Cumberland Street. [pause] And then you came along to Longmuir Street, which had been South Wellington Street, and you came to the Bees - now that wasn't the right name, I can't remember the right name, the Wellington cinema, that was the right name. Everybody called it the Bees, and you came along going to Oatlands, and you came to the Ritz Cinema. That was at the corner of, eh, Ballater Street. [coughs] Just at the top, Rutherglen Road, sorry, it wasn't Ballater Street, it was Rutherglen Road. [coughs] I'm trying to think have I missed any out for you, probably have missed about half a dozen!

**VB: You mentioned the Princess's [referring to the Princess's Theatre] the last time, was that?**

**SM:** No, that was a revue, that was, eh, aye.

**VB: Right. I see, I mean that's a lot, I mean I'm just trying to visualise.**

**SM:** That was just on a couple of streets too! And I'm sure I've missed them out!

**VB: You mentioned that one, the Electric Cinema.**

**SM:** Uhuh, I don't know why they called it that. That was in Eglint... that definitely was in Eglinton Street. Now these other two, the Coliseum and the BB Cinerama, it wasn't Eglinton Street, and I can't remember what street it was. It's so annoying, I'm trying to think. It was near Gorbals Cross, or a bit beyond. God, I can't remember, they were upmarket, they were a bit dear to go to. I think when the rest were fourpence, they were sixpence you know? That kind of thing?

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** I'm trying to think have I missed any out for you. I probably have. My memory's not as good the day as it even was yesterday! [laughs]

**VB: So you're saying the BB Cinerama and the Coliseum were the sort of upmarket...?**

**SM:** They were the upmarket ones for that district, definitely.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** The Paragon and the Bees, and the Crownie [referring to the Crown]. That was the one I think I told you about last week, the Crownie was the one that made all the kids sit on the front row, and they were right under the screen, and your neck was sore. You always came out with a sore neck, but you always went, 'cause it obviously was cheap. And I don't know, they probably showed all these ones you'd to keep, the serials, you know? [laughs] I know that we kept going, whether our necks were stiff or not! [laughs]

**VB: 'Cause I meant to ask you about that as well. Did you go to these eh, were they matinees then the serials? Or...**

[plate noises]

**SM:** No we went at night, we went at night. The only matinees was at, in fact a lot of these cinemas only opened at night, in the Gorbals. They didn't open during the day. The New Star opened during the day, and the likes of the Coliseum opened during the day, but the likes of these, the Paragon and the Bees and places like that, they only opened at night, you know, maybe from one show only. Two shows at the most, they didn't open during the day.

**VB: That's interesting, because the ones in town must have been.**

**SM:** Mhm. They opened all the time, as I say you went in at one o'clock started at half one, and you went on till eleven o'clock at night. And your early night was half past nine. That was a long, long day, wasn't it? And as I say, now I know, you were in among all that smoke and everything. And you know now what happened to you! [laughs] You weren't to know these things. You weren't to know. But, eh, sorry I've got nothing with the uniforms on. I don't know whatever happened, I did get some cine [sic], pictures taken, but they stayed in my mother's house, and I really don't know who got them at the end of it all, you know?

**VB: I mean, these ones that you were showing me were great.**



**SM:** They were just from the Star, you know? They were just the one. So that was the Orient, the Star, you know they're all connected?

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** The Kelvin, they're all connected.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** Ah, what was the other one? And the New Partick. That's four I've got for you, isn't it? Is that four?

**VB: The other ones'll come back when you least expect it!**

**SM:** I know, when you're away! [both laugh] I'm really annoyed at that. I've also got that feeling that I've missed you out a few in the Gorbals. [gasps] The Green's, the Green's! In the Gorbals, you know the Green's Playhouse?

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** Well, they had what they called the Green's, just at Gorbals Cross. That's another one. The Green's cinema.

**VB: Right, what was that like?**

**SM:** It was their B hall! [laughs] It was just a wee hall, not a wee hall, but it was downmarket, you know. [laughs] That was the very first one I that was the very first one I remember going to, because we stayed in Ballater Street, that was a continuation of Ballater Street, going towards Gorbals Cross. And it was, maybe, less than five minutes' walk, and I remember going there when my brother and I were wee, wee things. On your own you went, like on the Saturday matinee, just wee, wee things, I remember going, and that was the first hall I went to, the Green's. So that was just called the Green's.

**VB: So was it run by the same company as Green's?**

**SM:** Run by the same people who owned it, uhuh, we just knew it as the Green's, there was no other name to it.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** So that was that one. I'm trying to think if there was anywhere else. I've a feeling I've missed you out a lot, and that book names every one, except I had a couple that it didn't name, but it had a couple in that I didn't know! [laughs]

**VB: So did you take your wee brother then when you...?**

**SM:** Well, you had to, I had to, I was the eldest in the family, and you were shunted when, to keep them out of the road! [laughs] When I think of it, we were wee, wee things! I mean I must have been going to that matinee in the Green's when I was about four, and he would be two! [coughs] On your own.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** You wouldn't believe that. The places you went on your own.

**VB: Did you, did you feel, I mean, was there a sense of community then in the Gorbals? Did you feel quite, I mean...**

**SM:** You never felt afraid, that's true.

**VB: No.**

**SM:** I never, ever remember feeling afraid. The way you would do now. You just didn't. There was nothing like that. You never felt you were going to get hit or mugged or murdered or...

**VB: 'Cause your parents must have felt quite safe, to let you...**

**SM:** Oh, you even went across from Ballater Street, where I've told you, it's that nautical college, is at the corner now, it was just beyond that, where I was born, and eh, I remember a girl taking me, she'd be six month older than me, taking me across to the People's Palace on the Glasgow Green. And that would be somewhere about five year old! And that was the first...

**VB: Quite a way!**

**SM:** I know. You just went everywhere on, you know, no matter how small, and nobody, I think they were always just glad to get rid of you, and, you weren't there. You know?

**VB: Yeh. [pause] I mean, I mean it is interesting that, because it's like, when you talk about this, it sounds very different from the sort of childhood that people have today really.**

**SM:** I suppose, looking back on it now, it's quite frightening when you think, I mean, you were taking to the lending, somebody did me a really good favour, they took me to the place that gave you out free books and this was the library in MacNeil Street, that was along Rutherglen Road, and eh, that was before the Gorbals Library was built. They built the Gorbals Library when I was seventeen, it's now knocked down and, as I say, that was the only library there was. This wee one was just a wee one. And after that, of course, that was me. It was books all the time. [coughs]

**VB: Did you just read everything you could get your hands on!**

**SM:** Everything, oh funny things. Who was the one about, oh, 'Down and Out in London' [referring to 'Down and Out in Paris and London'], who wrote that now?

**VB: George Orwell?**

**SM:** Aye, that was it! I was only a young lassie when I got that one out. Somewhere about fourteen! [laughs] I mean this was the kind of things, you didn't know what you were taking! You just took a book! And I would read the first part, you know, read the first bit, and if I thought I fancied it, "Oh, that's great!" I remember reading that many many, just when I was young, very young.

**VB: It's a very advanced book for a fourteen year old!**

**SM:** [laughs] I know, it wasn't half!

**VB:** Aye!

**SM:** It wasn't half! [coughs]

**VB:** 'Cause that, I mean, I was interested as well, when you were talking about, you know, you'd been to Russia and, were you interested in, when you were that sort of age, in things like watching the News or...?

**SM:** When did I become 'politically minded'? [laughs] I'm trying to think. I suppose it was only right that you should become politically minded, living in the Gorbals, and under these hardships. I just can't remember when it hit me. I remember one, that must have been quite late on, because there was, eh, in the Gorbals, I don't know if I mentioned the last time, in our close it was all Lithuanians, from Lithuania and they'd come across, oh God they'd hard lives. First of all they'd a wee house, just what we had, I think, I don't know if I said last time about them taking washings across to the washhouse. There was a communal washhouse across the road from us, in Rutherglen Road, just across from Camden Street. And the granny would come and the family would come, and the grannies, everybody worked, and the grannies would take washings, your washing, anybody that could afford [coughs], aw the toffs, the bookies and things like that could afford it, they would take the washings across to the, the steamie, the old steamie, and do the washings, and that was what they made their money on, and it was - there was something I was going to tell you there - about being politically minded. I think I told you about that building bulging out and all of a sudden we all had to get out and go to Maryhill, and, eh, this, one of they lassies, I started palling up with one of these lassies from Lithuania, but she was born here, you know? And, eh, I remember her saying her father was a Communist! And she used to go around telling people her father was a Communist! "She should keep that a secret; she shouldn't tell people that!" Even in those days you were really brainwashed! "Oh! She should keep that a secret!" So, I wasn't politically minded then, I don't know when I became politically minded! [laughs]

**VB:** Right.

**SM:** I did go to Russia six times. Now, how did it come about, the first time? The first time it was Patricia's boyfriend's mother had booked, there was a cruise going to Russia. And she'd booked it,

and she said, it was, there was a Travel Fair up the town somewhere, and she says, "We're going to book this cruise, you want to come?" And it was for the Fair Fortnight, and I says, "Och, I can't, no point in me going, because my husband was, eh, a maintenance engineer. And when the place shut down, United Biscuits, well it was MacDonaldis at that time, when it shut down, that was when the maintenance engineers had to overhaul the machinery. So they never, ever, got the Fair Fortnight off. So I thought, och, I'll go anyway. So, when I finally did go, a woman who I'm quite friendly with now was behind the counter selling the Russian cruises. So she says, "Och, you can put yourself down for, you don't have to take it, but you can put your name down anyway." I said, "OK, well put my name down for me and my husband." So when they did come back I phoned up and said, eh - I don't know if I told you this last time? - that it was our wedding anniversary, but it was actually the following year, and he let us off for that fortnight and that's the first visit to Russia. And that was quite good. It was Leningrad and Moscow. But since then I've been to Armenia, eh Kiev, och, all over, all over. So we kept going back every year, and eventually it was, they had trade union holidays, we discovered. So you could - you didn't have to be in a trade union, but the trade union were running the holidays from here. So you went to their sanatoriums when you got there. Just nice big hotels, you know? Where they had their sun, where they had their places for their sick people, if you needed a holiday, if you were working in the town they sent you to Sochi and places like that, the Black Sea, so that's where we eventually...

**VB: That's good.**

**SM:** Aye, it was great. I must show you this, must show you this one. [following extract not transcribed from 0:44:50 to 0:47:20 ; sound of dishes being taken away; SM shows VB collection of Russian dolls given to her by Russian friends and talks about collection of icons and amber necklaces she brought back from Russia]

**SM:** Well I liked Russia, there may have been a whole lot of things I just didn't know, I didn't find anything, and what you didn't find, and you're finding now, you're finding it now, is that the kids are sleeping in the streets and things like that. And I always remember seeing, I think I told you about [personal name] and I said to him, he worked here, but he went out there quite a lot, and I said, "If you ever see any children neglected, or sleeping in the streets, I'll stop believing." And he says, "I've never seen it." And the children were all well-looked after, well educated, you would go into a school, greet you in English, and you could leave your stuff, you never had to lock anything up. Whether there was a lot... until you get perfect people you're not going to get a perfect system, is

the way I see it. And probably there was a lot hidden but [laughs] I think it was a lot better than it is now. Honest, I really think so. I really think so.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** The old people paid very little for rent, very little for, for their food. The basics were cheap and the rents was cheap, and your heating was cheap. If you wanted anything different, a wee bit different, then you paid sky-high and I think young people always wanted what they... [laughs] I think the worst part was letting the tourists in. They would see the American tourists with all these things that they couldn't get, because they made the basics first. And the luxuries came second. And of course they would see all this and they began to get, I think, dissatisfied, you know?

**VB: Aw, I see.**

**SM:** And I could see that, as I say.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** Nothing's perfect. But what I found was I liked what I did see, and that was six times, you know?

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** [coughs]

**VB: I mean, one thing that crossed my mind when you were telling me about, em, you know, the union trip and everything was, were you in a union yourself when you were in the cinemas?**

**SM:** Eh, my husband's own union. [pause]

**VB: When you were working in the cinemas?**

**SM:** Nobody ever asked you to join a union. No, never. Never. And I think it was needed, when you think on it. Wasn't it?

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** It was needed. But nobody ever came to say about a union or a thing. I don't know if I remember being in a union in my life, to tell you the honest truth. Even in the Rolls Royce, I don't remember. [pause] Don't remember if my husband was in a union either! [laughs]

**VB: It's interesting.**

**SM:** Funnily enough!

**VB: I mean, there must have been so many people working in the cinemas.**

**SM:** Uhuh! And yet there was no, there was a union, there was a union. But nobody ever asked you to join in. There was a union [sighs] I'm trying to think of the name of it now. There was a union. But nobody bothered coming round the cinemas, trying to get supporters or anything like that, you know. [pause]

**VB: I mean that, it's interesting in itself. Um.**

**SM:** Naw, I mean as I said I wasn't politically aware. I don't know when I became politically aware. Probably somewhere about, probably when I was in the Rolls Royce for some strange reason! [laughs]

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** I don't what I done, I don't know why. I don't know why. Probably got older and wiser, or less wiser! I don't know! [laughs]

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** [coughs]

**VB: I mean I wonder as well, I was wondering while you were talking about the, the sort of less fancy cinemas in the Gorbals. I mean, was there ever anything like, I mean, did the films always run smoothly? Or were ever, were there ever any problems?**

**SM:** Break downs? Aye there was break downs! And when there was break downs, as I say, you got a terrible time of it, shouting and bawling and carrying on, oh yeh, there was that. And, there was eh, I don't know if you've noticed it, even yet I still, there's a wee thing in the corner. When I'm watching the films on the TV, and I'll say to Trish, "That's a changeover!" "What do you mean?" But, the wee thing in the corner, and this, the projectionist would see this wee thing, eh, it was all reels, you see, four or five big reels, to show the film. And, eh, as soon as they saw this wee thing in the corner - and you'll still see it [something?] - they knew to be ready for the changeover. So then you'd see the second one, and the scene would change, because that was a new reel going in. So normally, if you watch for that...

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** It's always on the right hand, the right-hand corner, up at the top.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** If you're seeing the old films, watch for that! [laughs] That was the change, all, "That's a changeover!" [laughs]

**VB: That's interesting. So, I mean, did you watch the films a lot, when you were working?**

**SM:** Not really, not really. You were up and down, you know? Especially in the Regal, like they were coming in from half one in the day to eleven at night. You were sitting in a funny wee seat, say that was the passage going in to the right, all the seats, you had a wee tiny seat, it was a wee stool, but when you got up, it went up against the wall. So, you were up and down in that wee seat, you know, as soon as somebody came in, just at the door, you had to get the torch and take them down to, and fill up that side and then that side, you know, so that was really, that was a degrading job! [laughs]

**VB: So, I mean, they were coming in and out, right through the film?**



**SM:** Oh gosh, aye! All day and up until, as I say, about half past nine at night, when the cash box shut. That's when you got away if it was your early night. If it was your early night.

**VB:** So you were really on the go all the time, it sounds like?

**SM:** You were on the go all the time. I couldn't do that now! It's well seen, the cigarettes got to me, I never smoked in my life. I've to go about with that in my hand now [an inhaler] all the time, it's terrible. It really is. I just walk into the room and I'm breathless, you know?

**VB:** Yeh, yeh.

**SM:** I'm very seldom out. I go out about once a week to the shopping centre, but I didn't get out this week.

**VB:** Yeh.

**SM:** And I thought if it was as bad as yesterday, or the day before, I was going to say to you, "Make it another day, it's rotten for you to come out, you know?" [Note: time of Strathclyde flooding]

**VB:** Yeh, sure, sure.

**SM:** Was it OK for you the day?

**VB:** Fine, fine, I mean.

**SM:** Was it?

**VB:** Yeh.

**SM:** I thought, I couldn't have the lassie come on a day like... You know what it was like.

**VB:** Yesterday.

**SM:** You couldn't have come, no, no. And you couldn't have done it on Saturday.

**VB: No.**

**SM:** So that was my day's to the shopping centre. I said to Maureen, she came on Saturday, I said, "Oh, I couldn't go out the day. I couldn't even walk from your car to where the, you know, to get in to the Pollock shopping centre".

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** I says, "We'll leave it till tomorrow." and of course, Sunday was as bad and I said "Just forget it" so she brought me a few messages [groceries] today.

**VB: Yeh. I mean, are you alright talking just now, or...?**

**SM:** This is the way I am all the time.

**VB: Right, right.**

**SM:** Some days I'm a wee bit better than others, but...

**VB: 'Cause I mean, I don't want to make you...**

**SM:** Naw, naw.

**VB: III! [both laugh]**

**SM:** It's maybe just as well I'm not a hundred per cent, or I'd never stop!

**VB: Aw! [both laugh]**

**SM:** So what do you want to ask, Valentina?

**VB: Right, well let me see, there's another thing I wanted to ask about, you mentioned the dancehalls in the Gorbals.**

**SM:** Aye. They were almost as, there was as many of them as there was, do you want to ask about them?

**VB:** [nods]

**SM:** There was Diamonds Dancing Academy at Gorbals Cross, I think I told you about that, there was the Princess, that was the new place, you know, live shows, there was the place in the middle, Diamonds Dancing Academy and then there was the Palace. Oh, that was another one you didn't put down, right at Gorbals Cross, the Palace Cinema [referring to the Palace Theatre].

**VB:** Right, the Palace. [writes down]

**SM:** [coughs] That was right at Gorbals Cross, on Gorbals Street.

**VB:** What was, what was that like?

**SM:** The Palace? I think it was a wee bit upmarket. That was sixpence as against fourpence! [laughs] So if it was sixpence it was upmarket! So, that was the Diamonds Dancing - that's where you got taught - and funnily enough there wasn't - there's talk about the gangs in the thirties and that - well I honestly didn't see anything out of place - I don't remember a house getting robbed.

[following extract not transcribed from 0:53:22-0:57:35; anecdote of upstairs neighbour getting robbed after VB's last visit, taken through to see window they broke in to, from the back of SM's house - broke in while SM was watching TV downstairs three years ago, in the next block on Christmas Day, break in; woman across the road has an alarm]

**SM:** So you never got that in the Gorbals, you never got that in the Gorbals. I don't remember a house being robbed in the Gorbals. As I say, I do remember a few meters being broken into but probably the people themselves, it was prepayment meters, and if they were hard up it was [mimes forcing open meter] [laughs] but I don't remember them. I mean, they talk about the razor gangs and that but I didn't see them. Maybe I was just lucky. Didn't see them or meet any gangs. There was the Bee Hive and the Wee Hive, I think I told you about that? The Bee Hive gang was in the, the

Bee Hive was the name of a shop that sold wool in Cumberland Street. So they all hung about this corner, so they were called the Bee Hive gang!

[both laugh]

**SM:** I don't remember them doing any damage! And then there was wee-er ones, and they were called the Wee Hive! [laughs] 'Cause they were younger! [laughs] I don't remember them doing anything really! But that was the main one in the Gorbals, the Bee Hive gang and as I say, I don't remember a thing.

**VB: It doesn't sound very threatening, does it?**

**SM:** Outside a wool shop! [laughs] It was round, just round the windows of the wool shop, they hung about!

**VB: I mean, did you ever see sort of fist fights and things, or...?**

**SM:** I don't remember ever seeing anything. Lots of shouting matches, with the women, you know? Living on top of each other, the way they did. There was lots of that but they never came to blows funnily enough. I don't, I don't even remember seeing the police about very much even. You know? It was weird.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** Not the way you see them now. The police are here every, because of [laughs] And whether it's the same crowd that's doing the burglaries here, I just don't know, I just don't know.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** But that's three year ago, the very same kind of, in the next block, the very same as what happened to her.

[discussion of entry via tiny window and goods stolen; SM shows VB her icons and pictures given to her by children; worked as a nursery nurse for 2 years]

**SM:** That's from St Luke's School in the Gorbals.

**VB:** This is your report card, is it?

**SM:** When I left the school, you actually didn't get a secondary education.

**VB:** Right.

**SM:** That was the primary school, you stayed there till you were fourteen, then you went to a part that was known as the Advanced Division.

**VB:** Right.

**SM:** For two years, when you were twelve you sat the, what was it? Oh God, what did they call it? Aw, see this is where my memory goes now. You sat an examination and normally you'd go to a high school or something. I got, eh, I was getting free to this convent school up at Bridgeton. But it would have meant books, and it would have meant uniform and my mother couldn't see her way to do it. She was a gambler, she gambled [laughs] so she couldn't see her way to do it. So, eh, you just stayed on there for two years. And this was what you got at the end of it.

**VB:** Ah, I see. So this is sort of like a leaving certificate?

**SM:** That was the leaving, uhuh,

**VB:** Aye, I see. And I see your subjects were English, History, Geography, Arithmetic, Cookery, Housewifery!

**SM:** Aye, all the things!

**VB:** What was that?

**SM:** You were going to be servants, obviously! [laughs]

**VB: Yes!**

**SM:** Housewifery was how to clean a house, dressmake. If you notice that, that was really one-sided wasn't it? When you think on it.

**VB: Yes!**

**SM:** What you were going to be!

**VB: Physical training, and Distinction in English. And I note your geometry and algebra scored out.**

**SM:** Aye, you didn't get that. I haven't a clue about these things. I hear questions, I like the questions.

**VB: It is interesting, as you say, and very much geared-**

**SM:** Aye.

**VB: Towards-**

**SM:** Aye, towards you, you were just going to be a housewife, if you were lucky, or a servant if you were unlucky! [laughs]

**VB: Yeh. [both laugh] So that's 1934 then, when you left school?**

**SM:** Aye, that's when I left.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** I was actually fourteen in November of '33, and I remember my mother going daft because I'd to stay, eh, you know, it was leaving dates...

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** ...and she was missing out, you know, this was great, I was going to be the first to get a job, you know? And she was, [annoyed?] about this, I had four or five weeks more of this, you? [laughs]

**VB: I mean, when you did get your first job did you give most of your wages to your family?**

**SM:** Oh you did, uhuh. I think, I think the first job I told you was twenty five pence, five shillings, and, eh, I don't know how much I, I gave most of it.

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

**SM:** So, as I say, I think that's how I got the job that day. Because I'm standing with all my stuff like this [indicates] and there was ten of us all waiting or more, all waiting on a job. And I'm standing with my stuff like this and he said, "Up the stair!" and I think I told you about this, last week?

**VB: That's right.**

**SM:** Aye. So that was that.

**VB: Mind you, I suppose [money was tight when?]...**

**SM:** [showing certificate] That's when I won a prize, a first prize, this was all the prizes I got.

**VB: That's 1932 to '3.**

**SM:** Aye.

**VB: For General Excellence.**

**SM:** [laughs] Never got anywhere. That [showing badges] was when I was 53, I won these two badges for swimming!

**VB: That's amazing!**

**SM:** [laughs] That was Langside College. Swimming. [pause] I didn't really need to show you all this, it was just that... [pause] There's something that tells you that I became a nursery nurse somewhere. I don't know what happens to things. This is it here. So I became a nursery nurse! [laughs] But then my husband took ill and I couldn't practise.

**VB: Mmm.**

**SM:** I liked the kids and all. That's not what I meant to show you though! [laughs] [pause while looking through]

**VB: That's beautiful.**

[following extract not transcribed from 1:04:03-1:08:14; looking at icons; one is 15th century; Russian/Scottish Friendship Society jumble sale (organisers of cruise) for 5 bob, she'd not seen an icon before, broke down to half a crown; other one her husband bought; Sotheby's came to Glasgow, doing valuations, took icons, twenty years ago, the two worth £400; discussion of friends, man now ill; possesses several pictures; travelled to Czechoslovakia together]

**SM:** But that's getting away from your cinemas! [laughs]

**VB: Aye, we're getting away from the subject! [both laugh] Interesting though! Em, yeh I was wanting to ask you another thing about the picture houses in town. 'Cause you mentioned some.**

**SM:** Uhuh.

**VB: And we've mentioned some again just now.**

**SM:** Mmm.

**VB:** Like, em, the Regal, and places like La Scala.



**SM:** Uhuh, uhuh. The La Scala was on the, across the road, there was, eh, in Sauchiehall Street, there was, eh, the Picture House, that's where, now is the Savoy Centre.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** And facing it was the La Scala and beyond was the Regal.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** And round the corner was the New Savoy Cinema and the Playhouse [referring to Green's Playhouse] across the road from it, these were all together.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** And, trying to think, down the road, past the Odeon, there was the Odeon but that was the Paramount when it started. It started with a Bing Crosby film, *We're Not Dressing*. It opened, the Paramount when it opened, with *We're Not*. I remember that, and it was a Bing Crosby. That was the first film they showed. And down from that was the Regent. And that, I'm trying to think was there any more, then there was the Grand Central, [pause] I can't think of any more. It's rotten because my memory used to be so clear.

**VB: I mean you were saying that you went there more when you were going with your friends as you got a bit older?**

**SM:** Uhuh. I never ever went to the ones in the town, not until I worked.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** Never ever went to the ones, they were too dear. I mean a shilling was a lot of money as I say when you could get three times for fourpence.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** You know fourpence. It was a lot, so I never ever found out what like these cinemas were until I finally, finally worked in them.

**VB:** Aye. I mean how, how did you feel going into a cinema like that? [pause] Compared to, was it different from going in to the local ones or...?

**SM:** Oh yes, very much so, as I say, they had their restaurants, the bigger places had their restaurants and, as I told you, you could get your order just as you were going in, and say, "I would like so and so." and get the waitress to take your order and your tray would come down into your seat, wherever you were sitting, and as I told you, half of La Scala, not half, one side was the restaurant.

**VB:** Yeh.

**SM:** And they had lamps so you could see what you were eating, and Tricia said, "That would be wonderful!" but it was a clatter, you couldn't enjoy the... [pause] for people clattering dishes and things, you know?

**VB:** Yeh. 'Cause, I mean, you were talking about how your mother felt going to the cinema, and I would imagine going to one like that you must have felt quite...

**SM:** Different.

**VB:** Aye, different.

**SM:** Mmm.

**VB:** Different, yeh.

**SM:** But as I say the first time I was ever in was when I worked, when I got the job, that was the first time I was ever in one of these up the town. And the one I'd have liked to have worked in was the one that was, what was known as the Paramount then. That was the one, that was the one, that's the Odeon now. That was the one that I'd have liked to have worked in, and I nearly got the job, and don't know what happened, I didn't get it! [laughs]

**VB: Was that like the top?**

**SM:** That was the top cinema, I thought so, I thought so.

**VB: Yeh. [pause] I mean another thing I was wanting to ask about was em, someone was telling me about some of the big bands playing in the cinemas, like I think it was maybe the Olympia had bands in it too. I don't know if that was at ones you went to?**

**SM:** Naw, I don't ever remember the big bands.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** The Playhouse aye, you know, not in the cinema, not in the cinema, the big bands came to the Playhouse dancing part, that was the ballroom, but they never ever came to the cinema.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** You had the organs that came up.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** Gerald Shaw played in the Regal and Frank Olsen played in the Picture House, in my days, that was all that I ever knew.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** Was, eh, both of the organs came up, they were nice, you know? All lit up, you know, they were really, they should have kept them, they were nice. And, eh, you didn't see much of them, they only came in to play the organ and went.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** We didn't see them very much.

**VB: I mean, it sounds almost, you know, when you're describing it, like going into a different world.**

**SM:** It was, it really was, and I think it was needed. I think there'd have been a revolution here if it hadn't been for the cinemas! [laughs] Honest! I mean, it kept peoples' minds off other things, really! You know when you think of the thirties? And it was called 'The Hungry Thirties' and what makes me mad is we were the biggest empire in the world at that time, and, yet where was the crumbs going? That they couldn't bring it to their own people? And make them rich, it was really unfair, you didn't want to live on the backs of the blacks, but, eh, where did it go?

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** Where did this huge empire go? It was taking all the goods out of every other country, it wasn't coming in to their own country.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** It definitely wasn't, because there was hungry people in, even in England in the Hungry Thirties, it was the same situation.

**VB: Do you think, do you think that the films of the time...? [pause]**

**SM:** Made it political?

**VB: Yeh, or brought out these sort of points?**

**SM:** No. No, no.

**VB: Were you aware of it at the time?**

**SM:** No, no. There was no politics.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** There was nothing that was political, funnily enough. As I said to you, I don't know when I became, it definitely wasn't because, as I said, I was about seventeen or the eighteen when she kept saying, "Och aye, my father's a Communist and I'd ran to my mother and she'd say, "Aw, she shouldn't say that." You know? So I wasn't politically minded then at all.

**VB: Right. Did you ever go to the Cosmo or...?**

**SM:** Aye. I remember when that was built. I was in the Regal when it was built, and somebody got a job in it from [pause] and we quite envied her in a way, into this new cinema, you know? Quite envied her.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** I went to the Cosmo quite a few times, but that was after I was married. It was after I was married.

**VB: Right. So not actually during the thirties?**

**SM:** Not during the thirties, no. No, it wasn't during the thirties, I wasn't married until the forties.

**VB: Yeh, I mean do you think there was a change from the films that you were going to, say when you were going to...?**

**SM:** The thirties cinema?

**VB: ...to when you were married?**

**SM:** The forties cinema? Yeh, yeh, I think they began to change.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** I think they began to. There was always good stories in the thirties. Even yet - the woman up the stair'll not put it on if it's a black-and-white film and I'll say, "But the stories are better!" and I

honestly think they seemed to go on at a merry pace, there was no, they didn't lag, whereas now, if I'm watching a modern, well modern to me, on the telly, you feel your mind wandering, and your mind's away elsewhere and it might be old age but I think, actually...

**VB: [coughs]**

**SM:** They just don't hold your interest. They had a gift, they, Hollywood had a gift for films, there was no two ways about it. They said there was that many nationalities went over to America that they got the best people to, eh, you know, in the cinema business. Probably was. And there was some good actors. I saw Edward G. Robinson on yesterday but I didn't get seeing the film. Somebody came in. Edward G and somebody else. See, that was only yesterday and I can't remember who the other one was. My mind, I really get annoyed at this! [laughs]

**VB: I mean, was Edward G. Robinson one of your favourites? Or...?**

**SM:** Yeh. I thought he was good, I thought he was good.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** I thought he was a good actor.

**VB: That reminds me actually, just when we're talking about the stars, I've, em, we found this book in one of the second-hand shops near us [takes film annual out of bag] I thought you might like to see, I just brought it along.**

**SM:** To take a look at it? Aye? [book handed over] What did I do with my glasses? Did you notice? They always get lost! [both laugh]

**VB: They were there a minute ago.**

**SM:** They always get lost!

**VB: This is one of the Daily Express film books.**

**SM:** Aye, yeh.

**VB:** I think that one's 1938 or something.

**SM:** Greta Garbo! I'm going to put that fire on, wait and I'll put it on. That's a great find isn't it!  
That's a great find!

**VB:** Aye, it is, we were really pleased with it.

**SM:** Ah!

**VB:** So I thought you might like to see that anyway.

**SM:** [looking at book] Oh that was the director. He was a director, that's right eh. I'll just get through it as quick as I can.

**VB:** Aye.

**SM:** The glasses are, just gone, skite! [laughs] I remember a lot of Gorbals sayings, still! [pause while looking through book]

**VB:** Did you ever...?

**SM:** Claudette Colbert. Him. Charles Ruggles. I remember him but I wouldn't have picked him out. Eh, he's got on, eh, aye, he's French. Aye, Maurice Chevalier. Jeanette MacDonald.

**VB:** Did you like them?

**SM:** He's on this week.

**VB:** Is he?

**SM:** Aye, he's on. Eh, they were telling me there. I'm trying to think... it's either Christmas week, they were giving you a whole pile of films and he's in one of them.

**VB: I'll need to look out for that. Did you like Maurice Chevalier yourself?**

**SM:** Nah. No really.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** Kaye Francis. [pause] [inaudible] Gary Cooper. I'm reading these out. Trying to think who these are. Ginger Rogers, I didn't read her!

**VB: Did you like Ginger Rogers?**

**SM:** I did like her, aye. I did.

**VB: 'Cause when you were saying that you liked Bing Crosby, I thought.**

**SM:** [inaudible] I didn't know these two at all. [pause] Didn't know her. Him I did know, aye.

**VB: Did you like the sort of second features, and the B movies and that, or was it the...?**

[doorbell rings]

**SM:** What time is it? Oh my God, it's maybe George, no it can't be.

[SM answers door, ushers off visitor]

**SM:** As I told you I've got two neighbours, one's a good one and one's a baddie, that's the baddie! [laughs] She stays up the stair. That's the woman that got, eh... [discussion of their behaviour; if good neighbour she'd have told her to come in]

**SM:** And that's from the films! The goodies and the baddies. [laughs] I notice that's all back again, everybody's talking about goodies and baddies! [both laugh] I suppose I'll take too long to go through this? He was great in Henry VIII.



**VB: Charles Laughton?**

**SM:** Aye. I don't want to waste too much time. Jean Parker, I don't remember her. I, I know their faces but don't remember much.

**VB: Aye. That's what I was thinking about, you know, when the door went just now... I mean did you enjoy the sort of second features and the...?**

**SM:** Aye.

**VB: The B movies?**

**SM:** Sometimes they were the best! Sometimes they were, sometimes they weren't. But you did see the newsreel, and two films, and some adverts in between, and sometimes a wee short comic. Oh there was things on, Pete somebody's specialities [referring to *Pete Smith Specialties*] was on and that was from the thirties, the other day, I was sitting there watching it and it was all, it was quite, you know, strange things that happened. So if you ever see that, that's all from the thirties.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** Pete somebody. [referring to *Pete Smith Specialties*] These were just wee shorts they used in between.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** I can remember what I didn't like, I didn't like the British ones much. Thought he was rotten. [referring to Stan Laurel] It said he was born in Glasgow or somewhere.

**VB: Oh.**

**SM:** Stan, och, my daughter had a wee facts book you get, a Glasgow facts book, and it told you about Stan Laurel being born in the Gorbals I think it was. And a bit about him and wee bits about cinemas, but nothing much, it told you about different streets and things like that, you know?

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** I think it's, I think it's the Corporation that sent it out.

**VB: Did you, did you like Stan Laurel, or...?**

**SM:** I never liked these two. I mean, a lot of people laughed at them, I was maybe very funny, I didn't laugh at the things that other people laughed at. I really didn't. [pause]

**VB: Well, what about Charlie Chaplin?**

**SM:** I didn't laugh at him either, even from I was a kid. I was probably funny! [both laugh] Maybe too serious for all them. [pause] That's a rare find, isn't it!

**VB: It is.**

**SM:** That's a rare find. There's a lot I don't know, but there's a lot I do know. George Raft. Didn't like him either funnily enough. He was a good actor, but I couldn't take to him. Carole Lombard, I wasn't struck by her either. [pause] Joan Crawford, her adopted daughter wrote a book about her, afterwards, which wasn't very nice. [pause] That's great, that's great.

**VB: Aye, I thought you might like to see that.**

**SM:** Oh aye, that's great! I'm showing you icons!

**VB: Well it's better.**

**SM:** Fair's fair! [both laugh]

**VB: I'd rather look at these (indicates icons) Amazing!**

**SM:** I keep saying I'll need to take them up to Christie's and see what they... [continues on value of icons; discuss colours; woman up stair probably soap on, she comes down when finished]

**SM:** I've never seen 'Coronation Street' once! The only soap I did follow was 'Dallas', and I don't know how I got hooked on that, and I did start following that. That's the only soap I've ever followed, the rest, 'EastEnders', everything else, I've never seen one of them, you know, one edition of them, never once.

**VB: Of course, I mean 'Dallas' has got all the glamour, hasn't it?**

**SM:** Probably that's what it was. It was like the old cinema stuff.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** And that's what hooked me. I, you don't want to see 'EastEnders' about the East End, you don't want to see 'Coronation Street'. I'm afraid it's more like, probably because I was brought up in the thirties, when you did go into the cinema it was glamour and it was taking you away from, and that's what you still go for and that's why I don't watch the soaps.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** I don't watch the soaps.

**VB: I mean, just looking through, I mean, over your shoulder there, looking at that book, some of these stars were quite something, weren't they?**

**SM:** Uhuh. They really were. I suppose they could get the best at that time, you know? They, I mean everybody looking for a job and I suppose they could really pick them.

**VB: Yeh. I mean, how did you feel when you were seeing someone like Joan Crawford, or...?**

**SM:** You just accepted it, I mean, you didn't say, "Oh look at them, and look at me," kind of thing. You just accepted it, and as I say, I started to like wearing black a lot, and it was somewhere I was about seventeen when I went into that cinema, the Star, and as I say, the main article, "Have you got a black dress?" I'd only a navy blue one but I did get a black one. I got a black dress, well, and started wearing it, and sent for a collar from Woolworths, and we all wore the same collar out of Woolworths. And, I would never have thought, from the Gorbals, of wearing a black dress, then I

began to think, "Uhuh, it's very smart." Ever afterwards [laughs] I began to think it was very smart and then you'd swan about in it! You know? But, eh, it was funny that, you were in, they did influence a lot of what you wore and things like that. Both working and watching the screen, you know?

**VB: Is that right?**

**SM:** Mhm.

**VB: I mean, did you, were you conscious of imitating the styles of the stars?**

**SM:** You weren't conscious of it, but subconsciously, now, when you look back, you say. [pause]

**VB: Yeh**

**SM:** You know? I think everybody did, I think everybody did. And then this, the shops started churning out what they did see on the screen too, the style.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** They were nice styles in the thirties. I don't know if there's one there. I don't know if I told you about the Guinea Shop with the dresses, did I tell you that? And there was really lovely styles, but again a guinea was a lot of money, because you get four dresses in Marks [referring to Marks and Spencers] for a guinea, in Marks! But did I tell you about sending the stuff to France, from Marks? Eh, oh, I got friends in France, I've got friends everywhere, Germany, France, you name it! Czechoslovakia, you name it! [laughs] So, but eh, she'd taken us around or something in France, so I wanted to repay her with something. So I went to Marks and I got a nice sort of tartan skirt, it was a whole set and it was quite expensive, and the jumper and everything to go with it. And it was all together. And it was quite expensive and I posted it off. And she said something, she sent back and she said something about, eh, "It didn't fit me, it didn't fit me, I sent it to my cousin, sent it to my cousin." And then I discovered what was wrong. I think I told you about her coming over - did I tell you that tale? About her coming over? During the war?

**VB: Yes, I think you did.**

**SM:** And at that time, Marks was cheap, and as I say, the dresses were four and elevenpence, and she still thought of Marks and Spencer's being the same! So when this thing came with 'St Michael' she didn't want to know! [both laugh]

**VB:** It'd cost you a bit more than four and eleven now!

**SM:** It was quite dear actually.

**VB:** Yeh.

**SM:** And she didn't want to know about it because it said, and I never thought, you know that years ago Marks had got, you know, very cheap. And as I say, for four dresses, where in the Guinea Shop you only got one.

**VB:** 'Cause I mean Glasgow's always had a good reputation for shopping hasn't it?

**SM:** Aye, gosh, in a way, as I say, it's a ploy and I often feel about my daughters, poor people had no hobbies, you couldn't afford hobbies, so when you got any money you went out to the shops. And I did trail round the shops and you see now? This is where they're now, at Micro at the moment, that's over on the estate there. You'll need to go to Micro some day with them. At Micro, Tricia had already been in the town, you'll see by that stuff out there in the hall, and that's only some of it, some of it's in the bedroom, and I say I've made them shopaholics!

**VB:** [laughs]

**SM:** I really have! And [laughs] that's terrible! [both laugh] A capitalist ploy!

[both laugh]

**VB:** Well, I'm not one to preach about that, I must say! I like buying things.

**SM:** Are you a shopaholic too!

**VB: As much as I can!**

**SM:** I keep, I shouldn't preach because, see my wardrobe? The brass rail has all the stuff, it's going like that! [indicates bend in middle] And my husband could fix absolutely everything, and "If this breaks, what do I do?" But, I mean, the stuff's so heavy and there's so much, and I'll say, "I'll maybe go to the Pollock shopping centre and I'll get a blouse reduced" and I'll say, "Och well, it's not that dear, if I wear it a couple of times I've had my money." And of course that's goes into the wardrobe, and the wardrobe's like that! I don't get out and when I do get out, I overbuy.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** You know? And, just when I think of it, and now I'm saying, you've only one body when she's showing me all, she had about four pair of trousers the day! She had three tops, she had either two or three skirts, I, she comes in with this stuff! And that was only the start! That was only a couple of hours in the town! 'Cause that one got dropped here at 9 o'clock - you know how George works in the school - that one gets dropped at 9 o'clock, and I think, he dropped her somewhere at the train at her place. She took the train into the town, had a couple of hours in the town and then came on here to meet Maureen... [lists clothes bought; Micro extolled; Maureen took them for the first time; lucky husband wasn't around; shopaholicism]

**SM:** I'm digressing again, you ask me something.

**VB: No, no, I mean I think I've asked more or less what I wanted to ask.**

**SM:** Uhuh.

**VB: But I'm sure, now, having heard new things I'm going to think of other things as well! [both laugh]**

**SM:** Well, watch for the changeover anyway!

**VB: I will do! I will do.**

**SM:** There's one and then, just shortly afterwards, there's the other, and that's when the changeover.

**VB: Aye.**

**SM:** They change over to the other reel.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** And you do see a change in the film, you know, like it's [pause], you have to see it to explain it.

**VB: I will look out for it, yeh. [pause] I mean, I'm sure you picked up a lot about the technical side of things as well, when you were...**

**SM:** Well, that was one thing I was going to tell you. We never got into the projection box.

**VB: Oh right.**

**SM:** It must have been horrible for them too. They were up in that wee, tiny box, high above the balcony, wee tiny wee squares cut out, that had been poked through, and all that smoke must have come in to them. I don't think any of them would live very long. You know? When you think of it now, probably very few of them reached old age, I did see one, the boy that was the prisoner of war, I showed you his picture, didn't I?

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** Eh, I did see him in the paper, he died. But, eh, what was I going to say about it? Oh aye, the women, they never ever taught the women how to use the projection box, until the war, when they started calling them all up, and of course they had to go, it wasn't a reserved occupation, so they had to go, and then they started putting women up in the projection box and teaching them then.

**VB: Mhm.**

**SM:** So they taught a few then. It wasn't me, but they did teach a few to show the pictures. They picked tall ones, funnily enough. The projectionists were all wee, because they started off as page boys and they wanted wee boys, wee tiny boys, for the page boys, and then if they were nice and they got on well, they didn't like giving them their books, and there was a place in the projection box, that was why, they were all tiny! Nearly all tiny up there! [laughs] Under five foot, five foot if they were lucky!

**VB: Right!**

**SM:** Mmm.

**VB: That's interesting. So it was something that women just, just didn't get the chance to?**

**SM:** They didn't get the chance until the war, and then there was a few of them, a few of them. In the Regal there was a few, in the Picture House there was a few. I don't know where else. I don't know about the Star in the war. I never went back there after the war. Used to go back to the Regal, and then I stopped going.

**VB: And I take it there were no women cinema managers and things, then? Either, or?**

**SM:** There was one cinema manager, no, she was under manager, in the Picture House.

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** And that was the only one, the only one I ever knew. There was no cinema managers, I know the Picture House had one.

**VB: I mean, it must have been very unusual, just generally, to get a...**

**SM:** You were absolutely nothing but an usherette or a [pause] secretary for the boss, an usherette, or, eh, in the cash box, and that was it. That was it. Women had no chance, no chance at all.

**VB: Yeh.**



**SM:** Of being anything, as I say, and then they started showing them how to show films!

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** But the, how I knew about the changeover was, the projectionist would be, maybe, down talking to you, and he spied the wee sign, and "Oh, I'll have to run up! It's the changeover, you know?" [both laugh] So he got up in time to change the film!

**VB: Right.**

**SM:** He shouldn't have been down there in the first place! [laughs]

**VB: Aye. It sounds like the jobs were quite, you know, you didn't really find out much about the other bits? Or...?**

**SM:** You didn't, you didn't. The manager was the top boss, you know? And they called you "Miss McWhinnie" or "Miss O'Connor" it was then.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** It was "Miss This" and "Miss That" and "Miss the Next Thing". In nearly all these cinemas there was no, there was no first names.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** They were very aloof, you know? [pause]

**VB: I mean, were most of the staff, em, were the women staff mainly quite young? 'Cause...**

**SM:** Yes.

**VB: I would imagine that once you got married, was that the end of your...?**

**SM:** That was the end of it, there was no, to my, there was, oh, just at the end of, at the war, there was one girl who got married, but she married the doorman, and he was called up and she, that's the only married woman I ever knew to be in this cinema. That was the only one.

**VB: Yeh.**

**SM:** They liked them young and, I suppose, attractive, in those days.

**VB: I was thinking that when you showed me the picture!**

[both laugh]

**SM:** I suppose that's [inaudible]! [laughs] Although some pictures today I didn't want, it was my birthday a fortnight ago, that was me seventy-five, and Maureen took pictures and she brought them the day, I don't know what she's done with them, if you come back I'll let you see them. Don't ever take them again, I don't ever look in the mirror these days! And, when I saw these pictures, I honestly don't know what I look like, 'cause I don't look in the mirror! [laughs] I mean, when I saw these pictures, ["Don't ever take these"?] [inaudible] [laughs]

**VB: I'm sure they weren't that bad! [both laugh]**

**SM:** Tricia said they were good, after she saw them, "Dead good!" "Don't ever show me them!"

**VB: I mean these were lovely ones, and it's very good of you to lend us them!**

**SM:** Well, you were very good at bringing them back, I've lent things out, as I said, but, my wedding photographs that never came back. It was a shame. [majority of remaining extract to end of interview not transcribed; loss of wedding photos - lent out, doesn't know who got them; used to save up old coins, but gave them away to Tricia]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**SM:** I've given them away now!

**VB: These dolls are lovely, though, I'm quite taken with them.**

[discussion of dolls, given out to visiting children; VB praises ornaments (glass and ornaments from Russia, and ornaments from Pollock shopping centre, look at them together; china samovar; Littlewoods items) as SM shows them; VB suggests getting train]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape Two]

[End of Interview]