

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

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* Glasgow, 30 November 1994: Valentina Bold interviews Thomas McGoran

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* Standardised by Annette Kuhn

* TM = Thomas McGoran/VB = Valentina Bold

* Notes: First of two interviews with Thomas McGoran; A section of the final tape was used for the second interview with TM, this section is not transcribed here; Sound Quality: Fair; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner; the original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection; please contact Lancaster University Library for more details.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB introduction to tape]

VB: I'll just put it over beside you because it doesn't pick up very well.

TM: Yeh.

VB: So if I put it there, then, erm, that should be.

TM: Well, if you want to ask anything or, in between, or take any notes or anything, I don't mind.

VB: OK.

TM: But, eh, I was born in, eh, Ayr. You know what I... And, we lived in a village in, in Ayrshire, in Dalry.

VB: Right.

TM: And we came to Glasgow, I think it must've been about 1930. Eh, that, that was really to allow my dad to get to some work. 'Cause there wasn't much work down in a wee Ayrshire village. [pause 2 seconds] And when we first came here, the first time I ever mind [remember] being to a cinema was the old Annfield cinema [referring to Scott's Annfield Electric Theatre] in the Gallowgate. Now, I don't know if you know that area.

VB: Not very well.

TM: But there's a hotel down there, it's used as a working man's club nowadays, you know. But it used to, it was the Bellgrove Hotel. Now, on that side, where the Bellgrove Hotel stood, was the old Annfield cinema. And that was the first picturehouse that I was ever in. That I can remember. My dad took me to it. And the picture I saw, I think it was called 'The Luck of the Irish' and it was James Dunn that was in it [possibly referring to *Sailor's Luck*]. Now I didn't understand it, it was just something new to me. But I was more interested in at [sic] the back of the cinema. You know, where the light came from, this wee pinprick of light that come out of a wee window. I was awful interested in that. You know? I've spent more time sitting watching that than I did watching what was going on at the screen. So much so that I eventually became a projectionist. Aye! So that'll give you an idea. But, eh, after that I was hooked on cinemas. I couldn't get to them often enough!

TM: And there was plenty of cinemas around this district. You know, to go to. There was the Parade, the Park Cinema, the Scotia, the Dennistoun, the Rex, the Riddrie, eh... the Orient. Now there was a cinema. That, that cinema that I told you about, the Annfield, that was knocked down to make way for the Bellgrove Hotel. But just before it was knocked down they started to build a new cinema, a brand new cinema. That was the Orient that they put in a soft seats with that. And that was the most beautiful cinema that you could ever imagine. It was my favourite, you know? Of all [with emphasis] the cinemas that I ever seen, I've still to see one to beat it! The interior decor was absolutely marvellous. And, of course, yeh, I think it was either 1932 or '33 when it opened, and there was a big skri [great deal of writing] about it, you know, all the local papers was boosting up this wonderful cinema. It really had everything [with increasing emphasis]. You know, state of the art equipment, there was seats for 2,750 people, and it was a huge place. And it was carpeted all

over, with the floors and the passageways, and I loved to visit it. And when you did go to it, you'd certainly get your money's worth!

TM: It cost threepence to go in to the matinee. And when I say threepence, this is three old pennies, which is roughly about the value of about one and a half pence nowadays. And you were guaranteed at least three hours at that price, and sometimes longer. You used to get two features, a newsreel, possibly a comedy, a cartoon and maybe a *March of Time* or something like this. But this was the, eh, there was a lot of short features along with the, the big pictures in those days. You know?

TM: Eh, something like that *March of Time* that I mentioned. Now that was a monthly film magazine. And it was produced by the American magazines, 'Time' and 'Life'. And they used to concentrate their efforts on political events and, eh, economical events and sometimes scientific events of the period, and it lasted about fifteen or twenty minutes. And it came out every month, and it always had a very distinctive introduction to it. You know. A roll of drums, you know? And a voice saying, "The March of Time!" and then this particular music came on. And I thoroughly enjoyed that. That was great...

TM: Eh, there was a lot of cartoons, short cartoons. There was a lot of comedy. There was a lot of musical shorts, you know. Actors singing and dancing and that. And there was a series of, eh, *Our Gang* comedies, that was children. Eh, they all did all sorts of fun, you know, and just made up their comedy in the pictures.

TM: Erm, and then there was the serials! Aww! They always played a serial, every Saturday! And that was an event worth going to see. You know, you could imagine a cinema with kids, on a Saturday afternoon. No interest in the big picture, if it was a love picture or a talking picture, it had to be something with action in it to hold the kids' attention. But whenever the serial came on, all hell got let loose. You know?

VB: [coughs]

TM: The, the projectionist down there, I think they did, they did this deliberately. They used this kinda slide just before the feature, the serial, came on. And this slide simply said, "The next picture is extra and is shown only on Saturday afternoons!" Now I'm sure they did this deliberately. They'd

show this slide just for a few seconds before the serial to hear the Hampden roar! Because when this slide came on they went "Hyeaayyyyy!" you know, this is what you'd hear!

VB: [laughs]

TM: And the serials I remember best was *Flash Gordon* and then there was *Tim Tyler's Luck*, *Jungle Jim*, *Wild West Days*, *Flaming Frontiers*, *The Oregon Trail*. Aw it was great stuff and it always ended up on a cliffhanger scene, you know? And they said, "Come back next week to this theatre and see what happens!" And of course you couldn't wait for next week to come ... to see it! Eh, I, I do a wee bit of painting, and I was so intrigued with that Orient, it's still there by the way, it's still, it's a bingo hall nowadays, but a few years ago I had, I was, I was passing it ... and the doors was lying open. And I looked into it to see if it had changed. And it hadn't. And the decor's still there, and I says, [in hushed tones] this was marvellous to see it, 'cause I had never been in it since it stopped showing films. So I ran in an spoke to the manager and I said to him, "Would you allow me to come in and paint this?" "Aye," he says, "Certainly," he says, "As long as you don't come in when the bingo's on. What to do is," he says, "Come in in the morning, and the cleaners'll be here and they'll switch on the lights for you, 'cause they're always round about, have a seat" and he says, "and you can paint away to your heart's content." Come on and I'll show ye this painting!

VB: [inaudible]

[Bringing tape recorder along while viewing painting. Asks if TM's paintings in hall; they are; move into kitchen and admire cinema painting there]

VB: I like this one of the Arcadia.

TM: This is one I'm doing for a lady in Drumnadrochit. [TM had an art exhibition in the Provand's Lordship]

TM: The theme of my paintings is Glasgow in the thirties. Living in Glasgow in the thirties. [Lady saw painting in Provand's Lordship while on holiday, her husband had been a projectionist in Inverness and she asked him to copy the painting for him.]

VB: That's great. I like the way you've put in all the posters and everything. You've got Deanna Durbin and, eh, *Destry Rides Again* and all these great pictures.

TM: Well, that's the cinema I worked in.

VB: Is it? The Arcadia.

TM: The Arcadia, Bridgeton, aye. It's not there today, it's knocked down.

VB: What street was that on?

TM: That was London Road.

VB: London Road.

TM: Aye. That was [indicates] going that way was going towards Bridgeton Cross.

VB: Right.

TM: Going this way it was going towards the city centre. Glasgow Cross. Now that was, I don't know if you know Templeton's carpet factory?

VB: Oh yes, yes.

TM: Well, it stands maybe about another hundred yards up the road. In fact it was just at the next corner.

VB: Right.

TM: Templeton's carpet factory. That's actually a road that goes down to Glasgow Green now. There's a sort of roundabout thing there.

VB: I think I know where you are, yes.

TM: That's where I stayed [lived].

VB: It looks like a lovely cinema actually. It's quite--

TM: Well, in actual fact.

VB: Was it not? [laughs]

TM: It was a fleapit!

VB: Right! [laughs]

TM: But as, as I say, the Orient was my favourite.

VB: Yeh.

TM: [bringing out painting, wrapped up] Now wait till you see this. [unwrapping for 2 seconds]

VB: Oh, I like that. The colours are amazing!

TM: Now, you see all these wee houses?

VB: Uhuh.

TM: They all lit up! They were lights behind all the windows. And of course when the pictures came on the lights kinda dimmed. You know they were still lit.

VB: Yeh.

TM: But they were a lot dimmer than what they were; and then, when the picture's finished, the lights all came up again. And it was a marvellous cinema.

VB: It's beautiful.

TM: It was really beautiful. And it's still the same yet, it's still lit, except the screen has been replaced by a bingo board.

VB: That's amazing. I mean, I've never seen anything like that.

TM: Now these seats [indicating] are all gone now. It's all bingo seats that are across them. But everything else is still there! You can still see it!

VB: I'll need to go and have a look. That's beautiful. I mean, I like the picture very much. I mean, it gives a real impression of the--

TM: Well, I painted that with the intention of giving it to the manager. To hang it up in his office.

VB: Aye.

TM: But when I took it back to let him see it there was another manager who was in and said the previous fella had been transferred away to Greenock.

VB: Aw.

TM: And he says, eh, "What is it you want," and he was very abrupt with me, you know? And I says, "I just wanted to give him something," and he says, "Well, you'll need to go to Greenock to give him it." I says, "Right, fair enough."

VB: Yeh.

TM: I'll keep my picture. So I just took it back up again!

VB: Absolutely. Just as well actually! [laughs] It's a beauty!

TM: But it's worth, it'd be worthwhile going to see if you're interested, because, like I say, that cinema was the jewel of the East End in the 1930s.

VB: Yeh.

TM: It was absolutely marvellous. [with emphasis]

VB: It's amazing.

TM: Eh. We had a wee local cinema, along the road there, it was called the Scotia. It had wooden benches in the front of it. That recorder's going to miss it. [indicates]

VB: I'm just thinking, I'd very much like to actually maybe photograph some of these paintings of yours, at some stage, if you don't mind, because they give such an impression what cinemas were like. You know, that you don't get from...

TM: Well, to be fair, there's not many paintings of cinemas.

VB: There aren't. No.

TM: There's only that one, the Arcadia, and that one of the Orient.

VB: Right.

TM: That's a watercolour that I've done.

VB: Yeh.

TM: That's the only two paintings there is of cinemas. But I suppose more could be done. Yeh.

VB: Right. I mean I've never seen anyone painting, you know, the outside of cinemas before.

TM: [laughs] Well, to be honest, it's the first one that I did!

VB: Yeh.

TM: But only because it was such a favourite. Eh, I think it was about, my eighth or ninth birthday. And my mother give me sixpence for my birthday. Now sixpence, that's the equivalent of about two and a half pence or three pence nowadays.

VB: Yeh.

TM: And I thought this was wonderful. I could go to the pictures, I could buy sweeties, I could do all sorts o things with a sixpence in those days. [pause 2 seconds] And I says to myself, "Well, I'm going to treat myself, I'm going to the Orient". And I think this was a Wednesday afternoon or something, and Deanna Durbin, she was my favourite. I loved Deanna Durbin, I could listen to her singing all, all day. One of her pictures was playing in the Orient, so I told my mother. She says, "How are you going to spend your birthday money?" I says, "I'm going to the pictures, I'm going to see Deanna Durbin!" "Fine, OK then." So I'm down, I think it'd be about half past two, and I paid my money, threepence! And a bought a bag of sweeties, a wee bottle of ginger or something, and I treated myself, I went up to the balcony! [laughs] And I sat there and, when the time, when I had seen the whole programme, I sat in and watched it over again...You see, nobody bothered in those days that the, the film show was continuous. It ran from two o'clock in the day to half past ten at night and it never stopped. It just kept going all the time. So there was nothing to prevent you from going in and sitting all day if you wanted! So that's what I did! That's how I spent my birthday! I think I went home about half past eight at night and my mother said, "Did you enjoy your film show?" I says, "Aye", she says, "You must've. You were in there a long time."

VB: [laughs]

TM: I says, "I stayed in to see it over again!" So she says, she just kinda laughed and let it go at that!"

VB: What was the film? Do you remember?

TM: Eh, I think it was that one that I've painted up in there. *Spring Parade*.

VB: Right

TM: Aye. But like I say, I'd have went to the end of the earth to listen to that girl singing. I loved to watch her in the pictures. She was a right favourite of mine.

VB: [makes as if to ask a question]

TM: Go ahead.

VB: I was going to ask a bit more about Deanna Durbin. I mean, she made so many films, didn't she?

TM: Yeh.

VB: *Three Smart Girls* and...

TM: That's right. She made, I think the first one she made was *One Hundred Men and a Girl* [Note: This was Durbin's second feature film; her first feature was *Three Smart Girls*]. And then she made *Three Smart Girls*, *Three Smart Girls Grow Up*, eh, *Spring Parade*, *The Amazing Mrs Holliday* and then, of course, aw, there was a whole string of pictures came after that. I, I don't know why she retired so soon because she had a marvellous voice. And she gave it all up and married a doctor and went away to live in France. [pause 2 seconds] Right at the peak of her career. [pause 2 seconds]

TM: And I'll show you something else. [goes to get out items; pause 15 seconds while doing so]

TM: I don't know how much you'll remember of this! That was the certificate that they showed at the start of the pictures in these days.

VB: Oh really.

TM: This is the original photograph. That is a photocopy. So if you wanted to keep that.

VB: That would be great. Thanks very much.

TM: So you see this always came up before the picture started.

VB: Right.

TM: Irrespective of, the British Board of Film Censors, "This is to certify that". There was three categories in those days. There was U, for Universal, that meant anybody could get in to see it.

VB: Right.

TM: And then the second category was A, for Adults. That meant that children could get in but the picture really wasn't suited to them. And there was H, H for Horror. Now that meant that you had to be over fourteen to get in. That was the Boris Karloff films.

VB: Right.

TM: The *Draculas* and all that. Really a lot of rubbish!

[both laugh]

TM: You see when you think about it nowadays! And then, when they eh started introducing sex into pictures, and violence, they changed the H certificate to X. And that brought the category up to sixteen. You had to be sixteen. And then I think they brought out a Double X certificate. That was really for adults. That's when the foreign films started to come in, after the war. They started to bring in foreign films and they were full of sex and violence. So they said, "Right, children under eighteen shouldn't see these sort of things." So they made it Double X. And then of course they introduced this new censorship system that they've got nowadays, you know, fifteens and all that, and this went before. But I wrote away to the cinemas union in London and asked if they'd give me a copy of this.

VB: Right.

TM: So they were very good. They sent this up to me.

VB: Can you tell me a bit more about the cinemas union? 'Cause I don't know about that...

TM: The unions? Well, that was, my certificate. When I became a projectionist, after you had been there so long they gave you a card to certify that you were, that you were qualified as a

projectionist. In those days it was called the National Association of Theatre and Kine Employees, but fancy these days... [TM goes to find collection of logos] [pause 20 seconds] Look at this...

VB: The Universal...

TM: I've still got 20th Century Fox and Paramount to get, I look in the magazines, you know, cut them out and stick them in there. But erm, I'm quite friendly with the chief projectionist up in Parkhead cinema, he sometimes gives me these magazines, and this is the people I wrote to. [TM tries to find something to show VB] [pause 10 seconds]

VB: It's really interesting, I've never handled anything like this.

TM: It's all changed nowadays, it's all modernised and computerised these days.

VB: How long did you have to serve before you got these?

TM: Five years. Five years as an apprenticeship.

VB: I mean, I knew it was an impressive job, but I didn't realise it was as long as that.

TM: I started off as a spoolboy, that was rewinding the films.

[TM gives VB copy of magazine, "As long as it helps you in your project"]

VB: Thanks.

TM: Did you know that I once ran a cinema of my own?

VB: No, I didn't!

TM: Well, I'll tell you about it. I was about eight or nine at the time and I had a hand cranked projector, they things that you work with your hand with a wee five-volt battery. And it was my pride and joy. And there was a wee shop down in the Gallowgate, and it used to sell wee tins of film: 35 millimetre film, maybe about thirty feet long, and he sold them for threepence. Now I used to

get, in a grocers in the Gallowgate, [John Curlis ?], and deliver messages [groceries] for him on a Friday and Saturday. And what I'd do, I'd get about two shillings or something with me, and that was ten pence, for doing this, but the people that I took the messages [groceries] to, they used to give me tips for a penny or tuppence. And I [with emphasis] used to save up my pennies and tuppences and give the two shillings to my mum to help the housekeeping. And kept in my pocket the tips I had. And I used to save them up and go and buy these wee tins of film in the Gallowgate.

VB: Do you still have them?

TM: Aw no, I lost trace of them. But anyway, I kept this wee projector. Now, we stayed [lived] in a tenement building. Very much the same as this, only this is a higher class type. Because, eh, we've got a toilet inside but in those days the toilet was out in the stair. Now, the people that lived in the close, in the ground flat, their toilet was in the back end of the close, it was a dungeon, and the toilet itself was that size. [indicates] That size, that's how big it was.

VB: About five feet? Five by five?

TM: It was about five feet by five feet, roughly. I mean all that was in it was a water and closet bowl. Nothing else. And a wee window like this [indicates]. And you had this place, you had this at the bottom of the building, and it was dark, and it was, and I says to myself, "This is ideal for showing pictures, and I'm going to run a picture show here. So, the lavatory was kept under lock and key, you see, and it was only the tenants that lived in the close that had the key. Now one of the chaps that lived in the close he was a mate of mine, Charlie [Bryden?], I'll never forget him. And I told Charlie about my plan, and I said, "Look, Charlie, I [with emphasis] would like to run a picture show in here". I said, "I'll get my projector down but I've got to get the door open." And I says, "Only you can get it open for me". "Oh, he said, "I don't know about that" he says, "my Da'll get me into a row." So, I says, "Just go in and tell your Da you're wanting to go to the toilet. He'll give you the key, just go out and open the door and then take the key back, that'll do me." So, I talked him into doing it, so I'm away and he goes to the door. And I got a bit of wood and I put it across the seat of the toilet. And I rigged up the projector and I put a bit of white paper up on the wall and got everything ready and I let it out, there were kids all round about, there were a picture show on, ha'penny a time. And do you know, about a dozen of them turned up with a ha'penny! I crammed them all in this toilet, if you imagine it. A wee thing that size [indicates] with the kids all in it, packed everywhere, all sitting up at the window or round about the projector, they were sitting on the floor, they were sitting on each

other's knees, twelve kids all packed into a space, five by five! And there's me cranking away with this projector and giving a running commentary on the films that was showing. Halfway through it, does the door not get opened, this is Charlie's dad! He needed to go to the toilet, and of course he didn't know we were in there. So when he came in the door all [with great emphasis] he could see was kids' faces you see, and he's [great increase in volume], "What the bloody hell's going on here!" And of course, they all started to run out then, and he says, I was left with the projector, "And you, bloody Cecil B. DeMille, get out of here!"

[both laugh]

TM: And they were all complaining! And I had to give them their money back!

VB: Aw no!

[both laugh]

TM: So that was my cinema up in the air! But, eh, when I did become a projectionist I started as a spoolboy. Fourteen year of age, just out of school, and that was my very first job. Eh, and I thoroughly enjoyed that. I liked working in the cinema. If it hadn't a been for the fact that I was called up for National Service, you know, for the Air Force, eh, I suppose that I would've stayed in it. But, by the time I came out of the Air Force, I was in the Air Force for three years, and when I came back, I went back to my trade. I was in it, I think, for about another two years, and then television started raising its ugly head. And, "Aw God, time to get out 'cause that's going to kill the cinemas," and I decided to make a move then.

VB: Right.

TM: But when I worked in the cinemas, I [with emphasis] had the first all night show in Glasgow! Now, this was during the wartime. And they were very strict about the times that cinemas opened. We also opened in the afternoon, usually two o'clock, but you had to be closed by ten thirty. Lights down, because of the war restrictions. I remember, the foreman in our cinema, the man in charge of all the staff, his niece was getting married. We were all invited to the wedding, all the cinema staff. Of course, all couldn't go because it was quite a few. But unfortunately he says you can't go to the wedding, because of when the cinema show finished, because we finished at half past ten. So we

decided to go at eleven o'clock. And it was beginning to die a death then, you know, everyone had had enough. There was very little to eat, 'cause of the war. What drink there was was gone. That didn't bother me because I didn't drink at that time. I was maybe sixteen at that time. I was only fourth year of my apprenticeship. The chief operator, he was there with me and he says to me "This is dead, there's not much point us hanging around here." And we were going to go home, but the chief says to me "What about getting all the wedding guests and getting them down and showing them a picture?" I said, "Are you crazy? We'll go to jail!" He says "No, there's nobody around, we'll get a few bobbies [police officers] to come in as well." So we put this to foreman. We said "How would you like your wedding guests to see a film?" The film we were running that week was Abbott and Costello, *Hold that Ghost*. So we, we were all for it and he said "Oh aye." So we all trooped down to the old Arcadia and the foreman, he had the keys to the place. And he opened it up, and now this one o'clock in the morning at this point and it's during the wartime and there's a blackout on and there's two policemen coming down the street. "Aye, what's going on here?" they said. They knew the staff, 'cause they would always come into the cinema for a wee sly smoke and that and a wee rest. So the foreman says, "Looks, we're a wedding party and we're going to watch a picture." So the police say "Well, we'll just come into watch that language then." "Ah yeah, alright". And there was a couple of air raid wardens, these fellas that walked around in case of of air raids, they came on the scene. So they get invited in as well. So all and all there's about thirty people in the cinema. And of course, we me being the youngest there, the chief operator there he had his girlfriend with him, he says "Away with you, go and run the show. I'm going to have this seat with my girlfriend." So they were are, half past one in the morning, *Hold that Ghost*.

VB: [laughs]

TM: And I reckon that was the first midnight showing in Glasgow. Of course it's commonplace nowadays, there's plenty of them now, but I think, I never heard of anyone else having a show at that time in the morning. And the manager never found out about it, oh he'd have found about it we would have all got our books [being fired]. But the word went out "Shh, not a word!"

VB: *That's amazing*

[TM putting on the kettle for coffee]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: Actually, before we get started, I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions about yourself?

TM: Sure. Fire away!

VB: Make sure I get everything straight.

TM: Aye. That's all right, aye.

VB: Erm, whenabouts were you born? What's your date of birth?

[Personal details: born Ayr, lived in Dalry in childhood, father was a labourer, worked in a big house in Dalry as general odd job man; mother didn't work; at time of recording two brothers living, one passed away; three sisters living and two passed away. St Ann's primary school, St Mungo's Academy, then left at fourteen; apolitical "all a shower as far as I'm concerned", raised as a Catholic, still goes to church on a Sunday, "but that's it." "I believe everybody's entitled to their own beliefs." Came to Glasgow about 1930 and has been there ever since. Youngest son born in 1964, other '68, daughter '56, married 1954. Wife works in Marks & Spencers. VB is writing this down meanwhile. Consent to being taped and signing of the release form.]

VB: I was going to ask you when you were talking about doing that showing for the, you know, the other folk in the close. I mean, what, what sort of films were you showing?

TM: You mean, the wee ones that I got for--?

VB: Aye.

TM: Aw. Wee rubbishy things, as I say. Thirty foot of length, I mean, what I cranked them, they ran for a couple of minutes, just. And then I'd to change them, and put on another one. One was a scene that looked, and and curiously enough, it was a bit of colour film, which was quite unique in those days, and I didn't know it was colour until I bought it, it wasn't marked on the film. All it was, the

wee tins that they sold was about so big and just stamped on the top o them was 'western' or 'comedy'. Or something like this. And the comedy one that I always remember was a fella getting a pie stuck in his face. And I don't know who he was. I've tried to find out, through my own experience, and looking at books and that, but I never found out who that fella was. It's just a face appeared on the scene on the screen and then you seen another character come up on the side and he had something in his hand and he just [demonstrates action] plopped on this guy's face. And he started wiping it off, you know, and going like this! [demonstrates wiping gestures] And that was the end of it! And then there was another one, a boxing scene, it was just a boxing ring and two fellas fighting away. And that was, that was pretty short and sharp as well. By the time you cranked them round, you know, it was all over in about a matter of a minute or two. The western showed you a fella, eh, riding up on a horse and getting off the horse and tying the horse up to one of they branders [crossbars] there that [are] up there, you see, hitching up his pants, you know, and stepping up to the bar, and that was it finished as well. Just wee short clips.

VB: Yeh.

TM: And there was another one, eh, it was a fella walking across a rope bridge across a chasm and he was holding on to the rope and it was shaking all over the place but he was looking down and the camera was looking down with him and there was a tremendous drop away down and he walking over. And by the time he got to the other side the film was finished! Just wee things like that.

VB: Mhm.

TM: But the bit of colour film was a scene inside a forest. [pause 2 seconds] And it was nothing really except trees and bushes and the camera just seemed to be moving through the forest and just showing all, all the colours. And I was quite proud of that because, as I say, colour film was quite unique in those days. I remember one of the local cinemas advertising colour film. We had queues everywhere. It didn't matter how good or bad the picture was, the fact that it was in colour that attracted a lot of people, and they went. And we went to that picture house along the road, the Scotia. It's gone now. And there was wooden benches in it, and on a Saturday afternoon you paid a penny to get in. Now a penny is [pause 2 seconds] it's about one and a half pence less value than one pence nowadays. One pence now was the equivalent of about two and a half pennies. So you can imagine what one pence was. You paid your penny, in you went and you sat on these wooden benches. And of course there was hundreds of kids waiting to get in. And the ushers there, we called

them the chucker outs because they chucked you out if you didn't behave yourself, they used to call along and if all the seats were taken up they would say to you, "Right, try and squeeze up, fill them in behind you." Squeezing in all the kids up, pushing up, pushed up to get more in. And of course the one on the end, he finished up on the floor.

VB: [laughs]

TM: He got pushed off! So what he did was he just went round the back and he started off at the other end again! Squeezing his way to the end and he'd come along and squeeze up and somebody else has fallen off! You more or less took your turn at falling off! And when we went in, we used to smoke in the pictures. The ushers used to watch us about this, you know? You'd go into a wee shop, and [ask for] a ha'penny fag and a match. And you'd buy the cigarettes at a ha'penny, and a match to go with it. Now... strictly speaking it was against the law for shopkeepers to sell children cigarettes but just as nowadays, a lot of them did. "Ha'penny fag and a match" they'd say. "Who's it for?" "My dad" "Aye, OK then." And that was his getout, you know. If you said it was for your dad. You'd get into the pictures, you'd strike up your cigarette, you'd have a puff and you'd pass it on to your neighbour! Everybody'd have a puff of your cigarette. And if the usher came along, somebody'd say, "Here he's coming", and it'd be stamped out on the floor. And some would smoke cinnamon sticks! Now, have you ever seen cinnamon sticks?

VB: [quizzical]

TM: It's something like the colour of your jersey there [yellow-brown] and about so long [about five inches] And you could buy that for a ha'penny in the shops. And it was a devil of a thing to start burning but it did you could smoke it. It tasted absolutely terrible! How we did it, I don't know! But we'd take a few puffs at this, you know, and then blow the smoke out, and pass it along to my mate! And this is some of the things we used to get up to! A ha'penny used to buy a bag of broken biscuits out of the shop at Dennistoun there. You'd get a bag this size [indicates large bag] full of broken biscuits. Take that into the pictures. Or you'd go into the fruit shop, and buy some bruised fruit. The fruiterer used to put up apples and oranges. Maybe an apple had been a bit bruised and he'd cut the bruised bit off and put it in a tray on the counter. And if somebody came in and said, "A penny bag of bruised fruit" you'd get maybe an orange and an apple and a pear or something, thrown into the bag and handed to you. And that was the pictures, into the pictures. Aw it was great! 'cause the life, the cinema life then, it was everything! [with great emphasis] 'cause there was no other means of

entertainment for, for the uneducated masses! No, there was theatres in the city and there was dance halls. Dance halls for the teenagers. Once you grew up a bit, you went to the dance. The theatres, probably, for people that has money. But the cinemas was for the poor people. And you know, Glasgow had more cinemas, per head of population, than any other city in the United Kingdom! Glasgow was a movie-mad city! There was cinemas everywhere! And if you'd go to them, invariably you'd find them queued out, every day and every night of the week! [pause 2 seconds] You don't know what it was like. I mean, there's no way that I could describe what life was like, eh, and that simply going to the cinema was an escapist thing for us, you know? You used to go there and you would be carted away to another world! When we came out of the cinemas if we'd seen a sort of a cowboy picture, we would all be galloping down the road! [mimes riding a horse, with a crop] Hallo there, bang bang! [mimes shooting] shooting! You see. And of course, if we'd seen a Boris Karloff picture, we would all be walking down the road like this, [stiff and glum mime] like monsters! If we'd seen a musical picture, we would all be singing and dancing! But, this, this, this, it caught the imagination of the kids! You know? That they actually were living the lives that they had seen on the screen just before.

[**TM** offers tea/coffee; and to toast the teacakes VB had brought and serve them with butter/jam; VB accepts]

VB: Well, I was interested in asking you as well about your work in the cinema? You were saying a five-year apprenticeship - what did you learn during that?

TM: You're to learn all about electricity for a start. You're to learn ... the cinema projectionist, it wasn't only showing pictures. During the morning we went in and did all the repair works, any electrical repair work. The lights and all that. It was the projectionists who did that. The signs outside the door, they had to be changed twice a week. We did that! Er ... the projectors themselves had to be maintained and erm, maintained at a high standard because they were running mostly every day of the week, all day. Although, to be fair, modern projectionists have got it a lot easier in as much as, the modern projector that's actually running longer than what it was in our day. Er, our projectors got a rest, we got a ... the projectors that I worked with only showed films for twenty minutes. Then, er, you were to change over. Now, I don't know ... have you ever spotted a screen, and been watching a picture and noticed a wee dot appear in the top right-hand corner? Just for a split second?

VB: Aye, I think I have, yeah.

TM: Well, that's a marker for the projectionist to change over to the next machine. Now, erm, how best can I explain this to you. [pause 10 seconds]

VB: Can I get you anything?

TM: It's okay, I've got a whole box of them here. In our projection base, we had two projectors, see? Number one and number two. Now, they showed the films on the screen. One screen, this projector would have a film magazine capable of showing roughly twenty-minutes, eleven-hundred feet. The spool would be about so big [indicates size] put them in the projectors, run the film through the projector and set it off. Now when that film was shown for twenty minutes roughly, you got this one ready for the next reel in place. You'd open the magazine door and see when the film was coming to the end. When it was coming to about a couple of minutes to go, you'd get everything ready, get the light fixed up and ready to start this. Now, every film reel had this marker ... roughly seven seconds before ... no, wait a minute it wasn't seven seconds it was about ... fifteen seconds, roughly fifteen seconds before that reel finished. A mark would appear up there, just for a split second. And then we, when the projectionist saw that mark he started up this projector [projector two] and had it running. And then, just before this film finally finished, a second mark would appear, again just for a split second. And the projectionist saw that second mark, there was a device here, across the windows, just a bar ... just a bar with two bits of metal on it. And you shove it across and block off the light on that one and open up this one [projector two] which is already playing, so the film would continue. You needed to be a trained person to see it. But once you saw, if you turned around, when you saw the first mark, turn around and waited for a few seconds you'd see the light change, you know in the projection room, now that's going from one projector to the other.

VB: Mhm. It must have required split second timing--

TM: And then ... when that film came off, you take spool into the rewinding room and it be wound back to the beginning again. Ready for the next show. And then you get the next reel up and put it on this one [projector one] and then the same thing happened all over again. So you were working on a picture non-stop and you used the two projectors. But now days you've only got one projector and that's... and entirely different method of showing films. [TM looks for his glasses] [pause 5 seconds]

VB: So you were saying that the film was about ... erm maybe a foot wide or something?

TM: [distant] Sorry?

VB: How big were the spools of film? You were saying they were maybe about a foot, a foot and a half or...?

TM: About so big [indicates size] about fourteen inches.

VB: Yeah, it must be quite heavy as well?

TM: They weren't terribly heavy. [pause 8 seconds]

VB: I think they [TM's glasses] may be on the arm of your chair...

TM: [distant mumbling] [pause 6 seconds]

VB: I just remember they were lying there... You were saying the modern ones are quite--

TM: The modern ones are quite different. This is pictures of the Parkhead Forge cinema [modern Cineworld] now that's a projection nowadays.

VB: It's more like a laboratory isn't it? It's huge!

TM: Looks like something out of 'Star Trek'.

VB: Yeah.

TM: That's [indicating] the same picture, now I stood in the middle of the projection room and looked that way, then I turned around and looked the other way and that's ... that's the same projection, look at the length there. Mind you, that's seven cinemas at the one time... This is a modern projector, that's a full-length view of it. You don't need two projectors now days, see this thing here? This is what they call the cake stand. Now days ... they make the film up and something

like this and then it's carted off and laid down on this cake stand. And then instead of running the picture from one projector to the other as we did in the old days, what they do is, they take the film out of the centre piece, you see? On that cake stand is like that ... film sits like ... a centre piece there. So you take the film out the centre ... and they run it up and it goes around through pulleys, you see? And into the projector ... and then it comes down here ... and runs through a set of pulleys and it goes back onto another cake stand here. What they call a cake stand. So the actual films comes out of there and goes up, through a series of pulleys, into the projector, where it's shone onto the screen, and then it runs onto another set of pulleys and back on and winds itself onto another ... cake stand underneath. And that can take the whole picture without a break. And take a whole programme. Mind, nowadays when you talk about a whole programme, you're talking about one feature film and a few adverts, and a few coming attractions. They could never do it with the programmes that we saw, two big pictures, cartoon, the *March of Time*, a serial, you know, everything. Three and a half hours at the cinema, at the pictures, for threepence. Value for money!

VB: [laughs]

TM: You don't know anything about it!

[both laugh]

TM: Once that's finished, when that films finished nowadays, that film has been transferred to another cake stand. You see, there's three layers there.

VB: Right

TM: So what they do is, when they're ready to show it again it's just sat on the cake centre, that one, feed it through the machine, back up and onto this empty one and the whole goes onto the reverse and the film is shown again. The beauty of this, they can run the same film at two cinemas [screens] at the same time. For example, last time I was up there they were showing *Batman*, and *Batman* was shown at cinemas [screens] number one and number two. Bobby the chief projectionist, that's him there, [indicates] he told me, he says "We only need the one film." You see, there's a film there if you can see it? It's going there, it's going through up the pulley and disappearing over there. It's going down through the projector, down there, and a way back there. But what they do is, when they're showing the film on two projectors, two cinemas [screens], they

feed it through one and instead of taking the film back onto cake stand, they bring it along here through more pulleys and put it through a second projector. So it's actually the same film being shown on two projectors, but with like a minute of difference between them.

VB: That's amazing!

TM: That's modern projection for you. [shows pictures to VB] That's a full view of the projector, that's a closeup of it, and there's one there that's even closer still. [pause 2 seconds] That one. That's it actually working.

VB: It's quite amazing...the ones you were working in, were they that sort of size?

TM: Oh no, the place I worked was about as big as this. If you cut across here, it was about that size.

VB: So it was about six feet--

TM: It was about ten feet by eight. There was two projectors in it and of course a lot of equipment, you know the electrical equipment. That was all over to the side. And yet, we didn't feel cramped or anything, you know?

VB: Right. [pause 10 seconds] [sounds of doors opening] I wouldn't mind photocopying some of these, if you didn't mind?

TM: Take them away with you and you can get copies of them and send them back to me.

VB: That would be great if you don't mind, because it's interesting to get that...erm view of the cinema, I've never seen anything like that.

TM: Why don't you make yourself known to the people in the cinemas and get to see them? Because, I'm quite sure, you see...when that Parkhead Forge cinema first opened up...I had read a wee bit in our local newspaper about the new Parkhead Forge cinema. It said the projection system would be computerised. And I thought to myself "How the hell can they computerise projectors?" So I said to myself "I'll go up and see, if they'll let me see it." So, I go, and there was a girl, a manager, and I said to her "Any chance you would let me see the projection room?" I said: "I was a

projectionist in days gone by” I said “I’d like to see this computerised...” So there was a big fella in the office at the time, and she looked at him as much to say “well, will I do it or will I not?” And it transpired that this was one of the head office men who had come up from Leeds for the opening and all of this, you see? And he says to me “You were a projectionist?” I said “Oh aye, many years ago.” “Come with me,” he said, he took me right up. I was amazed walking into that place. So he introduced me to the chief operator, Bob Holmes, and he says “This is one of your old colleagues, I want you to show him around the place, I’ll go away and leave you, he’ll tell you everything you want to.” Well, I spent practically a...half a day walking around. This fella must have been fed up with me! But, eh, he says to me “Anytime you want to come up, just come up, there’s no need to ask her in the office, just come up and ask for me.” So I’ve been up two or three times, and they, I said “Do you mind if I bring up my camera, take a couple of pictures?” “Not at all.” So that was the result. He told me “Anytime you feel like a wee chat, just come up and see me” so I do. I keep him to his word. [clanging noises]

VB: It’s quite extraordinary to see that. You were saying that erm, I mean, you were a spoolboy yourself, was there a spoolboy...?

TB: That’s, that’s how you started. Er, you began as a spoolboy rewinding films. As the films came off the projector you rewind them.

VB: So you’ve taken them through--

TB: Taken them through to the other wee room, you rewind them back to the beginning, then rewind it until it [inaudible] you’ve got to check there’s no tears or rips in them, else it’ll just rip off as it goes through the projector and cause a breakdown. It’s a different type of film that they use nowadays, I don’t think there’s any chance of breaking them, they’re sort of made of plastic. In our days it was acetone nitrate, it was highly flammable, so you had to make sure that everything went fine. Er, once you you’d been film rewinding for about four months you got the opportunity to go in and look at the projectors and eventually learned how to lace the film...through, you had to release that at a certain position. And you started to pick up the tricks of the trade, from there you just carried until such time as you knew as much as it was possible to know about it.

VB: I’m just going to get another tape. [VB goes to get another tape, voices fade and tape left running]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

TM: --you can do it as well. Curiously enough, we never had any girl projectionists, not that I know of.

VB: Right.

TM: But, er, there's bound to be some now, in the modern cinemas. [TM puts photographs into an envelope for VB] I'll put them in there and you can take them with you.

VB: That's very kind of you. I'll get them back to you as soon as I...

TM: There's no rush for them 'cause they're just lying in there. I, I enjoyed my time as a projectionist, I really did. Do you take sugar, milk?

VB: I just take it black actually, thanks.

[TM brews cup of tea]

VB: I didn't realise that you had to do all that, er, the other work in the cinema as well. I always thought that other people--

TM: Oh aye.

VB: Was there quite a large staff in the Arcadia?

TM: In the projection room?

VB: Well, altogether?

TM: No, it was not great. There was four projectionists, there was the chief, the second, and the two boys. There was the manager, the foreman--he was more or less under, on the floor staff, he didn't have anything to do with the projection staff but he was in charge of the likes of the cleaners, the usherettes and the chucker outs, and that sort of thing.

VB: Yeh.

TM: We had four lady cleaners in the morning, there was four ushers, usherettes full time, that was girls that worked from two till ten, not every day, they got days off and that sort of thing, eh, there was, I think there was, about four or five night staff that used to come in. nighttime was the busy time, so they came in about six o'clock and they worked till about half past ten. They were only part time. And of course there was the projectionist that was full time. That was about the average in the local cinemas, you know.

VB: Right.

[**TM** offers tea and jam. Continues discussion of staff. The Odeon had bigger staff. The Orient would have bigger staff, more cleaners]

VB: You were saying you went to that wedding. Did you socialise a lot with the staff?

TM: No, no!

[both laugh]

TM: I was sixteen. And sixteen, in those days, you were a lot more innocent than what you are nowadays. I mean, at sixteen, when I wasn't working in the cinema, I was out playing with my mates. And when I say playing, we were playing at Cowboys and Indians! We were playing up nights through at the back and that, shooting imaginary guns at each other. I wouldn't think about girls and all that kind of thing, in fact if anybody mentioned girls to me I would say, "What? Get them away!"

VB: [laughs] I mean it must've been a really exciting job for you when you were that age!

TM: It was, and I was the envy of all my mates, because they used to say, "Can we get into the pictures? If we come down can you get us in for nothing?" I says, "I can't get you in for nothing. I'm working in the projection room, I'm [with emphasis] not down at the door!" I says. "But I tell you what I will do, if you get in," I says, "I'll get you up into the balcony to high class seats!" And that's what I'd do.

VB: I mean, did you go to the pictures as well, when you were working there, or...?

TM: The curious thing is, I had a mate. And this mate of mine, he worked along the road in the Olympia cinema, Peter McDermitt's his name, Peter went away to Canada and became a Mountie eventually. But Peter and I was good mates for years before we were at the cinema and on our night off, we arranged to get our same nights off, and where do you think we went? We went to the pictures!

VB: [laughs] [inaudible]

TM: And of course we knew the projectionists in all the cinemas close by, see the likes of, we worked in the Arcadia. But we knew the projectionists, you know, you know it was like a brotherhood, you all got to know each other. How I got to know Peter was, the two cinemas shared a newsreel. The newsreel, one newsreel did the two cinemas at, the manager, [meanwhile, moving around the kitchen, banging noises] they came to an agreement that they would only buy one newsreel and share it between the two cinemas. Now this meant a transfer on the newsreel. We would have the newsreel showed in the Arcadia and whenever we were finished with it, somebody from the Olympia would come along, pick it up (it was only five minutes along the road) and take it along to their cinema, and show it there... And then one of the Arcadia staff, usually the boys, we had to go along, pick it up, and bring it back to the Arcadia for our next showing. And that way, it saved a wee bit of money. But, eh, that was how I got to know Peter McDermitt. The two of us was working on the newsreels, carrying them from cinema to cinema. And, eh, Peter and I palled about for years after that. And we got to know one of the lads that worked in the Kings [probably referring to Kings Picture Theatre] and his cinema used to share a newsreel with the Plaza. So, through getting to know the boy in the Kings we got to know the boy in the Plaza. And then I got approached by the manager of Strathclyde, he says, "Do you want to earn some more money?" I says, "I don't

mind!" He says, "Eh, I'm looking for somebody to do a wee bit of part time work, you'd need to come along on your nights off." So I did that, so that was me coming out of my own job, and going along to the Strathclyde and showing pictures in there, just to get a few extra bob. But, eh, through that I got to know the projectionist in the Strathclyde as well, and and our main cinema in the town was, eh, old Cranstons. I don't know if you remember Cranstons. It's on Renfield Street. It's a new building now.

VB: Right.

TM: It's been made into offices, flats, and one thing and another.

VB: Right.

TM: Well, that was our lead cinema, that was our, eh, you know you had to have one cinema in the city, in the circuit I worked at. And, now and again, they used to say, "There's somebody going on holiday in Cranstons and they're short. They're short of a projectionist, eh, you'll need to go up there and work for a couple of weeks." So, as usual, it was the junior that always got sent, and I finished up working up in Cranstons. And they changed newsreels with the Odeon, and of course I had to go up to the Odeon and pick up the newsreel and I got to know the lads up there. And this is how you got to know people, you know, and they introduce you to somebody else. You knew everybody, everybody that worked in cinemas, you knew 'em. And sometimes on your night off, you'd say, "Come on, up to the Odeon, and we'll see Bobby," you know?

[both laugh]

TM: You'd get in and see the pictures for nothing! And, aw, it was good!

VB: Actually, somebody was just telling me a bit about Cranstons yesterday, 'cause that was quite a, quite a posh cinema, wasn't it? It was.

TM: It was nice, it was nice, aye. It was one of the city cinemas. The cinemas that was in the city was always regarded as higher class than those that was in the districts.

VB: Mhm.

TM: The first run of the films usually came to the city cinemas. The city cinemas, you had the Odeon in Renfield street, you had the Regal in Sauchiehall Street, the La Scala in Sauchiehall Street, and the Gaumont in Sauchiehall Street. And starting just round the corner in Hope Street, Green's Playhouse which was at the top of Renfield Street, Cranston's, it was at the bottom of Renfield Street, and the Coliseum was over in Eglinton Street, these were regarded as top-notch cinemas in the city. They got all the new pictures... And that's where we used to go on our night off.

When I was young [we] never went to the town cinemas. Always stayed in the local and districts, because our parents didn't like us going in the town... But once we got a wee bit of responsibility, when I started working in the Arcadia at fourteen, and I met this mate, we started going in and seeing the pictures in the town. They got first run. We would see them in the local cinemas maybe a year after that. They would take about that time to filter through!

VB: Really.

TM: Aye. They were the days they were getting them straight from Hollywood into the city cinemas here. But in those days, the local cinemas had to wait their turn. The way they worked it was, the first run, what they called the first run cinemas, they took the first showing of the picture, and then it would maybe go out of circulation, for a couple of month. Nobody'd see it, and then it would come back into circulation again. This time, it would be to the second run cinemas, the likes of the Parade, and the Olympia, and the Orient, the larger cinemas. They got a second bite at the cherry. And it would maybe go around the, the second class cinemas in the city for a couple of month. And then it would disappear again for another couple of month.

VB: Mhm.

TM: And then they'd be brought back again this time for the wee fleapits to show. The other thing, of course, the majority of people in the city'd seen it. It was only really to let people that had missed it in the city, you know, get another go at it.

VB: I mean, how often did you change programmes, yourself? Say in the...

TM: Twice a week.

VB: Twice a week.

TM: Mhm. If you got a picture that they expected to draw exceptionally good crowds, they kept it for a week. But normally speaking the programme lasted, maybe Tuesday, Wednesday, one programme, Thursday, Friday, Saturday second programme. Sunday, nobody worked on a Sunday.

VB: And did people come to every programme? How often did, I mean would you yourself go to the cinema?

TM: Well, never, I don't ever recall running a show to an empty house. Monday afternoon there was people waiting at the door at two o'clock, waiting on the doors opening. The same on Tuesday afternoon, there was always somebody there. On Saturday afternoon, of course, there'd be five or six hundred kids waiting to get in, screaming the place down, Saturday matinee was something special. But for the rest of the week you'd maybe get only twenty or thirty in. It depended what picture you were showing, you know?

VB: Mhm.

TM: IF you were showing a picture with the likes of James Cagney or Errol Flynn or somebody like that, some of the well known big stars, then you always got people willing to come along and pay to see them. If you were showing films with lesser known actors, then, there was lesser people coming to see them.

VB: Yes.

TM: But there was always somebody that came along. People used to come to us. They came to the pictures in the afternoon because they had nothing else to do. And, you know, for a few coppers they could come in, sit in the warmth, in the comfort of a cinema! Some of them came and slept. ... Go down, have a look in a cinema on a quiet afternoon and you'll see hchye! snoring! There's some guy'd paid tuppence or threepence to come in for a sleep. But it's better than walking the streets.

VB: Mhm.

[pause 2 seconds]

VB: I mean, when you went to the cinema yourself as a child were there certain kinds of films you preferred?

TM: No me! I, I went in anywhere to see any film ... as a child you don't really think too much about if you like westerns.

VB: Mhm.

TM: Or if you like musicals or if you like science fiction or that sort of thing. But I did have a preference for science fiction and westerns. Now, I went to science fiction because of their futuristic attitude. You know? I liked to see things, I always think the *Flash Gordon* serials, you know? That was amazing! Now that would be about 1932 or 1933. Now Flash Gordon had television in these films, he had light bridges, he had flying machines, he had space rockets and things like that. Now all these things have all come to pass. And it's amazing how the people that made these films could think up the ideas, now, that've actually come into existence, in our time. Now these were all there, in these serials. They could make things disappear, and they can make things disappear now can't they!

VB: Yeh. It must've been, from what you're saying, it must've been really exciting as a boy to go in and see.

TM: Uhuh. And I liked the westerns because I liked open spaces. Now, when I saw the films and they had wide open plains, and they had the mountains, and, aw, I loved that. I still like the westerns, I still like the open scenery...

VB: Were there any kind of films that you didn't like so much?

TM: Well, see, now, when you're young, if you, if you got eh men and girls slabbering over each other, you know when you're sitting, they would have catcalls, [shouts] "Aw, get them off!"

[both laugh]

TM: "Get them off!" That didn't appeal to us. There had to be something happening in a picture. Gangster pictures, there were a lot of gangster pictures. I liked them, because there was a lot of shooting in them.

VB: Mhm.

TM: Eh, in fact MGM made a series of them. A short crime series, it was called *Crime Does Not Pay*. They only lasted for about fifteen or twenty minutes. But they were always based on a real crime case in America. Eh, and they made these shorts of them, and they were very popular. They showed how, they always made it out that the baddies lost, you know? The cops always won at the end. The baddies never got.... Nowadays, you see crooks are winning all the time, and the cops are losing. Television.

VB: Mhm.

TM: But in those films there was a message behind them, and the message was that crime does not pay. Which, I suppose, in America, at that time, you know, just after Prohibition and they had a crime problem. And this was meant to get the message across, you know, that they were going to get done at the end. Which I suppose, if it had any effect on the American crime system, well, good luck to them!

VB: Mhm. I mean you mentioned, a minute ago you were talking about Errol Flynn and Cagney. I mean, were they stars that you liked yourself?

TM: I liked Errol Flynn.

VB: Mhm.

TM: I liked Errol Flynn. I liked James Cagney as well. And there were a lot of others I liked, you know? John Wayne. I was a great fan of John Wayne's, I went to see all his pictures, he was a real man's man. You know? A real tough guy. And I liked Deanna Durbin. I liked *Tarzan*, I liked watching *Tarzan* pictures, that is Johnny Weissmuller.

VB: Mhm.

TM: He was an Olympic swimmer, and he became famous through *Tarzan* movies, you know? Just because he was a good swimmer. He fought crocodiles and snakes and everything. That was very exciting.

TM: *King Kong*. The first *King Kong*, not the remake. When the first *King Kong* was made, we, we couldn't get in to see that picture, 'cause that was regarded as an H certificate, and that was for children you would need to be fourteen to get in to see it. But once I did see it, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

And then as I said before, any film that was in colour, whether it was good or bad or indifferent. The fact that it was in colour, that was a great attraction. There wasn't a lot of colour films, you know? But what there was, I went to see them, and I remember Ray Milland and Patricia Morrison in a film called *Untamed*. That was about the Northwest of Canada, you know, that was wide open spaces, you know? So, I didn't, I couldn't tell you much about the story but the photography was great. I liked the colour photography.

Eh, and then there was pictures like *The Four Feathers*, *The Drum*, that was a picture about the North West Frontier. *The Four Feathers* was about the Middle East, you know the fuzzy-wuzzies. They were guys with the big spears, you know, a bit of action. You know. Then, then they were great movies but, eh, once the war started, colour became more common then. You know? And they'd begin to make a lot more colour pictures. They started producing musicals and that sort of thing. And of course we were getting older then, you know, into our teens then, and we were able to understand pictures better.

VB: Yeh.

TM: I liked a good court case. See where you have your films of a court case and all that, and a lot of arguing--

VB: Mhm.

TM: --going on between the defence witness and the other side. I liked that sort of film.

VB: I do too. I mean, I love ones like *Twelve Angry Men*, that sort of thing, when you've got all that high drama!

TM: That's better. [banging noise]

VB: Aye. I mean, what about, do you remember when the sound came?

TM: Oh no...I can't remember the silents.

VB: No, that would be before your time!

[both laugh]

TM: I'm not that old!

VB: I'm only asking 'cause, eh, one person I was talking to that came from a rural area, they were saying that sound lasted, I mean the silents lasted quite a bit longer there 'cause they didn't have, you know, the equipment to do sound so I was only wondering, I mean obviously that wasn't the case in Glasgow.

TM: No. That cinema I worked in, the Arcadia, I remember I saw... where the projection room was, there was... outside where there were stairs were, down into the cinema itself. The roof up here, I saw a, I saw a square block in it. And I said to the chief "What's up there?" He says "Just an attic." And he says..."I wonder what's up there?" So, he says "Someday", he says, "Someday you and I will go up and see what's up there." So, a few days after that we got hold of a pair of ladders. We couldn't reach the ground level, it was higher than that ceiling there. So we got this pair of ladders, propped it up, and away we climbs up. [inaudible] bumped this lid and it came away quite easily. So, he says "It's pitch black up here." He says "away [go] and get a couple of torches." So, I got Lenny a couple of torches and climbed up. What did we find? But old sound equipment that used to be in the cinema when sound was played on records. Now, I saw a guard, a guard, that fitted onto the back of the machine, and there's a plate on it about that size, [indicates] these must have been big records. So we made a wee bit of a search, and Alec found out that the Arcadia picture house was the second cinema in Glasgow to have sound. The Coliseum was the first, they were the first to show that Al Jolson picture. [referring to *The Jazz Singer*] The Arcadia at that time belonged to the

ABC circuit, and it was, it was regarded as the second largest cinema, next to the Coliseum. So, it became the cinema fitted out with sound. Now when the sound went onto film then of course there was no need for these records there. So they took them off and this where they put them. But rigged one up. We brought it down and put it in the back of the machine, and we rigged it up as it would be. I took a couple of photographs of it, I don't know what happened to these photographs. But it was there as it was in the old days. Of course, we didn't have a record, but apparently what they did was they put this disc, you got the film and you've got this disc to accompany the film. You put the disc on it, and you put this stylus on it, they didn't call it a stylus then, they called it a needle then. Whenever the film started you started the record as well. The film ran along with the sound of the record. Sometimes it wouldn't be exactly synchronised, because the film would start and the record didn't start and the film...you'd find the synchronisation slightly out. This is where sound film actually...became better, because they were able to synchronise it better. Have you ever seen a bit of film? With the soundtrack alongside it?

VB: Aye, well, I mean, I'm really interested, you know? In you describing how that worked. I had heard that the sound was often out of sync when it first came out and that explains it. So it wasn't actually part of the film?

TM: They had to be lucky, to get it started simultaneously. The projectionist, they started the projector then watched...there was always what they called the lead-in film, a piece of blank film that ran through the projector before the film itself started. So they had to watch for when the blank film ran through and as they saw the actual picture coming on they had to start to start the record then. But...I suppose it was purely luck more than anything else that they got it just spot on. If they didn't get it spot on then it was out of sync--

VB: Then the whole picture was out.

TM: Well, for the whole of that reel. But then again, they could do the same on the next one. Do you want more tea?

VB: Aye, I'll take a wee spot. So, I mean, that's interesting, 'cause I mean you were saying the Arcadia wasn't one of the top cinemas when you were there.

TM: No, it wasn't then.

VB: But.

TM: It got relegated down to the fleapit stage, 'cause it was an old, old cinema.

VB: Aye.

TM: I mean, I think it was built about something about 1930 or something, or before that.

VB: Right.

TM: It must've been before that. 'cause I remember the Orient getting built, and that was in the thirties.

VB: Yeh.

TM: In the early thirties: '31, '32.

[pause 2 seconds]

VB: I don't suppose you know what happened to that equipment, I mean did that just go? It must've gone with the cinema.

TM: Whenever they took the cinema away.

VB: Yeh.

TM: They took the whole lot away. I often wondered what happened to all the equipment that they took away from the cinemas whenever they knocked them down.

VB: Yeh. 'Cause it must have been, you know, quite valuable, these projectors...the equipment.

TM: Oh aye, there's a lot of electrical equipment. In fact, that cinema...got an, a whole new system. Brand new. Quite a lot of work done in it. The, the, the projectors and lamps that they had, and the

sound system, was getting past it. You know, it had been there for years and years. They decided to renew it all [inaudible] new equipment. Oh it was great! Oh, brand new projectors, new arc lamps, new sound. Just the flick of a switch, you know? It was marvellous. We thought we had everything, you know, when we got that new system.

VB: I meant to ask a minute ago as well, when you were talking about the, you know, the time that you showed the film at night. And you said the manager would have sacked you!

TM: Aw, aw! [with increasing emphasis]

VB: I mean, was he quite strict, the manager?

TM: Aw! Aye! We would have gone to jail if we'd been found out!

VB: So did they keep you, was it quite tight discipline ... in the cinemas?

TM: Aye. The manager we had at that time, his name was Waterson. Mr Waterson. He was a right, aww. He was a right a tyrant, you know? Everything just had to spot on. If everything was fine, he was fine. One thing went wrong ... aww. You had to keep out of his way. And he kept up spite with you for days on end. [laughs]

VB: Really?

TM: If you did anything wrong he'd never let you forget it.

VB: Ah. Can I ask you how much you got paid when you started as a spoolboy?

TB: When I started, the pay was twelve-and-six, that would be about sixty-five pence. That is what I got for my week's work. Started work at ten o'clock in the morning, finished at half-past-ten at night. Went in for ten o'clock until twelve, that was to do maintenance work on the projectors and on the cinema itself; keeping the lights clean, keeping all the bulbs on. There's an awful lot of lights in a cinema, you know? It all had to be kept... We all cleaned, 'cause the Master of Works [referring to Ministry of Works] used to send out inspectors every so often, to inspect the cinemas and see that everything was in order. To see if you had an emergency exit that wasn't clearly shown as an

emergency exit, then you were in trouble. If you allowed your lights to be dirty and your exit signs to get dirty and your fire exit signs; your fire exit doors had to be spot on. If he pushed them and then they opened, you were in trouble. So all these things you had to be concerned about. That inspector would come along and they always gave you a warning when they were coming, right enough. So you were able to get things started up for them. And it was basically a manual certificate that was issued for safety. But eh, also we did in the morning were the lesser maintenance jobs. And then we were home, got our lunch, come back about half-past-one ready for the two o'clock start. Both the projectors, you used to run them for a few minutes to get them warmed up, get the motors warmed up, get the film placed down, and then you let the people in and put on the show. And that was it right through until ten-thirty. How they worked time off, we used to get two half afternoons, two nights and a morning off a week. It was arranged that, for example, I got a Monday night, Thursday night off. And I got a Wednesday and Friday afternoon off, and a Thursday morning. So that means, on a Monday I went in at ten o'clock and I stayed until twelve. But then I didn't go in again until six o'clock at night and I worked from six until ten. On Tuesday, I was off on a Tuesday night. So I went in in the morning at ten, away for my lunch, back in at one in the afternoon, and then at six o'clock at night that was me finished and I went away. And that's where I [inaudible]. We overlapped each other, you know? And of course, if there was any possibility of anybody--say I wanted a Wednesday night off or a Thursday night off for a special occasion, well your mate was always willing to change. "You work my shift and I'll work yours." And the same with Saturday. They didn't allow you to take a Saturday off, because Saturday was regarded as the busy day. But if it was possible at all, if you needed the Saturday for any particular reason, we could always work something out. There was only four of you in the [projection] box, there was supposed always be two on at the one time. But sometimes if somebody was sick we used to bring in a part-timer. This was the likes of of the job I got offered at the Strathclyde. The manager was pushed for staff you know, and he'd say "He knows another operator, can you come in and do a few hours at night to help him with his problem?"

VB: Did you watch the films while they were running, from the box?

TM: Sometimes.

VB: Yeh.

TM: Aye, sometimes. You could watch them, but a lot of the time you didn't get interested.

VB: I suppose once you'd seen it once! [laughs]

TM: You had to watch the screen occasionally, 'cause you had to see everything is okay. [pause 2 seconds] You see the reflector and the arc house, if it was slightly ajar to the side, then you got a brown shadow to the side of the screen. Or the other side, or maybe the top or the bottom. So this reflected effectively spot on. And just a simple nudge of the elbow would knock it out. So I'm between reels; if one had finished and... how they got the light was two carbons fed by electricity and connected to each other, caused a spark. A brilliant light. It was reflected into this wee square where the film was running. You had to replace these carbons every so often. And while you replaced them, it was quite easy for your elbow just to nudge the mirror a wee bit, see? And you would have never noticed it, until it went onto the screen and then you see a brown shadow down the screen. So, it's only a case of turning the handle and getting the mirror properly focussed, to get the picture spot on.

VB: Ah, I see. 'Cause another [tape cuts off]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: [tape noise] the image is not quite straight, I mean is that something that's...

TM: That's, that is usually a sign that the springs on the gate are not properly tensioned. When your film is running through your projector. [pause 3 seconds] You've got your film magazine at the top, the film comes out of a slot there, a sprocket here and the film went up like that. Now this was your arc house, this is where the light came from. It was concentrated on what we called the gate. This was the part of the projector that held the film tight in position, to give you a steady picture as it ran through here. And of course it ran down to here and through another sprocket and around a curve like this, and to the sound the part, this is was the sound part here, then it finally went to the bottom magazine, this is where your pictures came from. Here was the lens and here was the gate and there were a couple of tension springs on the outside. These tension springs was meant to keep the gate closed to hold the film steady. Now, if these springs were slightly loosened, there'd be a wee bit of play in the gate, and if the film ran through it its own vibration would cause it to--

VB: I see.

TM: And that's what gives you the, the [inaudible] on the screen. All it needed was somebody to go along and tighten up these wee two screws, put the tension on the gate, on the film. Keep it steady.

VB: 'Cause I was going to say, I've noticed that you sometimes get the start of the film and then it seems to, so maybe the guy has come up and sorted it.

TM: Somebody has seen it, aye, and sorted it.

VB: That's interesting. I mean, were there other things that you had to watch for? I'm getting the tricks of the trade here, I think! [laughs]

TM: Aye. The main thing you had to watch for was a break in the film.

VB: Right.

TM: Like I said, it was nitrate film that we used. Bobby Holmes in Parkhead [referring to Cineworld] tells me that breaks nowadays are few and far between, very seldom. Mainly because of the type of film that's used.

VB: Right.

TM: The film is plastic-based now, whereas in our days with this nitrate base it was very brittle. The, the heat that was generated by this light was tremendous, and if that film stopped for a split second, in that gate, then you had a fire on your hands. [pause 2 seconds] Nitrate film was very inflammable. Just phew! And this is one of the reasons that the magazine door had to be kept closed at all times. There's usually a window in it. Like that. So you can imagine the spool was coming around inside and you could see the film whirring away, as it ran off onto this spool. This was how you knew, it was like a gauge, you knew when it was coming near the end. Whenever a film disappeared from the spool, you're allowed to open the gate, the magazine door, to see how much film was left. You knew when you were getting very near the end that it was time it was time to stand by and get ready to operate the next machine, at the crossover.

VB: Right, right. So you had take a great deal of care about that?

TM: Other things you had to watch for was tears in the film. Rips. Like I say, it was very brittle. This was how when you were rewinding it, you had to keep your fingers on it, and you had to keep your fingers like this. Then you'd be rewinding the film, your forefinger would be on top of the film.

VB: Mhm.

TM: The index finger, and your thumb would be on the edges of the film, and you'd be winding it through and either of these fingers would tell you, if you came to a ragged bit you'd feel it. You know, so you'd to stop rewinding.

VB: Yeh.

TM: Come back, find out where the ragged bit was, and if it required it, take scissors, cut a bit out, cement it together, put it back in place again and then continue rewinding.

VB: Right.

TM: Now every Monday and Thursday morning it was change of programmes, it was my job when I became third operator, or second operator, to go through the whole programme, every reel of film, stand and go right through it, put it onto the spools and check it. And make sure there was no breakdowns. 'Cause if you had a breakdown, all hell was let loose in the hall. You know, they were all stamping their feet and...

VB: Yeh. [laughs]

TM: And shouting, "Get that cowboy out of there!"

[both laugh]

VB: I mean, where, where did the films come from?

TM: There's a distribution centre in Glasgow. In actual fact it was in Arcadia Street, it was very near the foot of Arcadia street near Glasgow Green. They got all the films in from all the different companies and it was their responsibility--they had vans that travelled over Scotland. And they used to send the film--Film Transport Service, it was called, FTS.

VB: I'd be interested to know if that was still running or...

TM: I don't know how they manage it nowadays, I must ask Bobby Holmes the next time I go to Parkhead [Cineworld].

VB: So that was the sort of central place that all the films passed through then?

TM: That's right. They, they, they had, they were the [gathering?] point. The distribution, they distributed the films to every, to every cinema in Scotland. [pause 2 seconds] Do you want a biscuit?

VB: I'm okay now, thanks. It's good tea!

TM: Would you like some more?

VB: Aye, I'll take a wee top-up if there's still some; that be nice, thanks. [sound of tea pouring] But I can see now, as you were explaining it, why the apprenticeship was so long. There was obviously a lot of--

TM: Aye, there was always something happening. Apart from this, there was so many things that could go wrong, er, in a projector and in the system. I remember one time [pause 2 seconds] I'll speak of behind the screen, we called them the horns. In fact it was a chamber behind the screen that was called the horn chamber. This, you could go up there and this is where the sound came from. Now, you had a switch in the projector room that switched on these speakers. We had a speaker in the projection room, and it was possible for us to run a picture with sound in the projection room, but no sound in the theatre. Or vice versa; we could switch the sound off in the projection room and keep it on in the theatre. But we always had to keep the sound on in the projection room, you know, to make sure everything was okay. The system that we had was called the Western Electric Sound System, and they sent an engineer out once a month. He had a list of cinemas, and he had to go round every cinema that was on his list, spent two days in that cinema

maintaining the sound system. Now, what he used to do was... Scott was the name of the wee fella that came to us. Nice wee man. But he used to come in a morning and he'd go through the projectors, making sure everything was okay, and then he'd spend the rest of the day sitting in the cinema watching the films. Which was, I suppose, okay. Because he stayed the time he was supposed to stay to, and then he jumped in his wee car and away he went. And it was this time... I was getting a programme ready... And when I went to switch on the horn switch, there was some, I cannot say yet what it was, but something told me it wasn't right. I had bother getting the switch on, I says "That's curious, that." But anyway, I got it on and I started the programme. Now I put the sound on in the projection room, see? And I'm watching the film through the window. In about five minutes, I hear a knock, comes to the door, and this is one of the girls in the cinema, one of the usherettes. She says "There's no sound in that cinema," and I says "What?" So we could open our windows, see I popped my head out and right enough, silent pictures. [I'm telling you?] I was looking and the fella who's with me, he was, he was concerned as well. He was saying "Just stop it", he says, "no use showing pictures that are silent." So we closed up the curtains and put on the stage lights and we had a look at it. We couldn't find nothing wrong with it, even, there's a bulb in it, what's called the photoelectric cell. We took that out and replaced it with a new one and tried it. But in the back of my mind was this switch that I had tried, and I never said nothing to him. But we, we tried everything that was possible to find out why the sound wasn't coming through the cinema. Couldn't find nothing. So, we replaced this photoelectric cell, changed the film onto the other projector, tried it in that. Said "Well, if we can get one to go, well fair enough." But nothing. So we had to cancel the afternoon show, you know, and to tell the manager, "you need to get somebody out here, you need to get Bill Scott to come out." So, they phoned him. The manager kept a list of all the cinemas that this guy was at, and I think, I think he was at the Rex in Riddrie that day. And the manager phoned the Rex and says "Is Bill Scott there?" He says, "Can you get him to come down the Arcadia, to see-- we've got a serious problem here." So, ten minutes and he was [inaudible] in his car. He says, "What is it?" I says, "There's something wrong with the sound, Bill," and I says, "and I'm sure it's that switch there." He went over the projector, you know, and he started taking out [meters?] and that sort of thing. Trying new [inaudible]. Trying, did something else, "try it again." Opened up the sound box and the main control column and he said that everything appeared to be alright in there. Replaced a couple of valves, "try it now." This went on for the whole afternoon, try, try, try. And by this time, one of the chiefs had come down from the city, we had a head office on West Regent Street, and they arrived. Of course, to cancel an afternoon show, this was money lost to them. They says, "What is it?" I said, "We don't know." I said, I says, I says to the manager, "see that switch on the wall?" I says, "I'm sure it's that." I says, I told them, to have a look at it. So, he went away and he

says--for the first time a Western Electric chief, he was here as well! And he says, er, he says to me, "Have you told Mr. Scott it's the switch?" I says, "I don't know that it's the switch," I says, "I'm only suspicious here." I says, "But that something tells me that's where the fault is." So he went and had a word with Scott. Scott takes his screwdriver, you know, and he starts opening it up. Sure enough, that's where the fault was. So, this boss of Scott's, I think he [Scott] got a right rocket [telling off] for it, 'cause he pulled me aside and he says, "When you first discovered this, that there's no sound", he says, "and they had to call Mr Scott, did you tell him about that switch?" I says, "That's the first thing I told him when he came in." I says, "I thought that's where the fault was." He says, "And did he go to it?" and I says, "No." I says, "He went straight to the projector." So, I think he got a rocket [telling off] because... that was all I heard of it. But, the next time Bill Scott came back to me and he says, "Tom", he says, "the next time you have a problem with the sound", he says, "and you tell me what it is", he says, "and I don't do nothing about it", he says, "hit me a good swift kick in the backside, would you?" So he must have got a rocket for that!

VB: Oh dear!

TM: It's curious how a simple thing like that, you know, that... that just, just that feel, you know, that I got, that something wasn't right. And that's where the fault. [pause 2 seconds] But aw, I wished I could go back to it again, aw it was great! I was a bit of a showman you know, I, I [with increasing emphasis] was a great one. I had a wee fella worked with me called Jimmy Barton, and Jimmy was something like myself, he was dead keen on the movies. And we did all sorts of experiments, you know, to make things better for the customers and that. Eh, trying fancy lights, you know, trying all sorts of things, putting coloured lights in front of the lens, you know, to add a bit of colour to the film that was showing. And, you know, some of the things you get up to! [laughs]

VB: That's amazing.

TM: [laughs] If the management had found out, they'd have hung us. Aye.

VB: I mean, did that make quite a difference, if you had a different colour of light?

TM: Aye, Oh if you put a coloured filter in front of it, it changed the whole image on the screen. We were making black and white pictures into coloured pictures. But they were only one colour, you know?

VB: Yeh.

TM: Where you, they were maybe blue or pale green, or something like this. You know. But the thing is you had to stand with that filter in front of the lens! Eh, I remember we had a series of films that come out, *Bomba the Jungle Boy*. And we got a bit of sorta brown filter colour, and held that in front of the lens, and the picture come out as though it had been photographed in brown! Do you remember the old brown pictures? You've seen brown pictures?

VB: Yeh.

TM: That's how it come out! ...Somebody went in to the manager and said, "That's a right old-fashioned picture you've got the day!" He says, "How's that?" And he says, "Brown!" [VB chuckles] "Black, black and white picture showing brown? What the hell's this," he says. [both laugh] 'Course by this time you've put it back to black and white! And the manager didn't believe him!"

VB: Aw no!

TM: He says, "Aye, I know, you're seeing things!"

[TM goes off to let in the refuse men]

TM: You'll not remember the three-dimensional pictures that come out, do you?

VB: No, I don't!

TM: Yeh, you had to wear polaroid glasses, to see 'em. Eh, that was a system that they used two projectors, and they showed two projectors but they were slightly off. If you looked at them without these polaroid glasses then the picture looked as though it was out of focus.

VB: Right..?

TM: But once you put on the glasses the whole thing came together and you got the three dimensions. You got the height and the breadth, and the depth. You used to have people throwing

things. Indians throwing spears, tigers jumping out at you. Baseball fellas, you know, you'd see somebody throwing a ball at a baseball player, he'd hit it and the ball would come straight for you. You'd--

VB: Really.

TM: You would go away to get out the road! Did you never see it?

VB: No, when did that come out?

TM: That was, let me see, that must've been the late 1940s.

VB: Right.

TM: The first one that was shown in Glasgow was called *Bwana Devil*. That was a jungle picture. That was how the lions and tigers is, was jumping out at you. And then they became quite a fashion for a while. Eh, *House of Wax*, that was an old, old picture, and it was remade, in colour, with Vincent Price, and that was the best 3D picture that I ever saw, you know? For effect.

VB: Yeh.

TM: Because it looked dead realistic. Eh, there's a couple of space pictures that came out. And, eh, I remember going to the Rio in Rutherglen. And they showed a, a 3D programme. Not only was the feature in 3D. Everything that was shown with it, eh, they showed a musical short with Nat King Cole in it, in 3D. And a Woody Woodpecker cartoon in 3D. Everything was in three dimensions.

VB: Amazing.

TM: For the whole programme! But it was a very expensive system. They didn't persevere with it too long because of this need to use two projectors.

VB: Right, right.

TM: But I saw, I, there was something on the radio the other day there and I just caught the tail end of it, and it was somebody talking about, they're developing a new system in America, eh, which might be able to bring 3D films back into focus again, if you can use that word!

VB: [laughs]

TM: Without two projectors. So, they'll maybe come up with something at the end of the day! But eh, anyway, is there anything else I can tell you now?

VB: I'm sure there's a lot, a lot more you can tell me!

[both laugh]

VB: I'm just trying to think, I've been, thinking while you were talking as well. I mean, I wondered if you had any preferences yourself, you know, when you were growing up, for instance, between the British and the American films?

TM: Oh, always the American.

VB: Was it the American?

TM: Aye, Aye. The British films got a bad name, and yet, it was a name that they didn't really deserve. Actually, because some of their pictures was really good. But, eh, America had the film stars. You know, we didn't, we had the films, but we didn't have the big names that went with them. America in those, I mean I remember, in my days, as I've already said, the Errol Flynns, the James Cagneys, George Raft, and Edward G. Robinson, and aw, Anne Sheridan, Lana Turner, people like that. Eh, Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, these, these were household names. These were people that you felt that you knew personally. Because you'd seen so much of them. [pause 2 seconds]

TM: There used to be a series of short films that was quite popular. I think they used to turn them out one a week or something. It was called 'Shooting Stars'[?]. And this showed you the film stars at home, you know, it caught them out shopping or out having a day at the beach or something like that. It showed you them away from making pictures. Film stars without makeup, you know? And this made you even more aware, you know, that they were human beings. And it made you even

more aware that you knew 'em far better than what you knew anybody in this country. We, we had a few good, a few names, but if you had asked me to name a British star of the thirties, I don't think I could do it. You know? Apart from maybe Laurence Olivier. He was, he was well known. He made a few pictures... The actors that was in pictures like *The Drum* and *The Four Feathers*, they were one offs, you know, they made one picture or maybe two or three and you never heard of them again.

VB: Mhm.

TM: But the Cagneys and the Flynns and the Bogarts, they kept coming back every couple of months, you know, a new picture. So you got to know them. I think that went a lot in the Americans' favour.

VB: Right.

TM: Plus the fact that they were better at making [with increasing emphasis] pictures. Although the British pictures had good stories and that, there was something lacking [with emphasis] in them. You know, just something that you couldn't put your finger on. Not nowadays, mind you. I mean, they're as good as anybody now, in fact better than most.

VB: Yeh.

TM: At making pictures in Britain... The thing is they don't make enough of them. That's the whole thing.

VB: Aye, aye. I mean did you get these, you were saying you had these stories about the stars in, at the pictures. Did you ever buy any of the film magazines?

TM: Well, I used to buy it every week!

VB: Did you?

TM: Aye.

VB: Yeh?

TM: Aye, there was the 'Film Weekly' and there was the 'Picturegoer', and there was a, a, a magazine that used to come out weekly called 'Boys' Cinema'. Now that was the one that I got. Because that was all the information about all the adventure films, you know?

VB: Right.

TM: It was, it was telling you all, all about the films that, eh, were attractive to boys. The 'Boys' Cinema', that was the name of it.

VB: Right.

TM: The 'Picturegoer' was probably the most widespread of the film magazines, and the 'Film Weekly', that was, that was another one.

VB: Yeh.

TM: And they were more or less for adults. A lot of reading in them about, for the adults, you know.

VB: 'Cause I hadn't heard of that one, the 'Boys' Cinema'.

TM: Aye, well if you make enquiries about it you'll find that that was a very popular magazine in the thirties.

VB: Yeh. How much was it? Was it?

TM: Tuppence!

[both laugh]

VB: Tuppence!

TM: Aye, tuppence, aye.

VB: Aye!

TM: We used to get it, eh, there was a lot of comics in those days, I mean you talk about the 'Beano' and the 'Dandy'. Well, there was hundreds of comics that came from America. There was 'Flash Gordon', there was 'Mandrake the Magician', there was 'Tarzan', they had whole books to themselves. And, usually they were printed in colour.

VB: Ah.

TM: Which was another attraction, for the American comics. Whereas the British ones, they were more or less in black and white, the 'Chips', ooooh, and the 'Tiny Tots', and things like this. And there was one film comic, it was called 'Film Fun' and it was always Laurel and Hardy that was on the front of it. And that was it, also all in black and white.

VB: Right.

TM: And we used to go round each doors, each, all our mates, we would go round their houses, and chap [knock] on doors, and take an armful of these comics or books, and exchange them for each other, go up to our mate's door and knock on the door, and his mother came to the door, "Is Robert in?" "Yes", "Eh, any comics to change?" and he'd go away and dig out all his comics and we'd sit out[side] and we'd say, "Have you read this one?" "No" "Well I'll give you this one if you give me that one."

VB: [laughs quietly]

TM: And this is how we went. Exchanged comics, and that would give us something to do in the evening. You could sit in and read comics. We didn't have television or anything like that.

VB: Mhm.

TM: Radio didn't bother us. We had a radio but I very seldom listened to it. I was quite happy to lay in front of the fire and an armful of comics, reading the books. And the 'Film Fun' and the 'Boys' Cinema', they were high on the list. There was other boys' adventure books as wel. 'The Adventure', the 'Rover', the 'Skipper', eh ... there was another one, what was it, now... But these were story

books rather than picture books. Now, these boys' books told you stories. Eh, air races there was a serials of *Ace, Ace Drummond*, I always remember that, he was a flying man. *Tim Tyler's Luck*, that was another flying one. But, eh, between the serials and what we read, in these boys' magazines. Aw, we lived in a wonderland. Aw, a land of imagination, all made possible through this.

VB: Yeh.

TM: It was great.

VB: It must've been amazing for you being at both sides of it.

TM: Aye.

VB: Both a fan and a...

TM: Aye.

VB: You know, someone as you say that made it happen.

TM: Well, like I say, right from the very first time I went into a cinema and I looked at that screen and then I turned round to see where this light was coming from, and I seen this wee pinprick of light, and it suddenly got bigger and bigger through the rays and it hit the screen, and I used to sit and watch this and I says, "I wonder what's going on up there? I wonder who makes that." Well, I eventually found out!

VB: Aye!

[both laugh]

VB: It must've been a dream come true!

TM: Aye, Aye. I believe it when I first got my job in the first cinema--

VB: Aye.

TM: ...Couldn't take my eyes off the screen, you know, standing beside the projector watching the film. But see after a couple of weeks? ...Never bothered about it. You'd just have a check at the screen to see everything's OK.

VB: Yeh.

TM: As long as the pictures nice and bright and clear, and the sound's going OK, didn't bother. We used to take in books and sit and read books!

VB: Right! [laughs]

TM: Aye! Oh, it was great.

TM: That's where I met my wife!

VB: Is it!

TM: Aye, aye! She was selling ice cream in the cinema and then she eventually became a cashier, you know, she was in the cashdesk selling the tickets. So, we got married, eventually.

VB: That's amazing. It's like something out a movie almost, isn't it! [both laugh] You met, you met at the pictures. That's great.

TM: I only wish I had kept a diary, everything that happened, you know? Of course you never think of these things at the time.

VB: Yeh. Was, was your wife a keen cinema fan as well?

TM: Aye, aye. Oh yeh she liked the pictures as well, aye. 'Cause there was nothing else for us! Whenever you got time off, you know, you'd look at newspapers, and you'd get a page in the newspapers and it's full of cinema adverts.

VB: Aye.

TM: And we'd say, "Where'll we go?" Pick out, out a cinema that we hadn't seen and that's where we went!

VB: Is that where you did most of your courting?

TM: That's right! That's it! Aye, aye.

VB: Did you like going to the dancing and things as well?

TM: No, that was a thing I never went to, dancing. Never bothered with dancing at all. [Pause 2 seconds]

VB: You probably wouldn't have had time actually!

TM: [clearing away dishes from the table; VB takes the chance to get another tape out]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape Two]

[Start of Tape Three]

[Start of Side A]

TM: In the newspapers. [showing VB item]

VB: Right.

TM: It shows you some of the cinemas that was in existence. Now I got that out of a newspaper in the Mitchell Library.

VB: Right.

TM: I don't know what the date of it was, but it was obviously into the forties.

VB: Right.

TM: Because you see here, they've got Sunday shows. Now, Sunday cinemas only came into operation when the war started. They started running Sunday cinemas for charities, to raise money for charities. And that was the only reason that they got to allow open. The staff had to work voluntarily, for nothing. For a Sunday show, but it was all in a good cause, you know?

VB: Ah, I see.

TM: The film companies gave the films for no charge. The cinemas gave the electricity to the cinema to run the shows and the staff gave their time to run the show. All the proceeds were given to charity.

VB: Right.

TM: Apart from that, you weren't allowed to open the cinema on a Sunday. If it wasn't a charity show, then it wasn't on.

TM: This was the Coliseum and the Regal. This was ABC cinemas. The Waverley, the Grosvenor, the Rex in Riddrie, the Govanhill, the Kings and the Dennistoun Picture House, that was just down the road there.

VB: What was that like?

TM: The Dennistoun? That was quite a big cinema, that. I, I quite liked the Dennistoun. It wasn't as fancy as the Orient, it was quite plain at the front. But it was a nice cinema all the same. Eh, if I got a chance at all, it was the Orient for me. 'cause I, I could sit, I didn't need to watch the pictures, I could sit and watch all the wee houses! I, I quite liked that... The Parade in Dennistoun, that was just along the road in Meadowpark Street that there. That was a big cinema too, it was a big long cinema. It appeared to be awful long, when the Orient and the Dennistoun, they were compact, you know, they were round shaped. But this was an awful long cinema. If you were sitting at the back of the screen, the screen looked about this size. You know, it was that far away.

VB: [gentle laugh]

TM: The Picture House, that was in Sauchiehall Street, that's where your Savoy Cen..., Shopping Centre, is now.

VB: Oh right, right.

TM: Now that sat back to back with the Savoy. The Savoy, the entrance to the Savoy was actually, aye, see there it is there [indicates paper] the New Savoy, that was actually in Hope Street, but the Gaumont sat like that [indicates] that was Sauchiehall Street there and this was Hope Street. The Gaumont sat there, the Savoy was here so the two of them were virtually back to back with each other. Both of them owned by the same company, the Gaumont-British, you see, G-B.

VB: Mhm.

TM: The New Cinerama. That was over the Southside, the Parade, Capitol, that was at Ibrox, the Tivoli, that was out Partick way.

VB: Right.

TM: These were independent cinemas, the Commodore and the Broadway. This is the Olympia, at Bridgeton Cross. You see, that was open at six forty-five, [reading from paper] two shows, six forty-five and nine.

VB: I mean, I was interested when you were saying that, about the Gaumont-British ones, 'cause I noticed that three of them are showing the same picture. I mean.

TM: Aye, this was it, the Gaumont-British took a film on, and then the Picture House and the Savoy, these ones had two city cinemas, they got the first run.

VB: Right.

TM: After that, the film disappeared for a couple of months. And then it came back in.

VB: Like you were saying earlier. Yeh.

TM: And the likes of the Parade, and the Capitol, the Tivoli, they would all get it at the one time.

VB: Right.

TM: But you notice they're well spaced out, that was in Dennistoun.

VB: Mhm.

TM: That's in Ibrox, and that's in Partick. So it means that the people all over the city are getting an opportunity to see the film, although it's the same film that's been showed in three different cinemas.

VB: Right, I see.

TM: [pause 2 seconds] The Paramount, now that was the Odeon's name before it became the Odeon? It was actually called the Paramount... I don't know if Paramount Pictures had anything to do with it, the actual building of it, or possibly they put up the money for it.

VB: Mhm.

TM: But, that's how it started its career. But that was a beautiful cinema as well, when it first opened. That's the Paramount, but it eventually got taken over by the Odeon, well, it still is the Odeon nowadays. There's Cranstons there, Renfield Street. [indicates]

VB: What was that one like inside? Cranstons?

TM: It was nothing fancy, you know [with animation]. It wis nice but I wouldn't say it was an awful fancy cinema. It was quite plain by city standards. But, it served its purpose. It was upstairs, you know, there was no cinema at ground level. You'd to go upstairs to go into it. I think it was shops or something that used to be in below. There's the Orient [indicating]. New Partick [probably referring to Partick Picture House], the Arcadia's not there, I don't think.

VB: Mhm.

TM: No. Now that's only a part page, you know. 'cause the likes of the 'Sunday Mail', in the 'Evening Times' and that, there was your full page. They had cinemas all over the place.

VB: It's amazing, 'cause I mean if you think of a cinema page now in the papers, it would maybe be about that size. [indicates a few inches]

TM: Aye, Aye! Well, that's what it is nowadays.

VB: The whole thing. You mentioned the Green's Playhouse. Was that quite a--?

TM: Oh, it's...

VB: I've heard that mentioned before.

TM: There; it's there. [indicating in paper]

VB: Yeh.

TM: The [Green's] Playhouse. That was the largest cinema in Europe.

VB: Was it?

TM: That, that seated, what was it, somewhere in the region of five thousand people! But oh! It was a helluva place to go into!

VB: Was it?

TM: Aw, oh!

[both laugh]

TM: I used to, I was quite sweet with one of the girls that worked in it for a while. And, eh, I used to go up there to see her, eh, Christine Degan. I'll never forget her! And, Chris was an usherette in there, and eh, I don't know how I met her, but she, she invited me to come up and see her. So I went up and I got to know the chief operator through her, and he took me in. But it was one of these cinemas, there was two balconies in it, you know? I think it had been originally built as a theatre. And, because, if you sat at ground level and looked out, where the balconies changed in like that, it cut off the top half of the screen! If you, if you're sitting in the back seat, and looking at the screen, you could only see, you couldn't see people's heads, you could only see them from the shoulder down, when they were on the screen! You'd to go like this! [illustrates acrobatic posturing]

VB: [laughs]

TM: You know, you were away down in your seat, you know, to try and [see?] what it was! So that's what made me think it was originally built as a theatre. You know, it was OK for the stage.

VB: Aah.

TM: But not for high up. And then when you went up to the gallery, into the balcony, that was how, you got a good view of the screen then. But then they had the upper balcony, that was away up in the gods; and again, when you were away up in the back there, looking at the screen--it was a huge screen and all--but it looked about this size [indicates small size] you know, when you were away at the back of it!... But it was, eh, like I say, it was the largest cinema in Europe at one time. But, I think it was about five thousand that could get into it. Although I don't think there were ever five thousand in it.

VB: No.

TM: No, it was too big to have queues outside it.

VB: So, I mean, they had a ballroom in there as well?

TM: They had a ballroom, the ballroom was above the cinema... Eh, that's where all the famous dance bands went. I don't know if there's anything about the dancing there. [looks through for 2 seconds] That's all theatres.

VB: Mhm.

TM: Dennistoun Palais, the Alberton [probably referring to the Albert Ballroom], the Locarno, Oh aye, there it is right underneath it, the ballroom, see it? It says, "Afternoon and evening sessions, seven thirty to eleven fifteen. Two and six."

VB: Mhm.

TM: Ladies, ladies two shillings. You, ladies get in for sixpence!

VB: [laughs]

TM: [nice, eh?]

VB: I mean!

TM: [reading out from paper] "Demonstration of the latest dances."

VB: Mhm. I'm just wondering what that would be like, I mean, if there was a band playing above the cinema. Could you hear it?

TM: Aw no, no. The soundproofing was good.

VB: Right.

TM: Eh, [pause 2 seconds] the, the, the dance hall was a good bit above the cinema, you know, if I can remember right, I think there was a restaurant in the Green's Playhouse as well, but that was down the ground floor level.

VB: Mhm.

TM: You went in, you got in to the cinema, the restaurant was at ground level, and you went up the steps into the stalls of the cinema, which was above the level of the restaurant. And then right away

at the top was the ballroom. I think there was a lift to take you up to the ballroom, you needed one, you know, with the steps that you had to climb up.

VB: I see.

TM: But a lot of the famous dance bands played there. Joe Loss and Geraldo and all the famous names of they days. They all turned up at the [Green's] Playhouse, it was very popular.

VB: Mhm.

TM: But I was never a dancing man, never. I went to, eh, Barrowland Ballroom a few times when it first opened up. Fifteen or sixteen years old, you know? Just to go with the boys, and I always remember, it was, eh, Billy McGregor and the Gay Birds that played there. He was the resident band. And he was a good band. We used to, in fact we used to liken him to Glenn Miller. 'Cause I think he took a lot of his arrangements from the Glenn Miller repertoire. And, eh, he did quite a good job of it. That's where Lena Martell started her career, she sang with Billy McGregor and the Gay Birds. That's where, that's where she started.

VB: I didn't know that.

TM: Aye, I remember her coming on, and "This girl's got a good voice," you know? And did things with this voice. I think she had some problems with her throat, she had to leave the system for a while. But that's where she started, Lena Martell. Next time I saw Lena Martell, after she finished off at Barrowland, was in the theatre show that Dickie Henderson--what was it called? Oh... 'Monday Night at Eight' [referring to 'Five Past Eight' stage production] or something, it was, 'The Show Begins at Eight', it was in the Alhambra [Theatre], let me see now, the Alhambra [Theatre]... Now it's... the Alhambra [Theatre], now that was, on the corner of Waterloo Street, that was a big theatre as well. After I'd seen Lena Martell in the Barrowland Ballroom, next thing she comes up on the Dickie Henderson show, 'Five Past Eight' show, that was the name of it, the 'Five Past Eight' show at the Alhambra... singing with him. Before long, she's on her way, you know, she's away [gone] down to London. Made a name for herself.

VB: You mentioned the La Scala earlier as well?

TM: Aye, that's a shop, that's shops nowadays.

VB: Yes.

TM: That's practically right across the road from where the Gaumont was, in Sauchiehall Street. The building's still there but of course the cinema's gone, La Scala.

VB: Was that quite a...?

TM: That was a nice cinema as well. That was a cinema that had a tearoom in the cinema. You could go in, sit down at a restaurant, have your tea and watch the pictures at the same time!

VB: [laughs]

TM: 'Cause the restaurant was offset to the side of the cinema. If you were standing at the back of the cinema and looking at the screen, the restaurant was at the right hand side and all the people were sitting there with wee tiny lamps at the table, just lighting up the table so they could see what they were eating. They could sit there and watch the pictures at the same time.

VB: That's amazing! Sounds ideal actually!

TM: That was the first time I seen, eh, sorry the second time, the first CinemaScope picture we saw was *The Robe*, that was in the Odeon, the old Paramount. And the second picture that I saw in CinemaScope was in the La Scala, it was *Three Coins in the Fountain*. And that's the one with Frank Sinatra singing in stereophonic sound. It was marvellous.

VB: Can you explain about CinemaScope?

TM: It was actually a distortion, er er er, of the film. If you get a proper lens, and you get a bulb, it can do anything. You know, it can change an image, just by changing the lens. So what they did was [pause 2 seconds] [draws diagrams] On film, they've got these... what was the name they had? Er, the name for the CinemaScope lens, dear oh dear... anamorphic! That was it. The anamorphic lens. Now, if it shot a film, supposing there was a scene like so [draws diagram] that's normal, you see? Let's say it was a desert scene. So there's hills [inaudible]. What the anamorphic lens did was... it

squeezed it up. It was able take in a wider scope, but to get the picture into that size of film it actually squeezed it up. In other words, if you put a human head in there, like so, and film with an anamorphic lens, the head will coming out looking like that, [indicates] eh? Now, when they printed the film and showed it through an anamorphic lens reversed, then that would open it out again.

VB: I see!

TM: And it would also open out the scope of the picture, instead of having a picture that size, showing... instead of having a picture that size showing a head that shape, it opened it out like that and the head became normal. That's all it did. And actually filming the CinemaScope, it squeezed up the contents of what it was taking. And then they reverse the projector through another anamorphic lens and it spread it back again to normal, and it gave it that wide scope.

VB: I see.

TM: And of course, they added stereophonic sound to it, they built speakers at the back of the cinemas, and all around them, and there was sound all around the place. Frank Sinatra singing in anamorphic sound. [inaudible] I thought it was the greatest thing I'd ever heard. He, he didn't actually sing in the picture, he sang before the picture began. The picture started, showing these scenes of Rome, taking you all around the er, er, a tour of the city of Rome. And all the time Sinatra was singing 'Three Coins in the Fountain', when he finished singing up came the titles, *Three Coins in the Fountain*, Rossano Brazzi, whoever else was in it. You never heard from Sinatra again after that, and yet he made more money from that picture than any of the actors did.

VB: Really?

TM: He did, 'cause he sang the... But eh, CinemaScope then became--it was, er... I think it was 20th Century Fox that introduced it, they had the copyright on it; but other film companies, they jumped into it as well, but they couldn't use the name CinemaScope because that was copyright to [20th Century] Fox. So they decide to that they would have their own systems. So, Paramount, they went for VistaVision... it's the same thing. PanaVision, that was another name that was used. Same thing, just another name, that's all; but the same principle was used, just squeezing up the picture and then opening it up again. [pause 2 seconds] Aw, that was that.

VB: So obviously there were a lot of technical changes, I mean just in the time you were at the cinema.

TM: Oh aye, oh aye. But some of them, er, there was, some actually cheated this. This Parade cinema, they, they, their screen, how they got CinemaScope, the screen was like that [indicates] you see? They had no room to expand at the side as it was a very long cinema. So what they did was, instead of showing, opening up the screen sideways, all they did was drop the top here down, to about half size, and they showed the picture there and they called it CinemaScope. So I went and told the manager, I says, "That's not CinemaScope, you're cheating the people." I says, "You're giving them half the picture." I says, "You call it a CinemaScope?" They never answered my letter. I says, "CinemaScope has got to be seen on as the same size of screen and it's got to open up at the sides, to let people see..." The best CinemaScope I've ever seen was a cinema in Morecambe, the Plaza. My wife and I went down for a weekend and we went to the pictures down there and it was CinemaScope. And it was from wall-to-wall... Right to the extreme wall of the cinema to the other. In fact, you couldn't look at all at one time, you had to look there and then look there to see it, it was great. And then Cinerama came on the scene, that was three projectors. The screen was curved, like that [indicates] and you had one projector here, one there, and one there. Your main projector showed the picture like that, this one projected... from there to there, and that one projected from there to there. [draws diagram] So you had a, a sweep like that, three projectors running and an all-round picture. The only trouble was, here and here, you could see joins. You had to look for them to see it, but they were there, and the picture I noticed it in most of all was *How the West Was Won*, that was the first Cinerama feature. There were other shorts that had been and interest films, but the first real story was *How the West Was Won*, and you could see the joins in it, you know? But it was good, mind you! It was definitely good. It gave you a three-dimensional effect and it also gave you the wide-screen, so you had the best of everything, plus the stereophonic sound as well. That, that, that was a, that was a real good thing, but it was this three projectors, that was a killer for them.

VB: I mean that must have been quite expensive to have...

TM: The only cinema in Glasgow with, that had it was the Coliseum. [pause 2 seconds] Have you ever seen the IMAX system?

VB: No, I haven't.

TM: Have you heard about it?

VB: No, I haven't.

TM: No, well, that's the system... The only place in Britain that has got it is in, er, Bradford in Yorkshire. At the History of... [referring to National Science and Media Museum]

VB: I have actually, I've seen it, I didn't know it was called IMAX, I've been there.

TM: It's a Canadian system. Er, that, that, I've been to it once, I'd love to go back to it again. My daughter used to live in Warrington, which is not too far from Bradford, and we went to stay with her for a few days. I told her, I says...I took my grandson and I left my wife, I says, "We're going over to Bradford, I want to see this IMAX." So we went across and back... it was great, it was absolutely marvellous.

VB: Is that the one that they show the films on it.

TM: Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

TM: It's actually a partner of, er, the Museum of ... er Cinema and Television, the National Museum of, er, Photography... Film, Photography and Television [since renamed to National Science and Media Museum] that's what it's called. And the IMAX theatre is attached to it, as part of it. [inaudible] the museum itself is open to go in, but if you go the cinema, at the time you paid, it was a few years ago, I think we paid around two-pounds-fifty, and you're only in there about half an hour. But you can see in the projection room, when you're going the past the projection room is opened up, there's a wall that's made of glass and you can see the fellas working. The film in that, in that, in that... projector's here, the film doesn't run down the way, it runs across. They've got this big cake stand and it runs off this cake stand across the projector, and into another one [cake stand] here. That showed pictures there. The screen is... it's as tall as that building there. It's five-storeys high and as wide... I had a photograph, I must try and dig it out somewhere. If you sit down and watch this picture, you're right in it. In fact, there was a scene in it where it showed you a tiger

chasing a fella, this tiger makes a leap for this fella, my grandson, he nearly jumped out of his shirt. The thing was coming out at you, he went back like this, he thought the tiger was coming to eat you. It was huge. But the quality of the picture is perfection, you know, you couldn't ask for better, it was really great. And if you're interested in cinema, you should [go to Bradford?]

VB: Well, I, as I say, I was in that place. Again it was a few years ago, as you're describing it I know where you mean now. 'Cause, the film that we say was erm... it had fish and it was like an underwater thing. And that was very, I mean it was just like being underwater because the screen's sort of round, around you. But I didn't know that's how it worked, I mean it's--

TM: Apparently the soundtrack is on a separate film.

VB: Is that right?

TM: There's actually two cake stands, and the bottom one carries the film that's got the soundtrack, but it's in perfect synchronisation because it runs through the projector along with the film. So, they [inaudible] proper start, then the synchronisation it spot on. And apparently there's nine soundtracks on the film. The film itself, this film is, what was it? 75mm, it's more than twice the normal size, it's about that size... [indicates] against the normal 35mm, it's double that. It's a much bigger picture, rather than running down the projector, it runs across it. But the quality of the picture is first-class, you know, it couldn't be better.

VB: It's an amazing place that, isn't it?

TM: Oh, I could've spent a whole day there. Could've spent the whole day there.

02:13:39 [VB admires TM's landscape painting; TM explains it is Interlaken, where he spent his holiday ten years ago; TM shows round pictures; shows one of railway, asks VB as 'a neutral person' to referee a family dispute about a car in the painting. VB can't see what he means. Looking at the car, seems to be standing out of the painting, almost like 3D. TM got the image out of a book on the West Highland Railway, a wee black and white image, he added the colours and changed it about a bit (trees eg in different places); TM's exhibition is still up; he sent art gallery people photographs of his paintings and asked re a show, didn't get much money for it (due to the cost of framing and putting glass on them). Most of his paintings are of Glasgow in the '30s, done from memory, eg with

box beds and range (TM shows VB his portfolio of photographs); a fight; street games; the big match; a man dressed up as Charlie Chaplin; Saturday night at the movies (picture of the Arcadia). VB listing titles while TM is out the room]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

[TM and VB continue discussion of paintings]

VB: You've got one of buskers which has a man dressed as Charlie Chaplin in it!

TM: Oh aye!

VB: Was that something that, that you saw then?

TM: Oh, that was quite common. That was a common thing in our day, for buskers to come around, and eh, I mean these were guys out of work, trying to make a few shillings for themselves.

VB: Aye.

TM: And they used to come round the side streets, a fella with the drums, he'd maybe be wheeling the drums on a barrow or a cart or something, and they were all playing their instruments. And the kids would all sit down and they'd do their stuff in the street and--

VB: Aye.

TM: Or a bit of spare ground or something like that. And then the people would show pennies out to them or something. Are you wanting to see the original? [referring to the painting: VB and TM are discussing a photograph of it]

VB: I'd love to, yes.

[**TM** goes into cupboard and brings out the painting]

VB: Oh! Och that's amazing! I didn't realise it was going to be so big! You know, with your other ones being on a smaller scale.

TM: That was the biggest one.

VB: That must be about four.

TM: Four-foot square.

VB: Four feet square. That's amazing! The colours are just, it's so lively! Ah, fantastic!

TM: That fella there that's Charlie Chaplin. He used to walk like this, [demonstrating Chaplin walk] you know, swinging his stick.

VB: Yeh.

TM: Being Charlie Chaplin, but you'll not remember Charlie Chaplin. Have you seen him?

VB: Oh, I've seen Charlie Chaplin, yeh.

TM: Aye.

VB: Was that someone you liked? When you were growing up?

TM: I wasn't really keen on Charlie Chaplin.

VB: Yeh.

TM: I never laughed much at him. But I only needed to look at Laurel and Hardy and I laughed at them! Everybody did, I think, hilariously funny.

VB: Yeh. I see you've got the cinema in here, as well.

TM: Aye.

VB: You've got your posters for the Picture Palace and the Grand [possibly referring to the Grand Central]. [pause 2 seconds] That's amazing. And the adverts for Guinness. Is that something that they did in the--

TM: Yeh.

VB: In the cinemas that you worked in, did they ever do promotions for..? 'Cause I was talking to another lady who...

TM: Lately. 'Cause you see in the 1930s?

VB: Aye.

TM: They never done it. The only cinema I knew that did, eh, adverts of any kind was the Parade.

VB: Right.

TM: But it was just a slide lantern. And they used to show it between the pictures. You know, maybe five minutes of slides of local shops.

VB: Right.

TM: It wasn't till, oh, I would say after the war; 1944, '45, that they started to make these film commercials, advertising local businesses and that sort of thing. And of course it's big business nowadays, you know?

VB: Yeh. That's really wonderful, I like that very much.

[**TM:** That one wasn't bought so he took it home, too heavy for the wall so took it back; VB likes the enthralled children and wee shops; took TM about a year to paint; a great deal of detail in it, as VB comments. VB likes woman hanging out the window; a common thing to see women hanging out the window "to have a wee blether", possibly with a cushion to lean on.]

TM: All the paintings in that book they're all of the thirties you know?

VB: Aye.

TM: 'Cause that's the period I, I remember!

VB: Yeh.

TM: That's the vivid time, you know, and I can remember everything, so that's how I decided to go that way!

[VB appreciates picture of Marbella which TM saw in a book; VB enjoys the "vibrant" colours in the paintings. TM shows copy of the painting of the Arcadia now in Provand's Lordship; the copy is for a lady who enjoyed the original; he changed the perspective and made some subtle differences to it. VB appreciates TM's line drawings too. A copy from *Stagecoach* as well. TM produces a laser print of the Arcadia painting. VB likes the detail of the doorman, David Crone, when TM was there, "a walking jokebook", great comedian, always had a story to tell and always a funny story. "A grand lot" working in the cinema. VB says she'll need to get up to the top floor of Provand's Lordship to see the paintings. First shown over a year ago, moved for another exhibition, then put up again recently. A point for conversation for the elderly.]

TM: I mean, let's face it, the thirties people, I mean, we're getting on now, you know? There'll soon be none of us left but! We can't last forever! We've got to go sometime! [laughs] I hope it's not for a wee while yet, right enough!

VB: Oh, I'm sure.

TM: But eh, thirties people are getting fewer and fewer.

VB: I mean, that's why it's so good of you to, to talk to us, you know, and record it.

TM: Oh, if it's helped you at all, that's the thing, you know, to keep the days alive.

VB: Absolutely.

TM: A find that there's, I, I, I [with increasing emphasis] did a bit of research on the thirties, you know, after I retired from the railway. I worked on the railway eventually.

VB: Right.

TM: And I did a bit of research, I was in the libraries and the museums and I found out there was a great dearth of information about the thirties. It seems to be a period that they've--

VB: Aye.

TM: More or less swept under the carpet and tried to forget about.

VB: Aye.

TM: But I can't see how they can forget about it. 'Cause really to me it was a period of time when people were poor, I mean we didn't have much and there were an awful lot of people out of work, you know, there was a right recession and depression going on at the time. But what you had, you know, everybody was in the same boat, you know, we were all, the fact that everybody was in the same boat led to comradeship being much better, you know, than it is now.

VB: Yeh.

TM: I mean we've, in those days, you could go out and leave your front door wide open. And come back and it was never touched. Neighbours used to walk in and out and in each other's houses. I remember when we stayed [lived] down there in [Lower?] Street, our neighbour there, Mrs Quinn, she was oftener in our house than in her own. 'Cause she had no family, she was only on her own with her husband, and her husband was out at work. She just used to come round, chap [knock] on the door and open it, come in and sit and talk to my mother. She'd sit and knit at the fire, and my mother would be getting on with her housework, and she'd spend the whole day sitting in there. And that's the way things were done. And if you had threepence, a wee silver threepenny bit, then you were rich! That was a night at the pictures and a bag of sweeties to go in. Tuppence for the pictures and a penny for sweets. You know.

TM: ... And when we were younger, we used to go round the middens, we used to go down there with the midges and rake out ginger bottles and jam jars, and maybe you've heard of people saying going into the pictures with a jam jar. I don't mind [remember] that, but I mind getting the jam jars, and washing them, taking them to the shop and getting a penny on the jam jar, and then going to the pictures.

VB: [laugh]

TM: But you had to get a, maybe a lemonade bottle and a jam jar, and that got you threepence, tuppence on the lemonade bottle, a penny on the jam jar, that was the money from the bottles. Great stuff.

VB: And of course now it's like, you'd need an awful lot of jam jars to get into the pictures now, wouldn't you! [laughs]

TM: Oh, it costs you now.

VB: Aye. Do you go to the pictures a lot yourself, at all?

TM: Not a lot, occasionally, I go occasionally. The last picture I saw was *Jurassic Park*.

VB: Oh, right.

TM: No but, eh, I haven't been for a couple a weeks. There was one or two films I'd like to see, but to me, the films nowadays that..., there is something lacking in them. They seem to be hollow. I mean, even *Jurassic Park*, good enough as it was, the, the special effects was tremendous, I mean, I can't argue with that, they were really first class. But the story itself was nothing. There was something hollow about it, you know? I liked to see pictures like *Lost Horizon*, *It Happened One Night*, you know? Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. I mean these were pictures that were entertaining in as much as the stars were in it, somebody special, but they had a story! You know they told you something. And that's what makes all the difference.

TM: James Stewart, he was another of my favourites, I liked him. *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*, you know? That, that was a great story. With Jean Arthur. Sometimes I sit, and I try to think of all the old pictures. *San Francisco*, Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy, about the earthquake that destroyed San Francisco in 1912. Special effects in that was marvellous. Walls that shook to their foundations.
[pause 2 seconds] Aw, we had our days then as well.

VB: You must have seen, I mean, so many pictures, it's hard to imagine, it's hard to know where to start if you remember them all!

TM: Well, sometimes when I'm in the town, you know that Halliwell's--

VB: Oh yeh.

TM: ...Film dictionary? Sometimes I find myself looking at that, you know, looking back at some of the old pictures. Erm, these serials I was talking about, there was one came to my mind there a couple of weeks ago. I don't know what I was doing, but I said, "That reminded me of one of the serials." I was up in Parkhead Forge and I was in a bookshop, and that Halliwell's dictionary was in it, so I opened it up and looked at the back and there it was, something came up, Ace Drummond, made at Universal, 1936. It told you who was in it, the guy's name's there, thirteen chapters, showing you the weekly chapters.

VB: Aye.

TM: That meant we had to go to the cinema thirteen weeks in succession. But you know, it couldn't come quick enough! See once you come out of the cinema, on a Saturday afternoon? You'd say to yourself, "I wonder what'll happen next week? I wonder if he'll get out of that mess that he's in." See?

VB: [laughs]

TM: And then Monday came, and Tuesday came, and Wednesday came, Thursday, Friday, the tension started to build up, and then it's Saturday, "We'll go to the pictures to see what happened to this woman!" And then you, when you went and the next picture came up and [cheers] here it comes, and we'll find out what happens!

VB: Oh wow!

TM: Aye.

VB: I mean, the atmosphere must've been amazing.

TM: Aww, it was marvellous days, marvellous. We didn't have much but you got a good laugh!

[both laugh]

VB: I mean, it was very good of you to give up your time and--

TM: Aw! That's OK! If there's anything else I can do for you, just give me a buzz and let me know.

VB: Well, that would be great because, I mean, we'll have to get these pictures back to you.

TM: I'm no in any hurry for them.

VB: I mean, would it be all right if I came back and talked to you, maybe, in the New Year?

TM: Sure.

VB: That would be great.

TM: You let me know when you're coming.

VB: Aye. 'Cause then I'll have time to think about...

[**TM** any day but Tuesday or Friday, wife's day off so go out those days, to get the shopping on a Tuesday and out on a Friday. **TM** "The trouble is my memory goes"; **VB** assures good memory. **TM** allows **VB** to take his sketches done through the session. **TM** will try and "dig out" stuff, look in his "glory hole" the cupboard he keeps his stuff in; **VB** thanks for his help.]

[End of Interview]

[Note: this tape was stopped part way through and used for subsequent interview]