

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

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* Lowestoft, Suffolk, 14 November 1995: Valentina Bold interviews William and Hazel Pickess

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/Standardised by Annette Kuhn

* WP=William Pickess, HP= Hazel Pickess, VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: Second interview of two with William and Hazel Pickess; Sound Quality: Poor; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner; the original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection - please contact Lancaster University Library for details.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

HP: [tape starts mid-conversation; inaudible; voice a little faint in background]

VB: [laughs] Right. Well I made a note of one or two things that you said that I wanted to ask you more about. I also brought along, I really enjoyed having a look at the book you were showing me and I brought along a couple from eh, Glasgow that I thought you might enjoy.

HP: Oh yes.

VB: Erm, having a look at that. One of them is eh, from 1938.

HP: Mhm.

VB: And the other one's 1934, I think.

HP: Yeah. When we went a lot.

VB: So I thought you might enjoy it.

HP: Yeah.

VB: It might be a bit awkward of course with your arm bandaged.

HP: Yeah. [inaudible].

VB: 'Cause it's quite heavy. Well, the first thing that I really wanted to ask was erm, I mean you mentioned quite a number of stars that you liked eh, people like Ginger Rogers.

HP: Yes.

VB: And I wondered what it was that particularly appealed to you in the stars that you did like.

HP: Well the fashions really. I liked about Ginger Rogers. Liked her fashions and dancing. She could dance. [inaudible]. Fred Astaire.

WP: Used to copy her clothes, didn't you?

HP: I used to copy her clothes.

VB: Mhm. So it was the way she looked--

HP: The way she looked and dressed.

WP: But not lately. When we saw her on--

HP: Not when we saw her lastly, she was eighty.

WP: Just before she died.

VB: Mhm.

HP: Yeah, she was reall--,

WP: Terrible state really, weren't she?

HP: [inaudible].

VB: But then she was—

HP: [inaudible].

WP: She made several films, though, didn't she? Really. Apart from with him [referring to Fred Astaire].

HP: Well I didn't know till they said about her on there, last night, was it? That she married Lew Ayres!

VB: Did she?

HP: Yeah. Well that was one of my favourites. He was in... [pause 2 seconds] What was that?

WP: 'Quiet on the Western Front' [referring to *All Quiet on the Western Front*].

HP: *All Quiet on the Western Front*. And then he was in the doctors pictures. He used to be in Doctor Kildare [referring to nine films (1938-1942), beginning with *Young Dr Kildare*, in which Ayres played Kildare].

VB: Mhm.

HP: I didn't know that till they mentioned it last night. Never knew that. Well I didn't think she married.

VB: He was very good, wasn't he?

HP: Yeah. Very nice. [tape very faint; inaudible] Doctor Kildare [inaudible].

VB: And other people you mentioned were stars like Madeleine Carroll and--

HP: Yes, Madeleine Carroll. She was very ladylike.

WP: Yeah. But we didn't see her much, did we?

HP: We didn't see her a lot.

WP: She was British, weren't she?

HP: Yeah. British.

WP: Well I told you my favourites Sally Eilers and Madge Evans. They were my two favourites. [laughs] I was in the Madge Evans Fan Club, I was. That was before I was married. I was sort of star struck then, wasn't I?

HP: [inaudible] star-struck! [laughs]

WP: Had it all stuck up on the walls.

HP: That was what we used to do mostly. Go into town and see the films.

WP: But as I said before, I mean, the films books what come out then like the 'Picturegoer' and the 'Film Weekly', but you don't see that now, do you?

HP: Don't see them now.

WP: I mean in the 'Picturegoer', as I said before, that gave you all the pictures what were coming on and all the cast and everything. But nothing like that now.

HP: Unless there is but we don't take them anyway. I haven't noticed any.

WP: Well I don't think, well, the same interest isn't there now. Not with the younger generation, are they? I mean eh, in that type of cinema.

VB: Yeah.

WP: But even so, I mean we had six cinemas in Lowestoft and now, we went a long time without any, until they got this one, what's it called? Hollywood, is it?

HP: Hollywood, yeah.

WP: They've got that going now.

HP: [inaudible; voice very faint] Marina. They do films in between.

WP: But as I say, we had a lovely Odeon here.

HP: And then they took it down.

WP: It was a crime when they pulled it down. It was a beautiful place really.

VB: Yeah.

HP: Yeah.

WP: And just to put a Smiths paper shop on.

HP: Everybody was complaining. They even got a petition about it but they still took it down.

WP: Mhm.

WP: I've got a thingummybob in there, a video of MGM. Don't know if you've ever seen it, have you?

VB: E-erm.

WP: MGM studios.

VB: I haven't actually, no, no.

WP: Do you want to see a little bit of it?

VB: That would be nice, yeah. That would be good.

WP: Or did you want to...

VB: E-erm, well maybe we could...

HP: You haven't got a lot of time, have you?

VB: No.

WP: Well, that's up to you. I mean I could put it on if you want.

VB: E-erm, it would be nice actually.

HP: Well, you see it then. Yeah.

VB: Okay.

HP: Yeah, I'm thinking of you, you know, what time you got.

VB: Yeah.

VB: Maybe just a few minutes of it, just to see.

HP: [inaudible].

VB: 'Cause I was wondering as well if there were sort of particular qualities that appealed to you in a star. Eh, we mentioned the way Ginger Rogers looked and that.

HP: The way she danced, yes.

VB: Do you think the appearance, was that something that was important to you?

HP: Oh important, yes really. Yes.

VB: Yeah.

HP: [inaudible] you know like Hedi Lamarr. Thought she was lovely. And Margaret Lockwood.

VB: Yeah.

[Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer video 'When the Lion Roars' put on; inaudible; overtalking] [video begins with 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'. Patrick Stewart as narrator; film being world of adventure, music and romance. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, greatest studio ever known. MGM meant escape, extravagance, glamour, Garbo, Gable, Tracy, Harlow, Garland. When 'Singin' in the Rain' comes on HP laughs warmly; something about Debbie Reynolds still doing that dance and that she was on Pebble Mill yesterday.]

VB: He was married to someone. An actress, wasn't he? Irving Thalberg.

HP: Do you know? [to WP]

WP: What was that?

VB: Irving Thalberg, was he not married to one of the stars?

HP: He married one of the stars.

WP: Who?

HP: Irving,

WP: Lilian Gish?

HP: Lilian Gish.

VB: Someone as famous as that but I can't remember. I'm sure he was married to someone.

HP: Not Ethel Barrymore.

VB: It could've been actually.

HP: There were several Barrymores.

WP: John--

HP: John Barrymore, [Edward?] Barrymore, Lionel Barrymore.

VB: Was that something that interested you at the time? The wives of the stars?

HP: Oh yeah! We'd take a great interest in them. I mean we'd get the 'Picturegoer'. I mean it's all in there—

VB: Yeah.

HP: All about their lives and what they did.

[video continues in background]

WP: But as I say, even musicals, you only had to go to the cinema that night and you knew the song when you come out. Whistle it going home.

VB: Yeah.

HP: Well they were catchy tunes, weren't they?

WP: Yeah.

HP: Yeah.

WP: As I say, Dick Powell, he was my favourite singer really. I mean when he died I was sort of heartbroken more or less, you know.

VB: Mhm.

WP: You know. I don't know what it was but eh, songs he sang sort of went home to you, didn't they, sort of.

HP: You got a lot of his--

WP: Tapes, yeah.

HP: It wasn't just his singing and dancing, it was his whole act. You know.

VB: It's wonderful seeing that [video].

HP: Yeah.

VB: The way it looks and--

HP: Maureen O'Sullivan. That's Mia Farrow's mother.

VB: A-ah.

HP: She had seven children [inaudible].

[all watching video]

HP: Norma Shearer, she was a good actress. [inaudible; Fred?].

VB: Mhm.

[no conversation as watching video]

HP: [That was one of the earliest films I saw in colour?].

WP: [inaudible] each other.

[general laughter]

VB: No he isn't.

HP: [inaudible; video continuing in background].

VB: Did you like Jean Harlow?

HP: Yes, yes. She died young.

WP: Jean Harlow, yeah.

[watching video]

HP: The Blonde Bombshell, they called her. [inaudible] Ben Lyon. [inaudible]. Ben Lyon. [Air?] films.

WP: Oh yeah, yeah. He was an aircraft pilot, weren't he?

HP: He was married to Bebe Daniels.

WP: They couldn't make pictures like that now, could they? I mean the cost of it all and all the lovely dresses. [music from video in background] Joan Crawford. She was horrible to her children, wasn't she, in real life?

HP: Yeah.

[all watching video]

VB: Were you much interested in the sort of technical side of films? The directors and things like that?

HP: Well I was. [inaudible].

WP: Well no. It's much more advanced now than it was then, I mean the sort of camera--

VB: Yeah. It was more sort of actors.

WP: Whereas now they've got the videos now. Not so much the big films they did have.

VB: It's been really interesting actually just to look at this.

WP: Are you coming to Lowestoft anymore?

VB: Eh, I may be coming over again next year. But erm, at the moment I'm not quite sure.

WP: You can borrow the video if you want to see it. Have you got a recorder?

VB: Erm, well in Glasgow. Yes. That would be great. And then I could pop it in the post.

WP: Yeah. I've only put it on for your benefit now.

VB: That would lovely. Yes! I'd enjoy that.

WP: Well we can take it off now.

VB: That's very kind' cause I'd like to see it.

HP: You could perhaps take [a copy?].

WP: Well she can do, yeah.

HP: Yeah.

WP: You got the apparatus to do it with. You can ask questions now.

VB: Right.

WP: [laughs]

VB: [laughs] 'Cause it is interesting to see that.

HP: Yeah. Well they're all there more or less. Aren't they? All the old ones.

WP: That's the war on.

VB: So many of the stars as well.

HP: Yeah. There's all the stars there.

WP: What. I'm trying to get it off. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

WP: Got so many things, I keep pressing the wrong one. One for that and one for that.

VB: It's a nice set that.

HP: How long have we had that?

WP: Oh, four years now is it? They reduce it after three, don't they?

HP: Oh yeah. Sorry. [laughs] Doesn't seem four years. How time flies!

WP: [inaudible].

HP: What else do you want to ask?

VB: Well, questions occurred to me just watching that just now as well. I mean like stars like Greta Garbo.

HP: We-ell, she was a good actress, but she didn't appeal to me.

WP: Who? What Garbo?

HP: Greta Garbo. She was a good actress--

WP: Yeah.

HP: But she didn't appeal.

WP: Well she acted the part she was supposed to act, didn't she?

HP: She got very aloof.

WP: Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

HP: "I want to be alone," she used to say.

VB: I mean, did you, when you say she was sort of aloof, did you like stars that were more approachable?

HP: Yeah. I used to like erm, cute ones like... [pause 4 seconds]

WP: But when you're young you fall in love with them, didn't you?

HP: You did, you did.

WP: [laughs]

HP: I used to like Lew Ayres, didn't I? I used to go mad on him. Yeah, if he was on I'd be there like a shot.

VB: Yeah.

HP: He was the same. When you're young, you know. But now you think how daft it is.

WP: [laughs]

HP: [laughs]. We get carried away.

WP: I think you modelled yourself on them, you know.

HP: Yeah, you get carried away.

[pause 4 seconds]

WP: There ain't no cinemas anyway.

HP: [inaudible]

WP: Is there many in your area?

VB: Erm, certainly not as many as there were in the thirties.

WP: No, no.

VB: Nothing like.

HP: Do you go much?

VB: Erm, fairly regularly. Yeah. Not as much as...

HP: We used to go. It was reasonable then.

WP: Well as I said well, having six cinemas and you'd get two programmes that changed each week. That's all your life was really, wasn't it? Going to the pictures. 'Specially if you were courting.

VB: I mean what do you think made the films then so good?

HP: Well, that was the entertainment of the day.

WP: There weren't nothing else, was there, really?

HP: Not really.

WP: That was a long time before they opened up on a Sunday. In our days, a Sunday you'd be walking up and down the street. Well everybody would be out on a Sunday night.

HP: Not like it is today. You'd walk up the front, down the front, used to be.

WP: Up towards where you are, up to Pakefield. There was a big hospital there.

HP: That would be our routine on a Sunday. Used to walk right up to Pakefield.

WP: Right up the front.

HP: Up the front. Esplanade. And down. And then we'd come right up the main street and down. We used to do that all Sunday night.

WP: Trying to click. Trying to get off.

HP: Get off, you know.

WP: [laughs]

HP: But now you wouldn't see a soul.

WP: You wouldn't see a soul after tea now. But as I say, then when the cinemas opened on a Sunday, well, 'course there was somewhere to go then, on a Sunday night. But you used to go to church then, didn't we? Sundays. Sometimes.

HP: I did. When I was young. [inaudible; overtalking].

WP: [inaudible] inside the church. Yeah. But apart from that, that was all cinema in those days. It was cheap. Sixpence, ninepence, old pennies and six old pennies and whatever. As I told you before, we used to go to the Grand Cinema for an egg. On hospital night. Take an egg. Used to collect all these things for the hospital. But then eh, [pause 3 seconds] we sort of made without cinema. 'Course the war started then, sort of messed everything up, didn't it?

HP: [inaudible].

WP: But of all the cinemas in Lowestoft, there was five working cinemas, there weren't one hit. Only the Odeon--

HP: The Odeon.

WP: During the war. And eh, there were several Wrens [WRNS—Women's Royal Naval Service] were thrown on top of the roof there. 'Cause there was a big canteen opposite the Odeon. Where the Navy, 'course there was a naval base there during the war, wasn't there? And the Wrens and the sailors were opposite in the restaurant. And that got the direct hit.

VB: Oh dear.

WP: There were ever so many Wrens and sailors. [inaudible] Odeon roof. But then eh... [voice fades; inaudible].

HP: No we never would go to the pictures much during the war. 'Course then the children were young, you see. Last film we saw together was *The Guns of Navarone*.

WP: *The Guns of Navarone*.

HP: Oh I remember. That was at the Odeon, weren't it?

WP: Yeah. That was the last picture we ever saw. [laughs]

HP: That's going back a long while.

WP: But when I was in eh, Egypt, they had open, open air cinemas.

VB: Ah.

WP: They had wire eh, what you call baskets for seats. Made out of rushes, you know. And it was all open air. And 'course, all these seats were all fixed. And all the troops used to come in. Well, what a mess [laughs]--

VB: [laughs]

WP: Banana peel. Orange peel. Up to your blinking ankles in, you know. 'Cause they never used to clean them out. Tommy Shafto's they were called. Tommy Shafto's cinemas. Open air. You can imagine all the troops in there. [laughs] [inaudible].

VB: Ah dear.

HP: Want a cup a tea?

VB: Erm, that would be nice actually, yes.

WP: You got time, you got time.

VB: Thanks very much.

WP: It's only just across the road anyway.

VB: Yeah. Erm, but it's interesting seeing that film and—

HP: Yeah, that'll be a help.

WP: I did have, that's Part Two. I did have Part One but I think I used it, you know.

VB: Sure.

WP: Gone over it.

VB: Yeah.

WP: But eh, anything like that, I always tape it. Anything to do with, it's like on these cassettes too. I got all Dick Powell songs and all that.

VB: What was it about Dick Powell that...?

WP: I don't know. I can't understand it. Why. And I get a lump in my throat like. It's a funny sensation really. And they reckon he was killed through the, some sort of a bomb in America. They were demonstrating and they reckon two or three film stars got this and they died through it anyway.

VB: Yes.

WP: And eh, [pause 2 seconds], you know the songs what he sang were, they were all love songs anyway, like 'Are the Stars Out Tonight' and eh, 'By a Waterfall', and all them types of singing. And, well as I say, used to get you when you was young. Silly, I suppose, but. You know, when he sing now, I do, I get a lump in my throat. I got a record of his there too, you know. His picture on it. But eh, if anybody, like if anybody else sing I go, "Well, he can't sing it like Dick Powell." And eh, he's well known anyway, in those type of songs. And eh, what's the other one. 'Are the Stars Out Tonight?' and eh, 'By A Waterfall'.

VB: There weren't any other stars that made you feel like that?

WP: No. Not really. No. Not what I would want to go and see, you know. It was just a habit of going to the pictures. But if I knew Dick Powell was going to be, you'd see a trailer, I'd think, "Oh, Dick Powell's going to be on," you know, and all that. And I'd do my best to get round to see him. But even now, I mean I've got eh, cassettes. I mean, they're donkeys years old. But to me, he's great. [laughs]

VB: Yeah.

WP: Yeah. And eh, [pause 2 seconds] I say, you get carried away. I mean Ruby Keeler was in one of his films. She was married to Al Jolson, weren't she? And erm, who else was with him? Mostly he was with Ruby Keeler. She'd be tap dancing and eh... [pause 3 seconds] But as I say, I can't explain it really. [chuckles] So silly really, but eh, it's just one of those things. Crush on people and that's it. Yeah. Have you got any favourites?

VB: Erm. From the thirties stars? Eh--

WP: 'Course you'd be a different age to me. [pause 3 seconds] Any man favourites?

VB: Yeah. I, I must say I like Clark Gable.

WP: Yeah. Yeah.

VB: Yeah. Erm, and I quite like Ronald Colman as well. I think there's something about him.

WP: He's a great actor.

VB: Yeah.

WP: And I tell you another one I like who died, he wasted away. What was his name eh, he was British. Erm, David, eh--

VB: Oh.

WP: Oh, de, de, de, de, anyway.

VB: Oh not, David Niven?

WP: Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

WP: Yeah, he died, didn't he?

VB: Yeah.

WP: He wasted away. He was good actor too.

VB: Mhm.

WP: He was more or less comical, drama really,

VB: Yeah.

HP: [comes in with tea]. Take this.

WP: Yeah sure. Those books are more or less similar to the one I've got.

VB: They were, yes. That's what put me in mind of them.

WP: Same era. Same sort of age and that.

VB: Yeah.

[pause 11 seconds; tea being brought in]

WP: I don't know which is what. I never asked her.

VB: Right. [laughs]

WP: If there's any difference. Which is what? [to HP] Would you know? Take your pick, as they say.

VB: Thanks very much.

WP: Have a bickie [biscuit] if you want one. If not, leave them out. [laughs]

VB: Okay.

WP: Are we still rolling?

VB: Yeah. It was interesting when you were saying that, about erm, d'you think there was any difference between the films that were made in England-- [tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

HP: [inaudible].

WP: Well as I say, we had good stars.

VB: Mhm.

WP: But 'course they went where the money was in America, didn't they?

VB: Yes.

HP: Oh, did I spill that? [inaudible; muffled voice]

VB: No.

HP: See, I can't feel my fingers.

VB: Yeah.

HP: Sorry about that.

[pause 4 seconds]

VB: We were talking about some of these English stars like erm, Ronald Colman.

HP: Oh yeah! He was lovely.

VB: Yeah.

HP: He was nice, weren't they, Ronald Colman. I used to like him. He had a lovely voice.

VB: Yeah.

WP: There we are, love. All right?

VB: Ah. Thanks very much. I'll enjoy looking through that.

HP: [inaudible].

VB: That's right. Yeah.

WP: Well, no hurry because I say I've seen it, you know what I mean. But it's nice to keep.

VB: Yeah. Yes.

WP: You'll enjoy it.

VB: I'm sure I will, yes. I'll put it somewhere safe just now, so I don't forget it.

WP: If you can get a copy, well copy off it.

VB: Yes. I'll see if I can do that. That would be great.

WP: Why can't I have a cup of tea?

HP: [inaudible] It's up there, look.

WP: Oh yes. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

HP: [laughs]

VB: Ah. I mean one thing that I did want to ask was, it sounded obviously as if you had a lot of pleasure out of going to the pictures. Erm, how did it actually make you feel when you were there? How did you, how did you--

HP: Really great! You got carried away.

WP: Well, yes. That's what I was going to say. Eh, you're glued on the screen and eh--

HP: Yeah.

WP: That was it. I mean if you were together you didn't have no interest in each other. You were [laughs] glued on the screen.

HP: You were absorbed in it.

WP: Yeah.

HP: Like, you know.

VB: So even if you were going as part of your courting, when you were actually there, it was just...

HP: Yeah. You really enjoyed the films.

WP: I mean many a time you'd see the whole programme round again, wouldn't you?

HP: Yes, if it was really good.

WP: 'Cause they were all continuous programmes. I mean, used to go in at two o'clock, half past two till half past ten at night! [laughs] Sometimes you'd sit there and see it all round again, wouldn't you?

HP: Mhm.

WP: But eh, don't think they'd do it now. 'Specially if there was, like there used to be people queueing up, didn't they? Waiting for a seat.

HP: Waiting to get in, you'd to queue up. You don't see that now.

VB: No.

HP: Have a biscuit.

VB: I'm okay just now actually. Eh, so I mean how did you feel afterwards? If you were absorbed while you were in there?

HP: Well, if the film was exceptional--

WP: You'd probably want to go and see it again.

VB: Mhm.

HP: Some of them weren't so good.

WP: Well, there used to be an A picture and a B picture, you see. The big picture would be the A picture and the B picture, sometimes the B picture was better than the A picture which was the main picture. But...

HP: Well, they'd have a comedy on with the main feature. You know, like a comedy as well [and the news?].

WP: Sometimes there'd be a fill-in one, say like a little--

HP: Cartoon.

WP: Quarter of an hour, either a cartoon or perhaps a band--

HP: Yeah.

WP: Or a dance band, sort of. To make the programme, 'cause the programme used to last three hours, didn't they. Three hours.

HP: You'd have a three hour programme. But mostly the pictures took two hours.

WP: Yeah.

VB: Were there any films, or types of films or film stars that you weren't so keen on?

HP: Well, like erm, Noah Beery.

WP: What Noah Beery?

HP: He was rough and ready.

WP: He was a character actor, weren't he?

HP: And he was in sort of cowboy films. I didn't like cowboy films very much.

WP: Marie Dressler would be with him.

HP: Yeah.

WP: *Tugboat Annie*. What's it called? *Tugboat Annie*. That was the name of the film anyway.

HP: Yeah.

WP: She was skipper of the boat, weren't she?

HP: Yeah. Then there was *King Kong*, you know and eh--

WP: Yeah, well I wasn't.

HP: I didn't really like them. But I liked who was in it. I liked Fay Wray. She was in it. And eh... [pause 4 seconds] Well, and *Tarzan* pictures I didn't like.

VB: Ah.

WP: Yeah.

HP: They didn't appeal to me. But [inaudible].

WP: But Esther Williams, she was--

HP: That was good.

WP: That was, yeah, she was always swimming, weren't she?

HP: Always swimming. And then there was Sonja Henie on the skating.

WP: On the skating.

HP: Now that was good. I liked that.

WP: She was with Bing Crosby, weren't she? In eh... [pause 3 seconds] What was that called?

HP: 'Sun Valley' [possibly referring to *Sun Valley Serenade*].

VB: Would I be right, would I be right in saying that you preferred the more sort of glamorous films?

HP: Yes, yes.

WP: Yeah.

HP: I liked all that sort of thing.

WP: All the dresses and--

HP: [inaudible; voice very faint] glamour.

WP: But period pictures I didn't like much, you know.

VB: Mhm.

HP: No, I didn't.

WP: Like old kings years ago and all this.

VB: Ah.

WP: With the wigs and all that sort of thing. Knickerbocker trousers and that.

VB: Yeah.

WP: Well I wouldn't even have them on there [inaudible].

HP: 'The Four Musketeers'. I mean there was Douglas Fairbanks Junior in that [probably referring to *The Three Musketeers*, starring Douglas Fairbanks]. Erm, well that didn't appeal to me.

WP: What was that, what's his name what died? What used to be with, aw he was with eh, tch. Always in singing pictures, weren't he? Oh, what's his name?

HP: Not him what's in, [inaudible] in 'Dallas'?

WP: No, no. Trying to think. He was always in, always in eh, musicals. Not George Murphy. He was in musicals, weren't he?

HP: Gene Kelly?

WP: No. An oldish fella. Now he's just died. [pause 3 seconds] Didn't I say to you, what's his name on the telly? Can't think of his name.

VB: Not that, very tall, blonde man.

WP: Eh--

VB: [laughs]

HP: [laughs] I can't think of his name.

[pause 3 seconds]

WP: Just trying to think.

HP: Eh...

WP: He was with Alice Faye a lot too.

HP: Oh yeah. Don Ameche.

WP: Don Ameche.

VB: Mhm.

HP: Don Ameche. Tyrone Power.

VB: Oh yes.

HP: He was a nice one. Died young. Yeah.

WP: Yeah, Don Ameche. He used to be the outside man.

HP: Yes, he did. The other one got the girl.

WP: Other one got the girl. Don Ameche.

HP: That's right. We seen him recently.

WP: Yeah. But he's just died now, hasn't he? Good age.

HP: Nearly eighty. [You're nearly eighty?]

WP: Eighty in April.

HP: Yeah, I'll be seventy-eight.

[everyone laughs]

HP: They're all getting that way. Aren't they?

WP: Done well to get as far as we have, haven't we?

[pause 6 seconds]

WP: What was the other one? Nat? Nat, Nat somebody. He used to always lose the girl. He used to have the girl first and then lose her.

VB: [laughs]

HP: [laughs]

[pause 4 seconds]

WP: Good days, they were.

HP: Yeah.

WP: They'd never be like that anymore. Tell you another one. Richard Barthelmess.

HP: Oh yes.

WP: He had a wooden leg, didn't he?

HP: Not him. That was Herbert Marshall.

WP: Herbert Marshall, that's right. Yeah, he had a wooden. Never used to see him walking, did you? Always, always--

HP: Yeah. Never used to [inaudible], 'cause he had this wooden leg.

WP: Always his top half you used to see, but never, never his leg.

HP: Herbert Marshall.

WP: Herbert Marshall.

HP: [inaudible]

WP: Richard Barthelmess.

HP: Ramon Novarro.

[pause 4 seconds]

WP: Yeah, good days.

HP: [laughs]

VB: Who do you think were amongst the best of the male stars? We mentioned Dick Powell.

HP: Clark Gable.

VB: Clark Gable.

WP: Well, course, Jimmy Stewart.

HP: James Stewart.

WP: He was all right.

HP: Gary Cooper. Erm... [pause 3 seconds]

WP: James Stewart was better as he got older, weren't he?

HP: Yeah. Talked so slow, didn't he? And Ronald Colman I thought was nice. British.

WP: Yeah.

VB: You were saying that you liked his voice and the way--

HP: Oh, he had a lovely voice!

VB: Yeah.

WP: Mhm.

VB: What was it about Clark Gable that eh--

HP: His personality.

WP: I liked his voice.

HP: Carole Lombard.

WP: Carole Lombard.

HP: But she got killed in a plane crash. But he did marry again later. And he had a child but he died.

[inaudible; overtalking]

WP: But he always thought a lot of Carole Lombard.

HP: Ye-es. That was his life, love of his life, really. Carole Lombard was. She had a scar.

WP: Always had a scar on her face, yeah. Because she'd been in a motor accident, you know. The other one what killed, what got killed in a motor accident.

HP: That was Jayne Mansfield.

WP: Jayne Mansfield.

HP: Chopped her head, you know.

WP: Her head got cut off.

HP: Yeah. She was a pin-up like, you know... [voice fades; inaudible] Same as Jean Harlow.

WP: Then there was Clara Bow.

HP: Clara Bow was the It Girl. What they called the It Girl.

WP: And Ann Sheridan, she was the Oomph Girl.

HP: She was another one. You know, quite attractive. And Barbara Stanwyck. I used to like her voice.

WP: I didn't like her.

HP: You didn't like her, but I did.

VB: It's interesting. So you had sort of different tastes.

HP: Oh yes. Yes.

VB: Ever any arguments about what film to see or anything?

WP: Not really. I mean... [pause 3 seconds] No. Well actually, never really arranged to go to the pictures together.

VB: Mhm.

WP: Just met in the pictures, didn't we?

HP: It's where we more or less met really. The pictures. As I say, when I started work I was fourteen and he was sixteen. He was an errand boy at the time and I was learning to mend nets.

WP: Herring nets. [laughs]

HP: And that was how we met. Through him coming along the road on his bike and me I got to go next door to chop some wood to light a fire. And I couldn't open the door. And he come past and I said to you, "Could you turn the key for me?" And 'course, that's how we met. And then he used to wait for me up the top of the [store?] and he'd have his 'Picturegoer' and I'd have my weekly, or some film weekly and we'd exchange them and eh, that's how--

WP: But going back to the walking up and down the promenade, she would always be with a gang of boys!

VB: [laughs]

WP: And girls. And girls. Like, you know, and eh, as I said, you were walking up and down, walking up and down. And eh, I saw her and got more or less [friendly with her?]. Not really, you know, just kids. And I walked home with her. Now, from that, from that, [laughs] one day when I took her home. One day when I took her home, bit late. Must've been ten o'clock. That's late. Her father say, what did he say?

HP: [inaudible; drowned out by laughter]

WP: [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

WP: I was only fifteen. [inaudible; overtalking]

HP: My father was strict.

VB: Ah.

WP: And then again, funny enough, her father and my father were fishermen. Not knowing each other, well they knew each other but I didn't know that they knew each other. Her father and my father. And eh, they were both in the same ship during the war, in the drifter. The minesweeping. And they got blown up together like. Or the ship went up, out the water and come down. They weren't hurt or nothing. But they were, that was a bit of a coincidence, weren't it?

VB: It is, yeah.

WP: They were together. And then I was going to see the daughter. [inaudible]. Mind you we had fights and fallings out, yeah. The night she got second to Miss Lowestoft I was over at [Eaglescliffe] with her brother. You know, over at a sort of dance place out in the country, weren't I?

HP: Yeah.

WP: Yeah. Tuppenny half. Threepenny half.

HP: [laughs]

WP: She come second that night. Did you telephone? I knew.

HP: [laughs]

WP: So that was another row.

VB: [laughs]

WP: But we always used to fall out, didn't we? Fall out, fall in.

HP: [says something about engagement]

WP: [laughs] Yeah.

HP: We always got back together.

VB: Yeah.

HP: Everybody knew. "They've fell out again." [laughs]

VB: It obviously didn't do you any harm in the long run.

HP: No. I mean fifty-five years we've been married. We've had our Golden Wedding and we've had our Emerald Wedding.

WP: The next one'll be from the Queen I should imagine.

VB: Mhm.

WP: What's the time dear? Don't let us keep you. Look--

VB: Mhm.

HP: Quarter past.

WP: You got another ten minutes yet anyway.

VB: Yeah.

HP: That's quite a walk. Now, do you know that way?

VB: Erm.

WP: She's going to get the bus.

VB: Yeah.

HP: If you do miss that bus, keep walking and you'll get one in the main road, perhaps.

VB: Ah.

HP: If you do miss it, I'm saying. [inaudible]

VB: Well I'll maybe give it a couple of minutes just in case it comes early.

HP: Yeah. [inaudible]

VB: Well, I've got extra things. [laughs]

WP: You've got our love life anyway.

VB: Yes. That's right. [laughs]

WP: [laughs]

HP: [laughs] [Will you type it all out?]

VB: **Erm, well what will probably happen is, eh, we've got a secretary who transcribes them.**

HP: Oh, I see.

VB: **And types it all up. Erm, so if you like, I could send you a copy of that.**

HP: Ooh, yes, that'd be nice.

VB: **It'll probably be a while before it gets done.**

HP: Oh yes.

WP: Yes.

VB: **Got a bit of a backlog but...**

HP: Yeah, that'd be nice. Yeah.

VB: **If you'd like to see that, there'd be no problem.**

HP: Yeah. Great.

WP: I told you I did one for the blind, didn't I?

VB: **You were saying that. Yes.**

HP: Yeah. He's got to come again. Yeah. It's interesting for other people.

VB: **Very much so.**

HP: And it's for a good cause too.

VB: **Brings things much more to life I think as well.**

HP: Yes.

VB: **If it was, say, to write it down.**

HP: That's right.

VB: I mean looking back, you told me about a lot of sort of entertainment things that you did. Erm, not just going to the pictures. I mean how would you place the pictures among things like going for walks erm...

WP: Like the confetti fight on the pier.

VB: That sort of thing.

WP: [laughs]

WP: Yeah, there used to be a dance on the pier, on the South Pier. There used to be good bands come to that, didn't they?

HP: Yes, a lot of good bands.

WP: Say at the Carnival day or it would be in aid of the hospital. Fete day, sort of thing.

HP: Yeah. Which I was on, wasn't I? When I won the second--

WP: Second Miss Lowestoft.

HP: I had to be on a stage with Miss Lowestoft and the other one what come third.

VB: Mhm.

HP: And we had to stand on this stage, that was a hospital fete. And we had a tray each in our hand. And everybody--

WP: Shilling a kiss.

HP: Had to pay a shilling for a kiss.

VB: [laughs]

WP: [laughs]

HP: And all the proceeds went to the hospital. Yeah. And I had a crinoline on. A pink crinoline dress and then long drawers, you know. And a pink bonnet, didn't I?

WP: Mhm.

HP: Yeah. Then they'd have a confetti fight in the evening.

WP: All the boys would go on the end of the pier and put confetti down the girls' necks.

HP: And the boys used to get hold of the girls and shake them up and down with, and put confetti down their necks--

WP: [laughs]

HP: And all that. When you went home it'd be all over your mother's floor, you know. [laughs]

WP: And your mother would know what you'd got up to. Good fun though. It's only fun.

VB: It sounds lovely actually.

HP: Yeah, you know, really good.

WP: I mean what children know today, you wouldn't dream of knowing about, you know. It wouldn't enter your head, would it?

HP: Well, you didn't know nothing.

WP: When you see it all on the television and all that. Wouldn't have entered your head, would it? I mean, many a time if we were arm in arm, I've seen my mother took me arm out, you know. Things like that.

HP: Yeah. They used to be very strict.

WP: [mumbles something; inaudible]

HP: [voice very faint; inaudible] Broad-minded, more broad-minded today.

WP: Well I think too much.

HP: Yeah.

WP: But there you are. That's how it goes.

VB: D'you think you learned much about erm, you know, places like America and different ways of life from the films?

HP: Well yes, you do, don't you, really. Well they're more, what would you say? More flashy than we are.

WP: Well they are. They're more, they're straight to the point. I mean if they want to take you home they say, "Right. Come on," sort of thing, "Home."

VB: Mhm.

WP: But I mean, Englishman would take a long while to make up his mind whether he dare ask or, you know. But eh, you see it on films on eh. Well they used to say about the Yanks.

HP: They got more cheek.

WP: Yeah.

HP: More cheek than the English people.

WP: But I mean, during the war they had more money than what the English soldiers had.

HP: Yeah. They would meet the girls where they were stationed. Buy them nylons and all that, and chocolate.

WP: But I mean, you can tell by the number of girls what married Americans, can't you--

HP: Mhm.

WP: And went to America.

HP: But a lot of them came home again 'cause when they got out there, lot of them were only living in like wooden--

WP: Shacks.

HP: Shacks.

WP: Yeah.

HP: We know a girl what went out there and when she found out how she'd got to live, well she come...

WP: [inaudible]

VB: 'Course, there must've been a lot of servicemen stationed around.

HP: Yes. There was. In aerodromes near this area.

WP: All in the Norwich area.

HP: [inaudible]. That area. I never--

WP: Several, several aerodromes out in Norwich.

HP: But they nearly all fell, you see. This was a naval base.

WP: A lot of your types [overtalking] used came down here 'cause they were all fishermen. Scots fishermen used to come down here and were called up here because it was the main naval base.

HP: Yeah. A lot of them from your area came this way.

WP: Yeah.

HP: And some went [inaudible], didn't they?

WP: Oh yeah.

HP: Russ Conway.

VB: Really?

HP: He was stationed here. Yeah, and Jim Callaghan.

WP: He was here. Jim Callaghan was here. And Russ Conway what played the piano. He was here too. Yeah.

HP: He used to have shows at Sparrows Nest [Park].

WP: Blue Mariner's dance band.

HP: Blue Mariner's dance band.

WP: Elsie and Doris Waters were here. When they first took the Sparrows Nest over for the naval base. They kicked them out. Tell them to go home. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

WP: Yeah.

[pause 5 seconds]

VB: Well I think I should may--

WP: I think you'd better go. Don't want you to miss that bus.

VB: Rush in case I miss that bus.

HP: Yeah.

WP: Get a chance to read your book.

VB: Well if I do get a chance to come down again-- [tape cuts out]

[End of Interview]