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Dear Valentina Bold,

I am attaching your questionnaire. I am sorry it has taken me so long to reply - I misplaced it!

Age when first visited cinema - 4 years - summer of 1939 - Snowwhite.

Regularity of attendance - during the war - 1940-45 I attended the Saturday Cinema Club at the Odeon - Hopalong Cassidy, cartoons etc. I went with my mother if the film was suitable for a child - Bambi, Song of The South. We were taken by our School to see Hamlet, Henry V in the late 40's. I started to attend the cinema regularly after the war - when I was already 11. I lived in Worthing, W. Sussex. ( a small seaside town.) There were 4 cinemas then:

- Plaza - programmes from Sunday to Saturday; Odeon - Thursday to Wednesday; Rivoli- changed twice a week
- Dome - Sunday to Saturday usually - the local "fleapit".

Plaza and Odeon showed mainstream releases; Rivoli was privately owned, and showed old films and less popular releases - mostly Republic films (westerns etc). The Dome was the dregs - terrible old movies - later on, however, it was cleaned up, started showing continental films of some quality. While at school I was only allowed to go once a week. After I left school (1950) I was able to go as often as my parents (and money) allowed.

Favourite cinemas - Plaza and the Odeon - clean, comfortable seats, good views everywhere in the house. The Rivoli wasn't bad, but the cheapest seats were in a dip which rose up to the screen, you could crick your neck watching!

Companions - originally my mother (after 1945 - my father sometimes too) After 1951 - girl/boy friends or alone.

Favourite stars/films - I can't remember any one particularly from this time. I was never a fan of individual actors, did not bother with autographs or film clubs, photographs etc.

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Film magazines - my mother would buy these - Picturegoer, Film Show, Picture Show etc. I would like to read the reviews etc. but never much cared about the "gossip" or what Joan Crawford was wearing this week!

Other activities - charity work through the church, Girl Guides etc. I also belonged to a local drama group. I liked music and would go to concerts and the local theatre - the Connaught.

Cinema attraction?- there was very little else to do after the war, especially for young people in a small town. As a family, we would listen to the radio and I was an avid reader. As an only child, I was used to entertaining myself and I had a vivid imagination; the cinema was one place I could lose myself for a while.

Some memories that might be interesting - in 1945, just after the end of the war my father (who had come home in July 1945 from the Middle East), insisted that I saw the newsreels from Belsen, Auschwitz etc. I was only 10 and my mother was appalled, but Dad said that I must see it, so that I would never forget the evil of fascism and racism. He was right, to this day, I still see those images. I remember Bambi's mother's voice - "run Bambi run" from the fire that engulfed the forest, and I can recall the scene of Miss Havisham going up in flames in Great Expectations (1946). The power of these images are still intense, even after 50 years.

I do not think I was ever especially impressionable, and believe that my experience shows how very powerful film (and now T.V.) can be. That is why the scenes today - violence, gratuitous sex, which seem to infest every film one sees are so dangerous to the young. These images can desensitize young minds to the horrors of the realities. I hardly ever go to the cinema now.

I hope this is not too long for you. I have tried to limit my recall to the 1940's. With best wishes for your work.

Yours sincerely,

Betty Cooper

Betty Cooper.

Favourite space/lines - I can't remember any one particularly from this time. I use never a fan of individual actors, but partner with any group of film stars, programmes etc.  
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