

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, 22 November 1994: Valentina Bold interviews Mary McCusker

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/Standardised by Annette Kuhn and Sarah Neely

* MM = Mary McCusker/ VB = Valentina Bold

* Notes: First interview with Mary McCusker (audio and transcription unavailable for second interview, which took place on 13 December 1994); 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 details.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

VB: That would be great. I mean, another thing that I was wanting to ask you before we actually started talking was erm, for the project, we're keeping a record of everyone that we talk to. Just so that we know your date of birth--

MM: Uhuh.

VB: That sort of thing. Would you mind if I asked you a couple of questions?

MM: Oh, no.

VB: Right. [laughs] Eh, first of all, erm, is that your full name, Mary McCusker?

MM: [Put it on?] that table there—

VB: That's great, thanks. This is a lovely table.

MM: [Wee bin every day?].

VB: Is that, is that your full name?

MM: Yes. Just Mary McCusker.

VB: And what was your maiden name?

MM: Mary McCabe.

VB: Right. And what's your date of birth?

MM: The [date redacted], 1916.

VB: Right.

MM: At ten past four in the day. [laughs]

VB: That's amazing. [laughs] That exact. And was it Glasgow you were born in then?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

VB: Yes. In the Gorbals or--

MM: In Cumberland Street.

VB: Cumberland Street.

MM: In the heart of the Gorbals.

VB: Yeah. And what was it your father did?

MM: My father was a barman. And then when we moved he moved into the eh, the furnaces. A furnace worker as well after that, when we moved.

VB: Right. And how about your mother? Did she work?

MM: My mother never worked. No, no.

VB: Right.

MM: They were both Irish.

VB: Really?

MM: Uhuh. And she never worked.

VB: Of course, a lot of people in the Gorbals were Irish, weren't they?

MM: They were. Yes. That was like a wee ghetto, you know.

VB: Yeah.

MM: Highland people, they went to Partick.

VB: Yes.

MM: You know. But eh, oh tremendous families there. Wonderful families. But, och, you wouldn't know it now. I mean, I went back oh, how long ago? One Sunday about four or five years ago, I said I'm going to walk from here and find out what it's like, this town, changing and whatnot. And here I was standing in Crown Street and this girl said to me, "Are you looking for somebody?" And it was these lovely buildings. And I said to her, "Why are these all empty?" And she said, "They were never built for this climate. They were built for Spanish and the, eh, weather [inaudible]." Beautiful houses. So they were brought down, I don't know. So what else, my dear, do you want to know?

VB: Eh, how many sisters and brothers did you have?

MM: I was an only child.

VB: An only child. And what schools did you go to?

MM: I went first of all to St Francis Primary. And then onto the next. Then I went to Our Lady and St Francis School in Charlotte Street for secondary school. [pause 4 seconds] I finished there at fourteen. I would have loved to have gone on to continue my education, but it wasn't possible financially. At that time, wanting to pay for books and everything. That's how, any young people, I say, make the most of your education. It's everything because when you used to pay for everything, well, you know I was an only one and still couldn't afford to educate me. That meant uniform, it meant everything, you know. Everything had to be paid for then. But eh, children now, if they could only realise that they've got a great world. To make something of themselves, you know. So, what else now?

VB: Erm, have you worked yourself?

MM: Yeah.

VB: What was it that you--

MM: Oh! What did I work at now? Started off as a [pause 2 seconds] cashier in a grocery firm. [pause 6 seconds] That was from when I was fourteen to I was eighteen. [pause 4 seconds] And from when I was eighteen until I was twenty-one, I was in charge of a shop, of a grocer's shop. Eh, same firm. How many of a staff? Eh, one, two, three, four during the week. And extra weekend hands. That would be six or five. Eh, that was all. I was married at twenty-two.

VB: That would be?

MM: 1939 I was married.

VB: Yeah.

MM: [date redacted].

VB: And, do you have, obviously you've got a son. Erm, do you have other children?

MM: No. One son. One son.

VB: Right.

MM: Right now, he, he resents it very much. He's fifty. And I watched him cross the street there with a wee bald patch on his head, which you daren't mention! [laughs] Huh! Anyway, he's enough worries.

VB: And what was it your husband did?

MM: Well! Eh, my husband was a bricklayer. [pause 4 seconds] He was twenty-four [working out dates], he was twenty-four when we got married. Eh, is there anything else you want to know about him?

VB: Erm--

MM: No.

VB: If you like. I mean really it's just to get an idea of, you know, the sort of work that you've done and your husband's done. Erm--

MM: Well he worked away, he worked with the Electricity Board and he died when he was sixty-four.

VB: Right.

MM: Erm... [pause 4 seconds]

VB: And whereabouts have you lived? Has it always been in Glasgow?

MM: Oh! Well now. That's us in Cumberland Street. I lived there until I was twelve years of age

VB: Right.

MM: Moved from there up to Possilpark till I was twenty-two. So that was ten years till I was married. Well I was thirteen years in Townhead. Got a new house up in Milton. And I was twenty-nine years there. When my husband died this wee house was offered to me, erm, and I've been fifteen years here.

VB: Right. And erm, were you raised as a Catholic then?

MM: Yes. Yes.

VB: Yes.

MM: And my husband too.

VB: Yes.

MM: He was a Catholic as well.

VB: What about erm, do you have any strong political beliefs or have you ever been involved in a political party or anything like that?

MM: I've always used my vote.

VB: Yes.

MM: I sometimes wish I could walk into the House of Co... [laughs] and lay down my pension and say, "Have any of you any idea of how it is to live on sixty-six pound and five pence a week?" You know what I mean?

VB: Yeah.

MM: Mrs, the day that she came to Glasgow, she'll never know how near she was to getting my pension book. "You're supposed to be our **teacher**." However. Erm, no I erm, I'm not attached to anything but I've always all my life voted Labour. Because, eh, why is that now? You're brought up in an environment like, with a lot a poverty around. I didn't have terrible poverty. I was lucky. Because on our tenement there was umpteen children and of course anything that I was finished with had only to be handed one stair down where there was children. And of course I was warned. "If I hear you mention that thing belongs to you!" whether it was a dress or shoes or whatever, whatever, you know.

VB: [laughs]

MM: A very wise mother like that, you know. She was. I used to look and say, "That's my dress, you know." But I daren't mention it. [laughs] Is there anything else now you want to know?

VB: Erm, that's the form that we need to have signed. The other thing is erm, if you'd mind the tape that we're recording just now erm, being kept in the University. I've had it on. [laughs] I'll just leave it on while we're talking. Erm, if you would mind it being kept in the University and then, say in the future, someone else is working about cinema. If they could erm, maybe listen to it.

MM: Oh, not at all! I only hope that eh--

VB: [inaudible; see?]-

MM: I only hope it's erm, of some interest to somebody.

VB: Yeah.

MM: Me rattling on here! [laughs]

VB: I'm sure. I mean having read the book, I saw the letter that you wrote to Annette. I'm dying to ask you lots of questions but, eh, if you don't mind that, would you mind signing a form to say so. Because this is really just to keep everything straight. It's this bit here please. That would be great. And then if you decide later on that you'd rather it wasn't kept--

MM: Oh! I don't mind.

VB: That wouldn't be a problem either.

[signing of form; pause 5 seconds]

MM: Not at all! My goodness.

VB: Thanks very much. That's us. Erm, I mean, as I say, I was really interested by what you were saying about being brought up in the Gorbals and going to the cinema there. I mean you mentioned cinemas like the Paragon.

MM: That's right.

VB: What was that like?

MM: The Paragon was the local cinema in Cumberland Street. Eh, oh a wee, what would you say? A wee fleapit sort of style. Oh, nowadays. Eh, penny matinee on a Saturday. And I can remember, eh, this particular film, *Dr Fu Manchu* [possibly referring to *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu*]. And that night I came home and had a nightmare about Dr Fu Manchu. The Chinese man, with the big long nail. And my mother vowed, that was the last picture I was ever to see. I was never to get back again. Both of them were up all night with me with this nightmare of Dr Fu Manchu. I could see him walking through the kitchen. [laughing] Shows you. And then we had another cinema. Eh, the Crown picture house in Crown Street. We went there on a Saturday morning, eh, the matinee. And if you went upstairs you got an American coloured comic. A wee sheet. If you went downstairs, [pause 2 seconds] upstairs was tuppence and if you went downstairs, it was a penny downstairs. And you didn't get a comic. That I can remember. And eh, oh of course, when you came home you exchanged, you know, the comic and whatnot. Eh, then there was a beautiful cinema opened out in Caledonia Road [referring to the Ritz Cinema]. Oh, it was a beautiful cinema. It was new to us, you know. But oh! Pricey! You know what I mean. In our standards, you know. So that was up to I was twelve. That was the cinemas that I went to. Never went to any of them in the town of course. When I moved, eh, there was a cinema in Saracen Street. Possilpark cinema. Then the new Astoria, as we called it, opened. And I can remember the first musical that I saw in it. In black and white, was

the *Viennese Nights*. Oh! It was lovely. And I think Alexander Knox [referring to Alexander Grey] and Vivienne Segal, were the stars of it. And that was something new to us. Erm, then the Roxy in Maryhill opened. Again more modernised. Oh we were on the beautiful seats and everything, you know. But that was quite a wee bit far to travel. We'd to take a tram from Possilpark right away round to Maryhill, you know. And then get up to the cinema. But oh! It was worth it! It was beautiful! Erm, what other cinemas opened? Oh and then, of course, eh, furthest down eh, Maryhill Road, there was the Blythswood. The Seamore. The Cambridge, along Cambridge Street here. And these were picture halls that we went to, my husband and I, from Townhead, if there was a really good picture on. Some of them were, oh epics, you know. And one picture, I often seen black and white when I was being brought up there one I often think, who could I write to to ask them to bring back this one? Uhuh. Barbara Stanwyck in a picture called *So Big*. Marvellous, marvellous. Stories. Could be remakes, you know, if they only had the sense to remake them. Ah! Then, I can remember going to the Coliseum to see *The Singing Fool*, Al Jolson thing. Yeah. And that was the first talkie of course, here. And, oh when the talkies came in of course, you would never go and see anything else, you know. That was really something. And as the time went on oh, classics like *How the West Was Won* and different things. Great Pictures. Great, great pictures. And I think one of the wonders, to me, modern wonders at that time, was really coloured pictures. You know, they brought a new world to you. And again, going back again, Betty Grable and what was the other girl, June something? [referring to June Haver] Oh, they appeared in *The Dolly Sisters*. And it was a coloured film. Oh! The clothes in it were oh, lovely. And being young, you know, you're saying, "Oh!" So, I was growing out of this coat. And eh, my mother thought she'd be very practical. And they had come out in this picture with beautiful pale-blue coats with fur. Grey fur muffs, grey fur hats and a big band of grey fur on the bottom of their coat. So here I had this wine-coloured coat and it had black fur on the collar, black fur on the cuffs. And my mother thought, practically, to get another month or two out of the coat, she would buy black fur and put it on the bottom. And I felt like, whoa! [claps and laughs] Whole cheese, right enough! [inaudible]. Felt good!

VB: [laughs]

MM: Ah! And then as I say, after I got married, eh, in Townhead. That was, we went to live in Townhead for thirteen years. And the picture houses there were the Carlton. And the Casino. And then away out Alexandra Parade. Och! My goodness. The Marne. The Marne picture house, wasn't it? Uhuh. And oh dear me, I don't know! We could go on out. You'd no shortage, you know, and for a reasonable price. And right now, my heart goes out to young people coming into the town,

between bus fare and one thing and another. I don't know how they manage to afford it. I really don't. I really don't. Erm, now is there anything else you want to...

VB: Well I mean just carrying on from what you're saying just now. I mean it sounds like, when you were in the Gorbals there was a lot of cinemas--

MM: Oh yes!

VB: Close by.

MM: The BB Cinerama, the BB Cinerama was away up Butterbiggins Road way. Och! There was cinemas. You could walk to them all.

VB: Yeah.

MM: No problem. Erm...

VB: You said that one, the first one you mentioned, the Paragon was like a fleapit. I mean what was it like inside?

MM: It was a huge, like a converted church. But to us it was a palace.

VB: [laughs]

MM: We didn't look to see the old wooden seats or anything. We were only gawking up at the screen, [laughs] you know. As children.

VB: How old were you when you first... I mean that was the first picture you remembered, the Fu Man Chu one.

MM: Yes. It's a long time,

VB: Was it? How old would you have been then?

MM: [pause 3 seconds] I might have been about eight year old.

VB: About eight.

MM: Uhuh.

VB: I was wondering was it, was it the flicks that you called it? Or the, yeah--

[MM moves away to get something; pause 6 seconds]

MM: Do you want me to recite that for that?

VB: Aye, if you like. That'd be great.

MM: "Decayed and falling down, marble steps which used to gleam. Chromium handles on the door. And a man with silver buttons paced up and down the floor. He glanced out at our faces, huddled in the cold. 'Oh Mister, gonny let us in?' the big ones yelled and bawled. He checks his watch against the hour, five minutes more to go. Those eyes begin to glower, he'll stand soon in a corner, protected from our feet, as everyone goes pushing by to get a good front seat. Shouting and shoving and trips to the john, warnings to stop our carrying on. Lights are dimmed and the silence reigned, our world and all its colours change. Every shade in the rainbow's hue, brilliant orange to a deepening blue. Curtains of satin slide along, oh, who's on first? Popeye? Or Anna May Wong? Halfway through we suffer the news, not interested in adults or their views. Except the ships just launched on the Clyde, with a picture house and a swimming pool inside. On with the show, Mickey Mouse! Then Peter Lorre in the haunted house. So friends with this serial nearing its end, the Lone Ranger has only one bullet to spend. We argue a bit going up the road. 'An who's got money for chips?' And discuss the heroes we left behind. Till we see them next week, at the flicks."

VB: [laughs]

MM: Whoever's listening to that in posterity will be saying... [laughs]

VB: [laughs] Not at all. Not at all.

MM: No.

VB: I mean is that what it was like, I mean, for you as a child?

MM: Oh dear! That was the highlight of your week. A penny! My goodness. Children erm, where there was more children, they were grateful if a neighbour gave them a jam jar to go for a halfpenny over to the grocer's. And then somebody else, you know, would give them another halfpenny and that would get them to the movies, you know. No handing out of pounds then. [laughs] But eh, and if you know, if you went a message [errand] for a neighbour, no way were you allowed to take money off some poor old soul that couldn't get out, you know. But erm, there were bad times. But there were good times. Lot of good people come out of it [right?], you know, and sensible. Erm, wonderful, wonderful families. I was at school with a girl, and she was one of five. And she sat next to me and when any problems were put up on the board, eh, she would just take one glance at the board, and the next thing she would sit back with her arms folded as we had to do then to let the teacher know we were finished. And everybody else would be sitting chewing on their pencil. Do you know that that girl went on to work in a wee draper's shop and sold ribbon and wee bits of lace. Oh! Terrible waste of a brain! You know but, however. She certainly had a brain, [but that as I say?]. But eh, [pause 3 seconds] what else was I going to tell you?

VB: Did you go every week? Or is was it more than that?

MM: Oh yes. Oh eh, on no. Oh! Once a week! Oh! You were lucky to get. [laughs] You were really rich if you got once a week. That was really, really rich. Now eh, what was it we were going to go and see, my sister-in-law and I were going to go, *Forrest Gump*. Nearly died when I saw the price of the thingummy down there in the Odeon! Oh! For goodness sake! And no, no concessions! No concessions at all!

VB: That's terrible.

MM: So eh, *Forrest Gump* didn't have the pleasure of my company then.

VB: [laughs]

MM: We parted, [laughs] friends but...

VB: Oh.

MM: No way, you know.

VB: Can I ask if your, if your parents went to the pictures at all?

MM: Oh. My father and mother only saw one picture in their lifetime. And it was *The Quiet Man*. Eh, now, Victor McLaglen and Maureen O'Hara. And John Wayne was in that picture. And they were like two wee children in that place. Looking up at that. And that was, when was that showing? Up in Possil in the Mecca, which is again, now a bingo hall. And erm, and they thought it was the most wonderful thing to see coloured things, you know. [laughs] And only it was that, they would never have went, you know.

VB: You mentioned as well about erm, seeing that Al Jolson picture when the talkies came out.

MM: Yeah.

VB: What did you feel like seeing?

MM: A miracle, a miracle had happened. A miracle had happened. You know, to go and see it. Before that you looked at the screen and you looked at the, what do you call it now? Lettering underneath. And to see them actually speaking as the action was taking place was, well, to us, a modern wonder of the world. At that time, [laughs] you know. To see it. Now erm, I had a couple in here one night and they brought down a video to show me. They had been away at a function. I was supposed to go but I couldn't go. I was ill. And my brother says, but I don't have a video thing, you know, a recording thing. Then they brought down this camcorder with some new gadget. And they showed it to me, and I'm sitting quite the thing and I'm looking at it and then suddenly, you know, it finished up and we were all talking. And I'm looking over at this thing and says to myself, "I know that face." It was me! [laughs] It had my plants and everything. I couldn't figure it out!

VB: [laughs]

MM: I've a lot to learn about this electronic age! [laughs] And I was in a company on Sunday night and a child of three was working this – oh - computer game! And I'm watching him. And he could work things and I wouldn't go near it. In case I'd do some harm to it. So! Again I've a lot to learn.

VB: I mean you mentioned there as well, seeing the first colour films. Was that--

MM: Oh! First colour films. Oh! Dear, dear, dear, dear. And the first great big wide screen. What do you call it? The, the, it's not the 3D effect. Oh, what do you, oh, CinemaScope!

VB: Yes.

MM: We went to see that eh, in the Coliseum which is now a bingo hall as well! And erm, oh, my goodness! We were sitting quite the thing. And suddenly the opening scene of it is... [pause 3 seconds] On the left-hand side of the CinemaScope screen is an Indian sitting on a white horse, looking down on a valley. And we were amazed at the size of this thing. You know. But you know what I'd love to live, see, is the 3D. I don't know if it'll ever come in in my lifetime. Well hardly, [laughs] I don't think. But that would be really something.

VB: Yeah.

MM: You know, I don't know if they will ever manage to do it.

VB: Did you ever see any of these erm, I don't know what they're called, but things that make the screen look like 3D or like a wee--

MM: No, special--

VB: Pair of glasses or something. Someone was telling me about it.

MM: No. No, I've never seen them.

VB: I wondered if you'd seen them before.

MM: No. I've never seen them.

VB: Yeah.

MM: No.

VB: Just like a wee, I suppose, just plastic, paper or something.

MM: That causes you to see the 3D?

VB: Yeah.

MM: Oh, wonderful! Wonderful.

VB: I don't know. It sounds like it--

MM: Ah, maybe somebody trying out something new, you know.

VB: Yeah.

MM: It could be just testing it out maybe. I don't know.

VB: Aye, that's right. Yeah.

MM: But I can remember one time we were invited out and it was eh, I think it was New Year's Day or the day after it. We were invited to a house in Paisley. And we were all having a lot a fun when there came terrible news. A person came, a neighbour of theirs came to the door and there'd been a fire at that cinema in Paisley. You'll hear about it if somebody else went themselves. I don't know how many children were burned to death in it. [inaudible]. Oh! Shocking, shocking. It was really shocking. Eh, and I don't know, I don't know if the fire got, I think it was more panic than anything else, you know. But somebody else will tell you about that. Maybe if you're--

VB: I'm going to see someone in Paisley tonight actually.

MM: Oh well. Ask them about that.

VB: So I'll ask them about that.

MM: You ask them about that. Uhuh. If they're the same age as me they will remember it, of course.

VB: Yeah. Yeah.

MM: But erm, oh! Tremendous. I mean, thank goodness, I was never involved in anything like that, you know.

VB: Yeah.

MM: But must be a terrible thing, you know. But I don't know how many children were lost in it. Erm, have you been to the library and studied?

VB: Erm, I brought along a few photos actually. Erm, that I thought you might be interested to see. Erm, one of them I found was of the Astoria at the Round Toll, 'cause I think you mentioned that one--

MM: It's just up the road. Aye. Just up the road.

VB: Yeah.

MM: It was beautiful.

VB: What was that like inside? 'Cause I've only got a picture from the outside.

MM: Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful inside. Again a modern, very modern--

VB: Yeah.

MM: Now what's this? Now I don't know that one. I've never been at, that's the Roxy.

VB: Yeah.

MM: That was one of the ones. But I never was in it.

VB: Yeah, Well what was that one like inside, the Roxy?

MM: It was the wee Govanhill Picture House.

VB: What was that like?

MM: Well again, all these, that one was opened first. And then that one.

VB: So the Roxy was first, then the Astoria.

MM: And that's where that Vivienne Segal film I was telling you about. And I'm sure it was Alexander Knox.

VB: Right.

MM: They were the thingummies in it. D'you want me to look through it?

VB: If you like, yeah. Sure.

MM: [looks through book]

VB: I mean some of these look tremendously grand.

MM: Oh that was in [inaudible] Street.

VB: Was that erm, sorry I was going to ask, if it was erm, sort of bright colours and things in the cinemas. Or were they quite--

MM: Oh inside, oh! They were the last word. Oh! Yes. A favourite colour was like erm, a deep maroon and gold round, what would you say, gold designed here and there.

VB: So it's like a border.

MM: Yeah a border, maybe of four or six inches, you know.

VB: Yeah.

MM: And occasionally touched up with black. You know. Oh there's Miss Cranston's. I never was in those but eh, I know of them, you know.

VB: Yes.

MM: There's the Grand. Now, where I live now's built on that.

VB: 'Course, it must be.

MM: That was the Grand. That was a great picture house too. Saw a lot of good films in it. Eh, you know where the subway is there? Well. Just opposite the subway, where the houses are built, that's where that was.

VB: It looks from the photo as if it was quite erm, quite grand, [laughs] inside as well.

MM: It was spacious. It was everything else. It was not as grand as the modern ones were. The Astoria and that, you know.

VB: Right.

MM: Oh there's the Coliseum there. That was a huge big one. Huge place. Aye, the interior completely disappeared when the cinema [was sold?]. I never went in that one. No, you see, that [inaudible].

VB: Right. Did you never go to the local picture houses then?

MM: Yeah. Princes in Springburn. Oh, it was a beautiful hall, beautiful. [inaudible].

VB: Did you ever go the Green's Playhouse, 'cause I believe--

MM: Oh! The Green's Playhouse! I went there and I danced upstairs in the ballroom. [laughs] Yes, of course. I never was in the films. Eh, the Green's Playhouse had the golden divans. And what did it not have? There were three sections in it. You could go into the stalls. Eh, go upstairs. And the golden divans were the place. If you were out with some fella and he had a few bob, you went to the golden divans! But if it was some ordinary bloke, you only went to the, to the stalls, you know.

VB: Right. Was that these double seats then?

MM: Yeah. They were eh, the backs of them were all gold painted, you know. Och! Oh here's the Regent. My, this is really something, isn't it? Do you know where you should go some time, after this? Go into erm, senior citizens clubs.

VB: Yes. Yes.

MM: You know. Pass that round.

VB: Yeah.

MM: And you'll hear some stories about you know, women telling you about the fella they were out with and all the rest of it, you know.

VB: Did you go to the cinema yourself with your husband a lot when you were courting?

MM: Oh yes. Yes, yes.

VB: Yeah.

MM: The first time we were out, och, it was most awkward. I didn't know anybody he knew and he knew nobody I knew. And eh, here we went to the Vogue which was not very long opened. I was seventeen, he was nineteen. And we went, here when we went inside I never ever liked, you know, to go up to the balcony or anything. I always liked the stalls. And I said to him, "Would you mind if we went into the stalls?" You see. Well they were cheaper, it wasn't... So he said, "Not at all." And

anyway. And years and years later we were in a company one night. And we were talking about this and he said, "Mary doesn't know this," he says, "but oh, was I glad that she said go into the stalls. I had only enough for the stalls."

VB: [laughs]

MM: You know, so. I think the second time I was out with him my mother said to me, "That boy'll not be earning very much. He's not a journeyman or anything. You should get him ten cigarettes if he smokes." You know. I was horrified at that. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

MM: Anyway I did it, you know. And eh, it was only years and years after it he said, "You'll never know how I appreciated that."

VB: Did you take things with you to the cinema? Sweets and--

MM: Aye well, you'd all this, you know, you bought a bar of Cadbury's chocolate or something. It was tuppence then. Two pence. I don't know how much the value of that is now. [looks at book] The Lyceum, no. See these are all outside from the centre of the city, you know.

VB: Yeah.

MM: The Roxy. Aw, the Roxy. Lovely. Ah dear. That's bringing back a whole lot of memories to me!

VB: I've got one of the Vogue but I don't think it's the Vogue that you mentioned. Maybe it's erm, the one in Govan I think. Yeah, the one in Govan.

MM: Where's that? The former Regent. Where's that? [pause 4 seconds]

VB: Probably Bridgeton as well 'cause I think it's got most of them.

MM: Oh there's the Kelvin.

VB: Yeah.

MM: That was along erm, Dumbarton Road. Eh, Dumbarton Road starts there. Yeah. Aye that, Dumbarton Road, what is it now? Is it a gym, gymnasium or anything? Place in Radnor Street.

VB: Right.

MM: The Kelvin.

VB: Did you go to that one yourself?

MM: No. Never was in it. I know where it is, you know. The Orient. Now that was, eh, London Road way somewhere. Or the Gallowgate somewhere. Oh La Scala. There's quite a few you don't have there. I don't know if you could get it. The library would have all these. That's the Maryhill one.

VB: Aye.

MM: The Seamore. The Blythswood. Oh then Garscube Road! Oh there was three wee places. Oh I would never have gone into them. They were wee dens. That's the Vogue at eh, what d'you call it?

VB: I think it's the Govan one.

MM: Oh is that the Govan one?

VB: Aye.

MM: Oh aye!

VB: Were they all more or less the same the Vogues?

MM: Who were they owned by? Erm. [pause 6 seconds] Can't reme-, but the lady who was the cashier up there for thirty-six years, I don't know what her name is... [pause 9 seconds] Oh what was it? But she was in it in the cash desk. Lovely person. She knew everybody going in and asking about this one and that one, you know.

VB: Aye.

MM: That was her job, you know, but, oh dear. It'll maybe come to me. Can't remember her name for the life of me. But oh! She was a lovely person. Lovely. She sat behind the desk and was very ladylike. With a hat on. You know. I'd like to see that now.

VB: Aye. I mean that's just one from the start of the cinema in an Odeon in Leeds. Erm, but was that very much the same?

MM: Oh of course! Uhuh. They all had torches and what not.

VB: Did they have these quite sort of smart uniforms then?

MM: Oh yes! Oh aye. Aye, any modern cinema did, you know. Eh, but the older cinemas, you know, the likes of in Castle Street. There was the Carlton. And there was erm the Casino. Opposite. And after we were married and my son was born, eh, my husband used to come in and have his dinner. And I would dive down to the first house. If it was a movie that we wanted to see. And eh, that would be the first house, you see. And then I would run right up. And I would meet him just coming out the door of the house. You know, wouldn't leave the child on his own. And he came down and the price of that was fivepence. That's right. But while we were in the Casino, aw dear, dear. But wonderful films showing in it, you know. But it was because you wanted to see the picture.

VB: Right.

MM: You know. It didn't compare with any of the modern cinemas by any manner of means.

VB: Right.

MM: Now there was a circuit. You know the circuit. Graham's circuit was the Star in Maryhill. [pause 3 seconds] The Wellfield in Springburn. And the Possilpark Picture House. And they had 'go as you pleases' in them. And before the film started, you could go up and sing or do anything and there was a prize, the first prize would be three pound. And then there was a second prize of two and a prize for one. And my husband had a beautiful voice. And he used to go in, you know, and do it. Quite

often he won a pound or something, you know! And I used to think [inaudible]! But eh, that was a 'go as you please', you know.

VB: Right.

MM: Oh aye, I mean this, Graham's circuit it was called, you know.

VB: So was that just singing or did people--

MM: Aye, there was no music, you went up just and did your, [boos?] you took what you got, you know. I just need to... [pause 19 seconds]

VB: Did your husband erm, like singing the songs from the movies when you say he was a singer?

MM: My husband used to sing with a band when he was young, you know. We all went dancing. Dancing was the thing. Dancing mad. I would've danced anywhere. And he used to sing with Bill Hannah's band up in Maryhill Burgh. Eh, oh my, and Bill Hannah had a band and it was quick tempo. And you paid sixpence to get in. Lovely! Sometimes in your long evening frock. Oh!

VB: Really!

MM: Oh! Of course. You'd never have went in a skirt and jumper. No way! But eh, we had our fun times. Young people now have their own fun. They make their own fun in a different way, you know. But that was, eh, you know, you went to the dancing and saw some guy that was a marvellous dancer and prayed that he would come over and lift you.

VB: [laughs]

MM: Oh, when I think of it. However.

VB: Was it all women on the one side and men on the other?

MM: Uhuh.

VB: Yeah.

MM: Oh yeah. Oh aye, oh aye. And I always remember I worked with a wee girl and she was really keen on dancing and she went everywhere! To every dive in Glasgow she went but I never was, I never was brave enough. But this night anyway, she said to me, "Mary, what do you want to do tonight? I think we'll go the Tower." Now, this Tower. The cream of dancers went to the Tower and I mean that. Champion dancers came out of the Tower. Both sexes, you know. And here eh, I said, "Okay." So I gets ready and get away down and eh, I knew that most of the girls smoked and that I would be an odd thing out because I didn't smoke. So I went away over to this wee newsagents and I bought, eh, one cigarette you could buy. And ask for a match. And that cost me, I think it was a ha'penny or something. When I got up, and she said she would meet me inside. So off I goes. Goes into this terrible place. But the dancing was out of this world. And, aw, I was really shaking. You know, I knew I was out of my depth. So I goes into the ladies. And I'm looking at all these things. At that time I always kept my hair long. About your length. It was all [pinned?] back in a white flower. [inaudible]. [laughs] Eh, oh and I said, "How am I going to get this cigarette lit?" Didn't know what to do. So I combed my hair and all the rest of it and eh, I saw this lady striking a match against the wall, a wee piece on the wall. So I did, [inaudible]. And eh, leave the cigarette sitting to burn away. So my problem then by the time I'd changed my shoes and everything was how to get this cigarette out 'cause I hadn't a clue. So I said to this, [laughs] dolly bird that was next to me, "Oh, could you put that out for me?" She looked at me and she goes, in there, she just, so that was that. So then I noticed that all the locals had this piece of the cigarette behind their ear. [inaudible] And all the time I'm thinking... By this time this girl hadn't come out. And I said, what am I going to do? Well, I went into the hall and eh, twice I got lifted by two different people. But I knew I was out of my depth. I knew that if my mother knew I was in a place like that. Oh! Oh! I would never live to tell it. She never knew. [laughs] So then I waited a wee while and I decided, "Right. You get out of here." So I came out and as I came out the men at the door said, "Now remember, you don't get back in again." You know, you couldn't get back in. So yours truly, came down, it was three flights up. It's at the Round Toll yet but it's not a dancehall any more. Came down these steps, and I swear to you, I came down the whole three flights of that building at least two to three at a time. And run right out onto the main road in case anybody would see me coming out of it and would tell my mother.

Come into the house and my mother said, "You're home early." And I said, "Och, it was rotten. I don't know what I went for." You know. And she said, "Did other wee girl get home?" I said, "Uhuh." Oh, dear! If she'd known where I was.

VB: [laughs]

MM: As I say, I wouldn't be telling it here today if she knew that! No way.

VB: [laughs]

MM: No way! However...

VB: Your mother was quite strict with you was she?

MM: Well eh, you had freedom but you had to live to a code. You know, you must, eh, well I say that anybody's not brought up to a code that there's something wrong. Either the parents don't care. If they've got too much freedom. Oh when you're young, you know, to be told that you've to be in at ten or whatever time, you know. You say, "Oh, you're the only martyr," you know. But eh, oh no, you know then that they really cared.

VB: Yeah.

MM: But eh, life! We had a lot of fun, you know. But I was fortunate although I was an only one. The tenement building I lived in in Possilpark, my father had three sisters, married and they were all [inaudible] they'd all seven or eight children. And I was brought up among them all. You know, with the result, well I was just like one of them and if I was in their house and somebody did something wrong, my aunts, none of them would think anything of just cuffing me as well, you know. And I would come round most indignant. And, you know, say to my mother, "Ach, shouldn't be allowed to hit me." And she'd say, "Well you must've been doing something." Do you want to--

VB: Right.

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

[VB tape introduction]

MM: [inaudible]

VB: I don't know if that makes sense to you. [laughs]

MM: It's just to gather my brain just now.

VB: Aye, of course. Of course.

MM: You run through that there for minute or two and I'll try and figure out what I'm thinking on.

VB: Right, right. As I say, I was talking to a couple of other people from the Gorbals and they mentioned a few of the cinemas that you did. Erm, some people didn't mention some of the ones you did but mentioned some other ones. And I wanted to know if you eh--

MM: Is that one?

VB: Aye, I just put it on just now. For instance erm, did you ever go to one that was known as the Bees locally?

MM: What the BB Cinerama?

VB: It could've been the BB Cinerama.

MM: That was in Butterbiggins Road.

VB: Right. Right.

MM: Butterbiggins Road. Where is it the bus depot is out that way? What d'you call it? Victoria/Butterbiggins Road. That's where you'd get off the bus. Uhuh.

VB: What was that one like?

MM: Oh that was a very new one at that time eh, pricey according to the prices that we paid. Yeah, yeah. Erm, I can't remember, eh, the Coliseum as I said before. And eh, the Crown and eh, there's a

cinema in Norfolk Street. Green's? It wasn't Green's, was it? [probably referring to Green's Picturedome]

VB: That was one I was going to ask you about.

MM: Uhuh. It was attached to Green's in the Playhouse, and they were. The [Green's] Playhouse! Aw! It was out of this world. And the dancing up above was even more wonderful! Oh my, I went to the dancing one Tuesday, I was only fourteen and I went with these two girls from the shop, you know, they were older than me. And I had a long dress. I was the whole cheese. The whole cheese. Maybe I looked it too. Anyway, I went dancing for sixpence. Oh-h! Dear me. I felt I was a queen going with these two older girls, you know. And they did that for quite a while, you know. And here this guy came over one time and asked me to dance. So I said, "All right." So the next thing he asked me over for a drink. You know a drink was lemonade or orange juice or whatever. And eh, the two girls I was with, there was two boys from another branch of our shop. And eh, they were blethering [gossiping] with them. They never noticed me going away with this guy! So I was sitting at this table quite the thing in a long dress. And I'd bought sixpenny long earrings out of Woolworths and must've looked.... And over they came to the table and said to the fella, "D'you know what age she is? She's only fourteen and a half. She works with us." [pause 3 seconds] Did you ever see a deflated balloon? He never said anything. He got up and I got up. I went away to the cloakroom and got my coat. I never spoke to them in the shop for a week. I was heartbroken. Oh! You can imagine. You can suffer agonies when you're young with somebody doing that to you. They should've said to me first. However.

VB: [laughs]

MM: But they meant well.

VB: Aye.

MM: They meant well. They were in charge of me. Now what other cinemas, what do you want to know now, Valentina?

VB: Erm, well another couple that eh I've heard mentioned was erm, there was the Ritz. I don't know if you remember that.

MM: Ah, there was one out at Canniesburn, away out there [probably referring to the Rio Cinema].

VB: Aye.

MM: Is that the one you're talking about?

VB: Eh, no. See I think the people I was talking to were maybe from a different area from you.

MM: Uhuh.

VB: That's what I was wondering about.

MM: There was the Marne away out at Alexandra Parade. And there was erm, [pause 3 seconds] I think there's two, apparently there was two out that way. There was the Marne. [pause 6 seconds] Oh eh, somebody else'll tell you away out that way. Erm, [pause 4 seconds] can't remember the name of the one. There's two that used to be out that way. There was a big cinema on the corner out at Carntyne Road. Did anybody tell you about that?

VB: No.

MM: Oh aye, that's out Edinburgh Road. And it's now a bingo hall [possible referring to the Riddrie on Cumbernauld Road]. Eh, which most of them are. But I only knew more the north of the city after I moved up after I was twelve. But eh--

VB: I think that's really interesting, 'cause it sounds from what you're saying that you really liked the cinema when you were a child in quite a small area.

MM: Yes, in Gorbals, in the Gorbals area. South of the city.

VB: Aye, aye.

MM: And then we moved completely away from that. Away up to north.

VB: Right, right.

MM: And erm, [pause 4 seconds] I think I'll have previously mentioned the Possilpark.

VB: Aye.

MM: And the Seamore. That was up Maryhill Road. [inaudible]. And then gradually the other cinemas opened. Aw they were really something. Really posh. There was no wooden seats then! [inaudible] [laughs]

VB: 'Cause you were saying that just before I turned the tape on there that some of the cinemas were sort of more posh than other ones.

MM: Oh-h! You went to a penny matinee and you bunked down on this wooden thing. Oh dear, when I think of it. But upstairs of course, well it was tuppence as I told you before and they got an American comic. They were, it was a wee bit plusher the seats which was really great. You know. [inaudible] the first cinema [I went to?].

VB: Did you, I mean you were talking there about going to the matinees, was that--

MM: The penny matinees.

VB: Was that a serial that lasted over a few weeks or was it--

MM: That was on all the time. Every child went to the matinee. You would never be allowing children to go at night. Matinee was children's time. Matinee.

VB: Ah I see. So when were the matinees?

MM: Only Saturday morning. Oh-h! You knew from your mates what was on. Erm, if it was, if you'd been the week before and eh, continuous film and then a following up thing. Well, you were anxious to see that. But erm, you'd say, "Och. Nothing good on. We'll go here, we'll go there." You know, that way.

VB: Right. So you didn't always follow up a film?

MM: No. And the main thing was, if any neighbours wanted messages [errands] going, these children at the door. Like wee wasps at the door looking for jam jars for to go and get it in the grocers. Changed into half pences. You got a ha'penny for a one pound jar. And a penny for a big jar. But mostly it was... and Neill's jam was the jam. Oh my.

VB: [laughs] I mean what was it that made you go to one matinee and not another? Were there films you particularly liked as a child?

MM: Well of course, you see, say it was Tom Mix or whatever guy was in, you'd say, "Oh that's on. I'm going there next week." You know. And then you would forget about this thing. And then if the cinema had a good film on you'd say, "Oh, I'll go to the Crown". You know, you made up with your friends which film you were going. Erm but the new cinema out at Oatlands was a lovely cinema [referring to the Ritz cinema]. That was at the junction of Rutherglen Road. And Caledonia Road. Aye, it came to a point like that. But it would be good if you went out that way and saw all these things then you would know.

VB: Aye. Very much so. Yeah. I mean I was wondering there, when you were saying that, you know, erm, if it was a good film you would go. I mean what made a good film when you were a child?

MM: Oh! Well, action. Oh, action and somebody lying on the railway line and a train coming along. Eh, left you breathless. Absolutely breathless. And then horror films. 'Cause every child loves to be scared. Every child. [laughs] Including me. Eh, then as you get older, eh, as a young lady of about twelve or fourteen, the musicals were coming in. Oh-h! Out of this world! Out of this world. But the most wonderful thing I think, that came in at that time was coloured films. Oh-h dear me! Oh! You were in a, amazing. Dancing films, everything, beautiful films. But the black and white was good too because, you lost a lot, when you saw coloured films you know what you'd lost in the black and white. You knew what you'd lost in the black and white.

VB: Did that, did that mean when you'd seen some coloured films, did you seek out the coloured ones? Did you not think so highly of the black-and-white ones?

MM: Well they were never new then. You see. It was them you chose. Them you chose. But, in black-and-white films they should never ever be allowed to die out. Because, they're some of the most powerful stories in black-and-white films. I know nowadays maybe it would cost the earth to make them. But, oh dear me, the one that stands out in my mind is Barbara Stanwyck in that film *So Big!* And that's a long long time ago. A black-and-white.

VB: Can you tell me a bit about that one?

MM: Erm, I can't remember, whether it was Joel McCrea was her husband? But they went away out west anyway and they were scratching a living from a wee farm. And eh, oh they were out in all sorts of weathers. But anyway, he went out this night of a storm to try and save his plants. And he caught pneumonia and he died. And she'd a wee baby. And eh, she was in the town and she heard somebody talking. And eh, it was [inaudible]. And eh, she bought these new plants and she planted them. And through that, she prospered, she took her child to the field with her. And then she prospered. And eh, as she prospered, she sent this child to public school and whatnot and he became a young, silly boy. He'd a flash car and whatnot. And this night, through an accident he killed somebody. And eh, she went and swore on oath that it was her that was driving. She wasn't even in the car. And she went to jail for it. And he let her go. Oh dear! You see her, you know eh, going to the electric chair for his crime. Oh-h. Powerful film. *So Big!* was the name of it. And then Paul Muni in *The Good Earth*. It was done in a sort of sepia. It was brown. Sepia, I remember it now. Oh and it was a marvellous film. But these are films the eh, oh I watch black-and-white films for that reason. You know. Erm, Joan Crawford. I would have went anywhere to see her. And Bette Davis. Erm, Miriam Hopkins. All these wonderful stars. D'you know who was on yesterday? Anthony Quinn.

VB: Right.

MM: Just talking about his daughter. He says she can sing and dance. And Gloria Hunniford said to him, "What age is she?" He said, "Three months."

VB: [laughs] Actually that reminds me when you say that about the stars. 'Cause erm, we got a book in one of the second-hand shops eh, that I thought you might like to see. So I brought it along. I just got this about a week ago.

MM: Uhuh.

VB: Of erm, stars of 1938.

MM: Oh Norma Shearer.

VB: Was she someone you liked?

MM: *Smilin' Through*. She was married to Irving Thalberg. She was married to. And eh, oh they made some beautiful films. Then Janet Gaynor and him made *7th Heaven*. Oh! That was, oh I remember crying, it was a real tearjerker.

VB: What was it that you liked about stars like that? Was it--

MM: Well they took us out of our world. Our world, you know, oh! What? Living in a tenement in Glasgow and then seeing Hollywood films. There was no comparison at all! Yes, that's Robert Donat. Marlene Dietrich. Oh I remember her in *The Blue Angel*.

VB: Mhm.

MM: Ah there's Paul Muni there. Paul Muni and Luise Rainer. I couldn't remember her name.

VB: Could you tell me a bit about *The Good Earth*. 'Cause again it's a film I'm not familiar with.

MM: Well, it's about China. It's about China and the good earth. And how hard they worked and she's the most. You should try and hire it if you can somewhere and ask around about it because you'd never forget it. Beautiful film. Oh *Lost Horizon*. That was Ronald Colman. That's right.

VB: Ah yes.

MM: Shangri-La. Oh *Captains Courageous*. Freddie Bartholomew I think that was.

VB: Did you like these sort of adventure films as well?

MM: Oh! You'd have went anywhere for to see them. Aw here's Deanna Durbin. Oh aye. *Three Smart Girls. Three Smart Girls.* [inaudible]

VB: There was a whole series of them, weren't there? *Three Smart Girls* was one of them.

MM: Aye. She erm, *Three Smart Girls* and a hundred, *One Hundred Men and a Girl*. And eh, what was, her last film with Franchot Tone was a flop and she vowed she'd never make another film. Neither she did.

VB: Is that right?

MM: She lives in France now. And rehearses every day but doesn't sing, in public or anything.

VB: Did you like her as a singer?

MM: Oh yes. Oh, oh, of course. At that time you'd never heard anything really like her. Eh, [inaudible; speaking quietly] [Jonathan?] [inaudible]. *A Star Is Born*. Oh Janet Gaynor. Janet Gaynor, there it is, *A Star Is Born*. With Fredric March. Oh this is a great book.

VB: It is, isn't it?

MM: Pity you don't have a copy for yourself.

VB: Aye.

MM: Oh David Niven. [pause 6 seconds] David Niven's young wife, I think, what happened there? She was in their Hollywood home. And she went to go down to the cellar for something and she tripped on the cellar steps. And broke her neck. Ah, think that was it. They're things maybe somebody else can tell you.

VB: Mhm. I mean did you read a lot about the stars?

MM: Well we bought books. What was it? Was it 'Film Fun'? And then, oh eh, you had a weekly magazine, you know.

VB: Mhm.

MM: You'd buy it one week and your pal would buy it the next week. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

MM: We'd share. We didn't go to extremes.

VB: Well the ones I've heard of, I mean there's the 'Picturegoer' was one.

MM: That's right.

VB: And 'Film Weekly'.

MM: 'Film Weekly'. Ah, that's right.

VB: I mean, did you feel that you got to know quite a bit about the stars?

MM: Aye. There's Sonja Henie. She was, she was the world champion skater of our era, of our age. And she was a plump thing. And when she went to America, oh-h! They made her diet. Oh-h, they couldn't have that!

VB: [laughs]

MM: But there's Gracie Fields. Now Gracie Fields, to this day, when young singers are being trained, it's on Gracie Fields's recordings that they learn their pronunciations properly. You can hear every word that she sings. You know, not that she was ever a favourite of mine but you can admire her the same. [inaudible], I don't know her. Is that Anna Neagle? Could've been.

VB: Did you like Anna Neagle?

MM: Aye, it is Anna Neagle. Well, [pause 4 seconds] I liked her in period pictures. I really liked her in period pictures. She did really extremely well in period pictures.

VB: Mhm. 'Cause she was Victoria, wasn't she?

MM: Who's that? Anton, oh Anton Walbrook. Aye. Joan Blondell. Aw she was a [glamorous?] thing. Joan Blondell I think it was in Betty Grable, was it *The Dolly Sisters* they did? [flicking through book; talking in quiet voice; inaudible] Vivien Leigh. Oh dear me. She made some job of Scarlett O'Hara, didn't she? In *Gone with the Wind*. Oh dear! I don't know how many times I saw that.

VB: [laughs]

MM: Charles Laughton.

VB: Was that one that were there big queues for when it came?

MM: Oh-h! There's still queues when it comes out. I think it, has it been remade? Not with all the stars. But they're trying to do it. It's been remade I think, at least twice if not three times. From the original film. Or copied, you know what I mean.

VB: Yeah.

MM: Put out now and again. But *Mutiny on the Bounty*. Oh gee whizz! That was some film. But this is a marvellous book. Oh Maureen O'Sullivan. She was, she was beautiful, beautiful woman. The British stars, erm, to me eh, no matter how well they dressed they were never as glamorous as the Yankees. You know, that's my opinion, you know.

VB: Was that a big part of the attraction of the American films?

MM: Oh! The clothes alone at that time, you know. Oh they were out of this world! Really out of this world, you know. And even yet, when I see 'The Golden Girls' who are my age [referring to American sitcom], and the gorgeous clothes they wear. And I go to the C&A and I get something that my grandmother would wear. Oh! I go mad.

VB: I mean even just looking at that book the clothes are really gorgeous, aren't they?

MM: Oh! Beautifully made. You couldn't make them now.

VB: Yeah.

MM: That's how some of these eh, old films with the shows in it, it's an awful pity they're not in colour. But oh Tyrone Power. I would have went anywhere to see him. He was in *Blood and Sand*. [inaudible]. Oh it was an epic. And it was colour!

VB: What was it, what was it about Tyrone Power that you--

MM: A very handsome, a very talented actor. Very handsome and very talented actor. Oh here she is! My husband used to say, "I am not going to see that woman and they big saucer eyes."

VB: [laughs]

MM: And I used to say to him, "Well if you go to see that, I'll come with you to a cowboy."

VB: [laughs]

MM: Oh she was some doll. Oh look at that. That's the [scene?], that's the set.

VB: That's an interesting thing. D'you think that men liked different types of films to women?

MM: Oh of course. Oh of course. A woman likes a weepie and something to think. A man, oh well, [pause 3 seconds] *All Quiet on the Western Front* and all these things appealed. And then war films, you know, and different things. Erm, *How the West Was Won*. These were things that eh, I don't know if I'd have went to see that. But, because my husband was interested, he was good enough to come with me. But the worst thing that ever came into the films was, see these porn films that they say that's what the public want. I don't know anybody in their right mind that wants that. Because these films are not life as it should be lived. I went to the movies one time, when my husband was off ill. And we went up Sauchiehall Street and we went into La Scala. Sitting quite the thing and I thought, oh, wait a minute, this is not colour. So we suffered it. And my poor husband was sitting going, most uncomfortable. So, he said to me, "Are you enjoying this?" I said to him, "No, not really. But wait. We'll see what the other film is." Uh! The other thing came out. And the first film was

James Coburn. And I can't remember. And I would have went anywhere to see James Coburn. Powerful actor. But this was a, oh! Anyway, the second film came on. And it was arty crafty. What you would say nowadays as gay people. I take it to be. Aw, anyway, we suffered enough for a few minutes and got up and came out. And I said to the young manager at the door, "Excuse me," I said to him, "Who are you catering for in there?" He said, "That's what the public wants." I says to him, "Oh, I think you're wrong." I says, "*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*," I says, "Is down there in the Cannon. And it's mobbed. And look at your theatre." But that was only one voice.

VB: Mhm. That was quite a big picture house as well, wasn't it?

MM: The La Scala.

VB: La Scala. Yeah.

MM: And then, what was the one in Union Street? Could have your wee cup of tea in it? The Grand Central.

VB: Aw.

MM: The Grand Central.

VB: Was that while the film was on?

MM: Yes. You could sit and watch the film. Have your tea.

VB: Mhm.

MM: Have a small meal.

VB: That must've been quite, [laughs] noisy actually when the film was on.

MM: Uhuh. Oh look at the way these pictures were made. [looking at book] We never gave a thought to that. And the orchestras.

VB: Did you like the music in the films?

MM: Oh yeah. Beautiful music. Oh-h! A full orchestra. You can imagine it. Eh, playing. That was part of the film, you know. Oh, Joan Bennett. Was she one of? There was Loretta Young and her. Who was the third? She was one of three sisters, wasn't she? [pause 3 seconds] Ah, there you are. "The youngest of the Bennett sisters." Constance and Barbara and Joan. I knew she was one of three sisters but, no, Loretta Young. Must be somebody else's.

VB: Mhm. That's a beautiful gown, isn't it?

MM: Oh! It's a beauty! Without a doubt.

VB: The Virginia Grey one.

MM: If anybody wanted to be really glamorous just now, you could pick a dress out of that, would be for all time.

VB: Mhm.

MM: You know what I mean. For all time.

VB: Did you ever copy--

MM: She was married to Clark Gable. And she was killed in an air crash.

VB: That's Carole Lombard.

MM: Carole Lombard.

VB: Yeah.

MM: Uhuh. Aw he was something. He was the funniest character.

VB: Who's that?

MM: Mischa Auer.

VB: Mischa Auer.

MM: Uhuh. And Spencer Tracy. What a beautiful character he played in that. And the strange thing was about the friendship between him and what d'you call her again, *The African Queen*?

VB: Oh Katharine Hepburn.

MM: Katharine Hepburn. Went on for years and years. And it was never made public.

VB: Is that right!

MM: No, no. I think his wife invited her to the funeral. So that took some doing. Oh, Jean Arthur. Oh, she spoke with the loveliest voice erm, [pause 3 seconds] a kind of squeaky kind of voice. Squeaky. But oh, she was something. What was she in now? *Mr Deeds Goes to Town*.

VB: Oh yes. Yeah.

MM: Aw, Luise Rayner. Beautiful, beautiful. That must be her made up there for... [pause 3 seconds]

VB: Did you ever copy the clothes and the hairstyles and things yourself from the pictures?

MM: You copied the hairstyles. There was no way you could copy their clothes! Same as just now. No way. No way. Your financial situation did not allow you to do that. But erm. [pause 3 seconds] Maybe after a big picture had been showing around a town, if you went to dancing, you'd see a girl and maybe somebody had made her a dress like that, you know. Eh, Dorothy Lamour and Crosby. That was great. And Gene Raymond. Here he is with Jeanette MacDonald. Oh mercy.

VB: Did you like Jeanette MacDonald?

MM: Oh she was a powerful singer... [tape stopped and re-started]

MM: He played some good parts too.

VB: Fredric March.

MM: Fredric March. There's Myrna Loy. Oh my. She made her name with eh, who was it now? In *The Thin Man*. Powell, was it? Powell.

VB: Powell.

MM: [inaudible]. Ah there he is. William Powell.

VB: Mhm.

MM: That's right. [pause 5 seconds] Aw they were a great couple. Great couple. Emile Zola [referring to *The Life of Emile Zola*]. My goodness! This is a great book. Rochelle Hudson. I don't remember her at all. Aw Don Ameche! He was a charmer. He was really the romantic lead. Oh here she is, Katharine Hepburn.

VB: She looks very different there from *The African Queen*.

MM: Aye. I never could take to her. Never really could take to her. It was the way she spoke and that. I could never, they said she was one of the greatest actresses. Not in my book. Not in my book. [pause 4 seconds] Oh dear, aw, "How the Stars Keep their Figures".

VB: [laughs]

MM: I would imagine they just don't eat.

VB: Probably. [laughs]

MM: [pause 4 seconds] Aw, and James Cagney.

VB: Was he a favourite of yours?

MM: Oh-h! That and Edward G. Robinson. You'd have went anywhere to see them. They were nearly always in either cop stories or jail breakouts. Mhm. Pat O'Brien. That was the three of them.

VB: Yeah.

MM: Yeah. James Cagney and Pat O'Brien.

VB: They're a great team, aren't they? The two of them.

MM: Oh yes. Yeah.

VB: I'm quite fond of Pat O'Brien myself. He's always so likeable, isn't he?

MM: Yes. They played then real stories of real life. Which, nowadays, even when you see a modern film there, it's fantasy! I know that the Hollywood pictures were fantasy but there was, you could recognise truth in them which was, och, I don't know. It must be me that's getting old, that's what it is. [laughs]

VB: But I mean it's interesting what you say. D'you think that there was a big difference between the pictures then and now?

MM: Well, they were for entertainment. And you could take any child at that time, to see any film. Nowadays I can hardly go myself in my old age 'cause I'm not interested in what they're showing just now. They seem to think they're hopping in and out of bed is what everybody, och! Nonsense! Nonsense! It's not life.

VB: Oh wow! [laughs] Valerie Hobson.

MM: I forget. Oh Ann Todd. She appeared with James Mason in something to do with a piano. He shut the piano lid on her hand. She was a pianist. Ann Todd. Oh dear! That was a powerful film [referring to *The Seventh Veil*]. She was the pianist and he was her sort of guru, you know. And she was getting on too well and that's what he did.

VB: He played a lot of these nasty roles, James Mason, didn't he?

MM: Uhuh, uhuh. Barbara Stanwyck. Oh gee. Some girl. Charles Boyer. 1938. Aw dear. 'Marco Polo' [probably referring to *The Adventures of Marco Polo*]. "New Stars of 1938". Dennis O'Keefe was a beautiful singer. Oh *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. [pause 2 seconds] Is it as long ago since that was made? 1938. It must be when I see it. It's a pity you don't have a copy of this for yourself because it really is something.

VB: It's great, isn't it?

MM: I would imagine if you went to, you know, the libraries have book sales--

VB: Aye.

MM: You know, you might get something like that, you know. But again if I am at any coffee mornings I'll certainly look out for that.

VB: Oh that would be good.

MM: No problem.

VB: 'Cause you don't see these things that often, do you?

MM: No. And if you're not there--

VB: Yeah.

MM: You're not there to see. [inaudible] [Louis?]. Oh, Alice Faye. Who'd she sing with? Tony Martin? Tony Martin.

VB: Did you like the dance films as well?

MM: Oh, yes! Oh yes! Alice Faye. What was it she was in? [Went anywhere to see them?]. Oh dear. I'll need to give this computer of mine a shake.

VB: [laughs]

MM: And a good shake. Jessie Matthews. Never cared for her.

VB: Mhm.

MM: She was a very gifted girl but I never cared for her. It was too British. There's nothing to touch the Yankees for musicals. The British for historical films. Nothing to touch them. Because they're very authentic, the British, you know. Well, that's my opinion.

VB: Mhm.

MM: I'm raving on here like a lecturer.

VB: [laughs] Not at all. I mean, It's interesting, you know, what you're saying about them being so different as well.

MM: Oh yeah. Don't know that. Here we are. Aw *The Goldwyn Follies*. The scenes that they put on, you were in another world. You were lifted out of it for the time that the film was on. [pause 2 seconds] And as I say, they couldn't possibly put them on today. *Mad About Music*. That's Deanna Durbin.

VB: Right.

MM: Ah she was in *Mad About Music*. Uhuh. [pause 3 seconds] She's fifteen years old there. Herbert Marshall. Ah, Gracie Fields somehow or other never fitted in, to me, to my mind anyway.

VB: Mhm.

MM: She never fitted in to me. I think she should have kept to concert perfo..., maybe that's my own opinion. Anybody in England would certainly disagree with you there.

VB: Yeah. D'you not think she was right for the movies then?

MM: Naw. She wasn't as graceful as stars of that era. That, you know, sort of, she was a tall sort of... George Burns. He's still alive, George Burns. What is he? Ninety-five now?

VB: Must be something like that.

MM: He's wanting to live to a hundred, he says [inaudible]. Dick Powell. Oh he was a beautiful singer. D'you know that that erm, the Casa record shop in Sauchiehall Street is now bringing back all these old singers like Dick Powell and eh, what did you call him that was in erm? There's two ladies up in Milton. And they collected every one of these.

VB: Mhm.

MM: Uhuh. So you can get any, to hear the recordings.

VB: That's interesting.

MM: Uhuh. Up in Sauchiehall Street. It's Casa Records, as far as I know.

VB: Uhuh.

MM: Oh there she is. Bette Davis.

VB: What was it that you liked about her?

MM: Ooooh! *Jezebel*. She was, there was a film, Jezebel. Stories were powerful for one, Jez, there it's there. *Jezebel*.

VB: Mhm. Is that the one where she wears the red dress?

MM: Yeah, that's right. Oh-h. [pause 3 seconds; inaudible]. What was the film he made? 'The Treasure of Sierra Madra', Madre or something. Sierra Madre [referring to *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*]. That's right. Jack Holt. But eh, aw the Houstons were great. Father and son. [pause 4 seconds] [Bringing up the Ritz?]. Jane Withers. Googie Withers. Think she was taller then.

VB: Did you like erm, Oliver and Hardy [referring to Laurel and Hardy]?

MM: Aw aye. We'd go to see them. As a break from, maybe, you know, whatever it was. And you would thoroughly enjoy them.

VB: D'you think the comedies were good then?

MM: Oh they were but I mean, eh. [pause 3 seconds] I mean to see Oliver Hardy and his friend in this room and they're trying to live cheap and they buy kippers. And they set matches alight on the spring of the mattress to try and fry them in the room. To try and save money. That's something.

VB: [laughs]

MM: Aw dear! Aw dear. Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert there in *It Happened One Night*. I remember it. It was funny.

VB: What about erm, Charlie Chaplin? Did he appeal to you?

MM: Yeah, I only saw Charlie Chaplin, I think it was in *Modern Times* I saw him in the Playhouse [possibly referring to [Green's Playhouse](#)]. Erm, oh aye! You got these wee shots in among big films, you know, just a fill-in sort of style. Again he was a very, very clever acrobat. Very clever. Nova Pilbeam. She was an English, that's right, she was in [inaudible; talking to herself]. Oh Irene Dunne. She appeared in *I Remember Mama*. If ever you see that film, you'll never forget it. *I Remember Mama*. D'you know what it's about? It's about a family in America, the father's foreign, like Swiss eh, Swedish or something. And he's married to mama. And they have, they've got two girls and two boys or something. But anyway, like that, every week he comes in and he lays down his wages. Mama gets out the book and she figures it, and then she'll say, "Oh, I'll have to go to the bank." So she goes to the bank every week. And eh, here, everything's sort of pit-pat, you see. But anyway, whatever happens anyway, I can't remember if she takes ill or not. And they look everywhere for the bank book to bank the money, whatever. And there's no such a thing. She just keeps, she can only keep, she can barely keep this. And it's a marvellous story. *I Remember Mama*.

VB: Ah. Sounds great!

MM: Oh-h! That was something. Oh *The Drum*. Who was in that now? [inaudible]. Oh Alice Faye. What did she sing in now? [pause 4 seconds] Aw dear. I think they were married. It's so long ago I'm doing well to to remember that! Aw that'll be a British film by the look of it.

VB: Mhm.

MM: I never could take to her, funny enough. And yet they say she was talented [probably referring to Anna Neagle].

VB: Aye, I mean did you see 'Victoria' [referring to *Victoria the Great*]?

MM: Yes. I saw these films, you see, but, don't know, it was always something. Ginger Rogers. Lovely girl. She never had a dancing lesson in her life.

VB: Really!

MM: No. And she said that eh, when she was presented one time with an award, and she said that eh, Fred Astaire got all the credit. She said, but I got all the skinned toes. See, she'd to wear high heels. He'd on his shoes.

VB: [laughs] Did you pay a close attention to the awards when they came out? Was it--

MM: Oh Aye! You know, you used to go, like now, you're saying, I don't know what they got it for. You know, I mean, your star was your thing, you know.

VB: Aye.

MM: Aw here she is! The Golden Garbo. Again, I never saw that many pictures of her that I could say that I could say she was a wonderful star. Maybe I missed it, I don't know.

VB: What was it about her that--?

MM: Oh I don't know. I don't know.

VB: Mhm.

MM: She seemed to keep herself like a mystery. Which focussed attention on her. I think that was it. I don't really know. I wouldn't have went any length to see her. Good job she wasn't depending on me.

VB: [laughs]

MM: [inaudible]. Don't know anything about that. *Dead End*. Aw that was something, and all the stars in it.

VB: Mhm.

MM: The Bowery Boys. New York slum. Sylvia Sydney. She's the sister, hold on now. [inaudible]. Aw there was a big cast in that.

VB: Mhm. Was it a good picture?

MM: Oh-h! Terrific. Sylvia Sidney is the sad-eyed sister of Humphrey Bogart who's a gangster. Oh-h! They were great films. I think that's what they should bring back.

VB: Mhm.

MM: Oh there's Marlene. I wouldn't have went any length to see her. Aw, *One Hundred Men and a Girl*.

VB: Was Marlene Dietrich, was she quite popular in Glasgow do you think?

MM: Ye-ah. You would of went to see her because it was [blasted?], you know, you were brainwashed to go and see them. You know. But you chose your own thing. But aw, this wee doll here.

VB: Shirley Temple.

MM: Oh she was something! She was something. In 'The Good Ship Lollipop' [referring to *Bright Eyes*] and heavens knows what else!

VB: Yeah. Were there other child stars, apart from Shirley Temple?

MM: We-ell, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney were the stars of eh, *Andy Hardy* series. They come up through that. And you'd have went anywhere to see, you know, Andy growing up.

VB: Were the films that you liked, I, I, you know, I'm wondering about these films with child stars. Did you like them more when you were young yourself?

MM: Yeah. Eh, well funnily enough the Andy Hardy stars, the Andy Hardy films erm, anyone again could go and see that. Who was Judge Hardy? His father. And of course he was always doing silly things, you see. And then he'd go to him and ask advice after he'd done the thing.

VB: [laughs]

MM: And the father was a judge, you see. And he was very much older than his son. And they were great. And Judy was always, you know, hanging on. She was the plain hanger-on. And he always fancied this dolly bird, you know.

VB: [laughs]

MM: With the wee curls. Aw it was really great! And you could, you could, they were realistic. You know, they were real to you. They were really real to you. George Raft. Oh-h, George Raft. See that film *Bolero*, eh, oh-h that was something. To see him dance the bolero.

VB: I didn't know he was a dancer as well, George Raft.

MM: Oh-h! George Raft was a dancer. So was James Cagney.

VB: Of course, yeah. *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

MM: That's right.

VB: But I didn't, I didn't... [tape cuts out]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

Start of Side A]

VB: Of course Cagney was wonderful in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. I mean, did you like him as a dancer yourself?

MM: Oh, yes! At that time, you see, you'd have went anywhere to see the likes of that, you see. Gene Kelly was only coming out as a young man. Eh, Donald O'Connor. He was some dancer. And all these, you know. But oh, it's a pity you don't have another book yourself for that's a treasure.

VB: Mhm.

MM: But I'll certainly, if I'm ever out at any sales of work or anything, I'll certainly look for you.

VB: Aye. Well as I say, I thought you might like to have a look at it.

MM: Och aye. That's fine. Thanks for bringing it.

VB: Certainly enjoyed looking, you know, glancing through it myself.

MM: Oh! Of course you would.

VB: Yeah.

MM: 'Course you would. Well, you see, when you're my age you'll have the stars of your day eh, to write about.

VB: Mhm.

MM: You know, somebody'll say to you, you'll have the stars of your day. You know. Each generation makes its own life, would you say? I don't know. You hear older people saying, eh, "I'm glad I lived in the times I did". Well, okay. Uhuh. Eh, but the young generation makes their own life. I say. You know. It would never do if it was a repeat and a repeat and a repeat. It would be really boring.

VB: Mhm.

MM: Now is there anything else you want to see about now or not?

VB: Aye. I mean if I were, you know, looking through that just now. I am interested in the sort of appeal of the movie stars as well. You were saying, the way they dressed and the way they moved, I suppose, as well.

MM: Oh yes. The girls copied their hairstyles. Like that and eh, and then you would hunt Glasgow looking for maybe Betty Grable's shoes. For myself I would never have worn anything else, only three-inch heels which my mother, [gasps] oh-h, dear me! She vowed I would never be able to walk. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

MM: But you suffer agonies because of that, you know. Erm, but you couldn't really copy it. No more than nowadays. There's lots of things you couldn't copy. Is there anything else now?

VB: I mean, how about the makeup and things? Did you try and copy that?

MM: They tried to. If you saw a film on Saturday, Woolworth's would be stampeded for long earrings if. If the next week somebody'd been wearing wee studs it would be eh, wee studs that Woolworths would be sold out of, you know. [laughs]

VB: That's interesting.

MM: Mhm.

VB: So it was as close as that.

MM: Oh-h, yes. Oh, yes. Very much so. And eh, if somebody had a new hairstyle, you know, you'd say, "Oh I must try that out," you know. But eh, I always had a very good growth of hair and I've always liked my hair bobbed and curled in. Never a fringe, you see. And then once the dancing, I swept it back, white flower in the back of it. However.

VB: It sounds when you were talking about the dancing that you were very glamorous yourself.

MM: Oh-h-h-h! The dancing in Glasgow was the thing. There was not another city in the world that had as many dance halls, at the cheap prices that they were then. And it was the city of dancing. You know. Anyone who danced in these halls could dance anywhere in the world. But a large part's all gone now. The young ones, well, they've their own dancing. But it amuses me to see that you only need twelve inches square [laughs] on the floor! You know. Bop, bop, bop! Eh, but that's their world.

VB: Did you, I mean I've heard that there was a dancing academy in the Gorbals.

MM: Diamonds.

VB: Diamonds. Yes.

MM: Uhuh.

VB: I mean did people take--

MM: I went there.

VB: Did you?

MM: Oh aye. Uhuh. Eh, you went there and eh, Joe Diamond and his son, big tall thin fellow. Joe Diamond, the son, well they were both Joseph Diamond. And they were dressed in evening wear.

And we went in our wee skirts and whatnot. Sixpence to get in. And the first hour, Mr Diamond or his son, whichever would be on duty that night, would give you tuition. And eh, then it was up to you there. After that, that was practice then, you know. But it was great. It was just a lovely palace theatre.

VB: How old were you, when you were doing that?

MM: Well, [pause 3 seconds] I went to school and it was too far away for me to go home at lunchtime. And there was a girl in school who could play the piano. And she played foxtrots, waltzes and whatnot. And the older girls taught us to dance. So I could dance from when I was twelve. You know. In a kind of a way, you know. And then erm, my cousin and I were the same age. And we started to go down to Diamonds because her brothers were going. That meant we were all going together. There were about six of us then. The boys went their own way, their own thing. And we went our way. And eh, oh I'd be about fourteen when I went there. Aye, I was working and I'd be about fourteen. She and I were both fourteen, we'd go there on a Tuesday night. Oh my! All that for one shilling! What is that now? Five pence? Oh-h-h! Dear, dear, dear, dear. But, we had a lot of fun.

VB: I mean when you started going to the dancing, did you still go to the pictures as much?

MM: Eh, if it was a really good picture you wanted to see. You couldn't afford to go to the two, you know. If you let the dancing go on a Tuesday night, you went to a movie maybe. You know, it depended just on what was on. But Tuesday night was faithful until you learned, really, to dance, you know.

VB: No wonder the Glasgow dancers were so good then if you were practising and taking lessons.

MM: Oh-h-h, of course, of course, of course. Eh, but then, there was also places that big sisters went to and took young sisters to. Eh, and they would learn. In the halls. You know what I mean, that way, you know. But there was very very very few young people in Glasgow couldn't dance. Very few. Very few. Don't know how you would explain that.

VB: Were there, I mean as well as the dance halls in town, were there smaller places that you could go locally?

MM: It was to smaller places you went, yes. The most famous place for the cream of dancers was the Tower Ballroom in Garscube Road. Then you went to Barrowland. Erm, oh-h! Oh! All over Glasgow. There was church halls. Everything like that. You know. Erm, the Locarno. Playhouse, Green's Playhouse. Oh, dear me. The Orange Halls in Cathedral Street. The Masonic Halls in Alexandra Parade. Oh!

VB: [laughs]

MM: Erm, your local church hall if they were having a wee dance. You know. Eh, again it'd be about sixpence to get in. What's that? Two-and-a-half pence?

VB: [gasps]

MM: Less. Erm. [pause 3 seconds] Oh it may have been. Then there was a wee charity band, maybe for a wee team that was trying to get funds up. You know. Eh, now when you hear what they pay to get into it, it's a costly thing going out of an evening. For young ones now. But oh, dear me, there was a lot of dancing! Och! Couldn't name the half of them.

VB: **It sounds from what you're saying that it would be almost more difficult to find a street that didn't have a dance hall in it. [laughs]**

MM: Exactly. Exactly. Down here, at the top of that street here there was eh, a big building there, the Clydesdale's on it. There was a dance hall above it. [pause 3 seconds] [inaudible]. But the Locarno. Oh! Sixpence to get in. It was dearer at night. But, you know, during, there was dancing every day in it. Used to go in, you paid so much, you know. Oh dear me. I'll be going to bed tonight and I'll be going back in my youth.

VB: [laughs]

MM: [laughs]

VB: **It must've been an exciting time to be growing up.**

MM: Ye-ah. Well I'll tell you this much. [laughs] It was an innocent time. [pause 2 seconds] A very

innocent time. You thought more that, your worry was, where would you raise the sixpence for dancing that night? I wonder if you could get a new frock for such-and-such an occasion. That was your big worry.

VB: [laughs]

MM: That was really your big worry. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

MM: And then again, when you went to the dancing, would you know anybody there that would lift you. Oh dear, when I think of that. But fun. Lots of fun. Lots of fun. And a thing then you didn't see, you didn't see two girls dancing together.

VB: Oh.

MM: Never. Never. Put that off, we're going have more tea.

VB: Right.

[End of interview]