

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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\* Heathlands Retirement Home, Manchester, 6 June 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Nat Frieling

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\* NF=Nat Frieling, OP=Other Person, VB=Valentina Bold,

\* Notes: Solo interview with Nat Frieling; Nat Frieling also took part in a group interview with other Heathlands residents (HR-95-047) on 4 May 1996; Sound Quality: Fair.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

**VB: When you were talking about the cinemas that you were familiar with when you were growing up--**

NF: Yes.

**VB: When you were growing up for instance. I mean that was very...**

NF: Well I [inaudible] without doing any research. It was just by memory.

**VB: Yes.**

NF: Did no research on it.

**VB: Yeah. 'Cause I mean there were quite a number that came up.**

NF: Well eh, there is time and space for advancement on it.

**VB: Yeah.**

NF: Because you're specialising. So it's not just a one-off thing you know.

**VB: That's right. Yes. Yes.**

**NF:** Now what way do you want me to advance if possible?

**VB: Right. Well the first thing I wanted to ask a bit more about was your early memories of going...**

**NF:** Pardon?

**VB: Your early memories of going to the cinema.**

**NF:** Oh yes. Yes. Well I delved a little bit into that.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** One thing that I didn't mention and I had it down on paper at home. And that was eh, nobody ever spoke very much about foreign films. For instance Eisenstein's 'Battle Potemkin' was a classic [referring to *Battleship Potemkin*]. I don't know if you've heard about it.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** You know something about it.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** Now I saw it in black and white. There was no coloured then. So eh [pause 2 seconds] the shots he took were magnificent. Have you seen it?

**VB: I have, yes. It's a wonderful film.**

**NF:** So you know about it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I mean the revolutionary part about it was interesting how he got the people to work with him. And eh, I thought that was his main objective. To get crowd scenes in particular, supporting the revolution at that particular time in history.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** I don't know whether you thought so when you looked at it. See, being interested in that subject and I was a working class, in particular, I was more interested than the average person--

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** Or as other classes. I can put it as bluntly as that.

**VB: Mhm. Very much so. It is a wonderful film.**

**NF:** He was a marvellous film director. I read a little bit of the history.

[**OP** comes in with cups of tea]

**VB: Thanks very much.**

**OP:** What time would you like Mrs [T?] to come in?

**VB: Erm maybe talk for about half an hour. Three-quarters of an hour--**

**NF:** Yours is the eh...

**VB: Something like that.**

**NF:** Your choice. How long you can bear my speaking.

**VB: Well. [laughs] How long...**

**OP:** Well, shall I tell her about twenty past eleven?

**VB: That would be great. Yes. That's okay.**

**NF:** Okay. Thanks very much.

**VB: So, was political film an interest from an early, from when you were quite young?**

**NF:** Well eh, well there's been some marvellous films over the last fifty years.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** There's certain names one could pick on as being eh, what shall I say, the top notches in the industry in particular.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** I mean, people at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers and Paramount, they didn't choose anybody for their directors, which was obvious. In their case, finance. I mean, what did they get out of it? Nothing to do with culture, in my own opinion.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** Mind you, American filmmakers provided the tops in everything. Apart from musicals. But their main object wasn't because they wanted you and I to see cheap films. Cheap as regards to admission

I'm talking about. Not made cheap. And erm they succeeded. They all became millionaires because it was the industry in America at one time. In the top ten industries.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** Apart from technical things, you know.

**VB: 'Cause I remember you mentioning a couple of the Chaplin films that had...**

**NF:** Oh well, they were classics in my own opinion. Because he was miming. There was no talking in it. And that was the beauty of it. You could laugh at the actions. Particularly people like Harold Lloyd. You know, on the edge of a precipice. How would he, how would he get off it, you know. The corridor of a big high hotel, the corridors. He'd be outside, wouldn't be able to get back. How did he get back? And so on you know. It was comedy plus a bit of pathos, you know. Would he, would he be alive eventually?

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** It went as far as that. Dramatically I mean.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** And whether you agree with that point of view of course, I don't know.

**VB: Yeah. 'Cause I was just interested when you were talking about erm, like the Eisenstein films that have obvious--**

**NF:** Yeah yes.

**VB: Political points. 'Cause some of the...**

**NF:** Well these were, we have to be honest, you have to admit it, political. Deliberately.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** I mean the government at our time wouldn't allow anything else but political.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Everything was propoganda. To further the revolution.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Whether you agree with what happened historically afterwards don't come into our conversation.

**VB:** Sure. I was just wondering if you were conscious of, you know when I think of some of these Chaplin films. Things like *Easy Street*. There's quite a lot of...

**NF:** Well I quoted one in particular where, he was that hungry. He was in a place like Alaska where everything was snow and snow bound. He wanted to eat. He ate his boots. I mean it sounds very comical. But human beings have been cannibals too. They've eaten other people. When the situation has been such. So we don't know what human beings, what any human being would do when they're given such choice. Where here it was comedy, yet tragedy with it, to an extent.

**VB:** So it was that sort of combination.

**NF:** You realise then what people would do if they're [inaudible word] in their lives. When the needs arise. It's like people getting VCs. They were very tame ordinary people. And yet they rose to the occasion of saving somebody's life. And so on. A similar thing, in a different way of course.

**VB:** It is interesting when you put it like that. I mean the sort of...

**NF:** Well eh, I've got [inaudible] different ideas, I have. I take a very broad view of many things. Attempting to be modest, you know what I mean. I'm certainly the odd man out and I know it. I've got a lot of faults too.

**VB:** Well you've certainly got some interesting ideas.

**NF:** Well, I'll tell you the secret which is nothing to do with our subject.

**VB:** Right.

**NF:** I had a very, very hard upbringing. I lost my parents when I was very young. See this is something personal. And I left school at thirteen. And the age of leaving then was fourteen. But while we went to school, we took the 11-plus and if you won it you went to a grammar school. If you had the brains and initiative obviously. Well I never went in for the 11-plus. And it was deliberate. Because in case, God forbid, I've got the brains to win it, I'd have to go to school to sixteen. But the people I was living with liked money. And I was more useful to them, than me winning the 11-plus. Such a [pause 2 seconds] [inaudible word] attitude.

**VB:** Mhm.

**NF:** And erm I don't advance on it but I'm bound to use the word if and but if I would've had parents you see. I mean losing them at six. The question always arose in my mind. Would I have advanced a

bit more than I am at the moment, if I'd have had my parents. And I always think, 'cause most parents love their children, the vast majority. Ninety-nine point nine. My own life on a personal basis should've been different. And eh I've told you all this for this reason. I was determined, because I left school at thirteen, to attempt--and that's the operative word, attempt to educate myself. Most boys of my age went dancing when they were seventeen, eighteen. Which is quite a nice sociable thing to do. I didn't. Most boys of my age, round about seventeen or twenty, went and played billiards. Most people of my age joined organisations, clubs. And they went to the dogs, racing. Did all kinds of social activities which I didn't. My main activity was based on one word. Education. I went to every museum and possible place of advancement in Manchester. To do one thing. Only one thing. To learn. And even today. [banging in background; inaudible] Wouldn't it be better if you put the [cup?] there. At my age now. I'm going on for eighty-six. I still want to learn. Which is a bit unusual. You think you forget all that and just be thankful you're healthy.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** You settle for that, you know. But I'm that tiny bit different. Maybe silly. I don't know. Very sensible or anything. I can't explain it.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** Before I answer any more questions, I'd like to show you something. Eh I'm going to put again an unusual view of this. If you take advantage of my ideas and what I'm going to tell you. You may do a bit of plagiarism. That'll mean copy other people's works. As you well know, it means that. But if you do it in a sensible way, and nobody notices plagiarism. [voices in background drowning out conversation] [Not even sentences and ideas even?]. But I think this a very new opportunity by sheer accident of you talking about the film industry. I'd like to advance on it now. I get the paper called 'The Times'. I get it every week, except Sunday. I'm sorry I don't get it Sunday, for a number of reasons I'll tell you later. Now, this [inaudible].

**VB: Oh!**

**NF:** You see. I'm sorry to have to ask you this. What paper do you get?

**VB: Erm I get the 'Glasgow Herald' and 'Scotland on Sunday' and the 'Sunday...'**

**NF:** Right. You get that paper. At this particular moment in time, it suits you--

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** For a number of reasons. Now, I'll tell you a little bit why I get 'The Times'. All my life, up to [pause 2 seconds] about two years ago, got the 'Manchester Guardian' and 'The Guardian'.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** Got it a very early age. People thought I was a bit [barmy?]. A young fella there reading the 'Guardian'. What does he know about all them subjects? Academically. It didn't worry me what other people thought. I bought it. And that was the end of it. 'Cause I was getting some knowledge from it 'cause it always had some marvellous articles. 'Manchester Guardian'.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Then 'The Guardian'.

**VB: I'm just going to put this, sorry, I'm just going to put this nearer.**

**NF:** I got this for about forty years, the Manchester Guardian. And it satisfied my wants. Educationally, culturally and news wise. Eh, I've got to say, I don't want to but I can't avoid it. When I came here I was getting 'The Guardian'. Now in some people's opinion, not mine, the 'Manchester Guardian' and 'The Guardian' afterwards, were anti-Semitic as regards to Israel. That's what people were telling me. I never agreed with them, 'cause I thought it was factual and truthful. And nationalism, being what it is, people trying to be a bit blinkered. It's kind of my country, right or wrong. Well life isn't like that. You can prove that now in Bosnia. Simple as that.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** Quickly said. See nationalism can be a terrible thing. At this particular moment in history it's killing people, nationalism. Even Hitler called his party the National Social Party. [[Inaudible]. That's politics of course. Now to come back to why I get 'The Times'.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** [beginning inaudible] two or three, for want of a better word, the executive person who runs Heathlands. And they saw me going to the counter and getting my newspaper. "Oh," they said, "I'm surprised at you, Nat." They know one or two of my ideas. "You're getting 'The Guardian'. It's anti-Semitic." And I shook my head. I didn't want to get involved in a personal argument. I thought my choice of papers is my choice, not yours. But I didn't say it. I thought it. I didn't want to be rude and argumentative. Which I can be on occasion. When I say I can be on occasion [inaudible] controversy 'cause [I like?] debate. If you're going to agree with me all the time it wouldn't do for me. You're going to say 'yes' and that constantly, you're no help to me--

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** Conversationally. Well eh I thought, well I'll try another paper. I didn't agree with him but I saw a lot of adverts in the press and in the media, on the television that 'The Times' had run a campaign to try and lower the price of their paper. Fifty pee.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** Fifty pee for a working-class person's a lotta money for a paper. A lotta money. Well the average you'd pay thirty. Thirty to thirty-five. With fifty I thought I'd try it. Will you have your, have you had your drink?

**VB: Yes I'm just about finished.**

**NF:** By sheer coincidence when I got here the owners of 'The Times', which own a few newspapers you know, decided to reduce the price in the hope of furthering their circulation. 'The Independent' was running a campaign. 'The Sun' were. Different papers were all going for one thing. Circulation. Circulation equals profits. When you're in a business. It's just common sense. They run this campaign at fifty and it did not help circulation figures. I know I'm diverting a lot from why you're here but anyway. You'll find the end produce, what I'm talking about, good for you. After I'm getting it for about three or four weeks it went to forty. Then it went to thirty! Thirty for a paper at the time is most unusual. Quite suddenly it went to twenty! 'The Times' now, believe it or not, was a great paper. I don't agree with its politics--

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** But I don't have to if I don't want, it's now twenty pee! But they have some marvellous reporters. Absolutely marvellous. Now to come back to what we're talking about, it was only by getting 'The Times' I realised that, I'm going to advance, tell you something about this in five minutes.

**VB: Sure. 'Course.**

**NF:** They are running a series of eight articles now on the cinema. And they're going to be in book form. They'll tell you how to get a [binder?] for it for yourself.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** And eh, it's about a thousand pages, average. And it'll be an eight part, serialised, on a Sunday only--

**VB: Uhuh.**



**NF:** Which I don't get. In 'The Times'. Now my personal opinion which you don't have to agree with, it's going to be a great advantage to you.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** You will get to know facts and figures on photographs in those eight issues which advance your project. Not in any doubt. And I said quite some time ago, you may, you may have to do a little bit of plagiarism.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** I don't mean copy every sentence word for word. But you'll have to copy the ideas.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**NF:** [Beginning inaudible. There's so many different aspects from sheer entertainment to knowledge. From seeing animal pictures.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Geographical pictures. You know. It's quite an industry. The cinema. Without a doubt. And I know very little about it. Actually. I don't research. I don't know enough. Now. [rustling of paper; drowns out voice] Now this tells you a lot more about it.

**VB: Right!**

**NF:** See. All this is about the cinema.

**VB: It does look really interesting. Thanks a lot.**

**NF:** Oh and to stop talking to me about it--

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Take those home. And see if my ideas will come to any, will fruitify.

**VB: That's very kind. Thanks very much.**

**NF:** I think, for you, by sheer coincidence, it's going to be very, very useful.

**VB: Yes it looks it.**

**NF:** Whether you agree with me or not. I don't know.

**VB: Well it sounds from what you're saying as if it is an ideal source of information.**

**NF:** I mean, it's covering the entire subject from every aspect.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** As I said, from entertainment to serious type of films.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** And eh, [pause 2 seconds] could I be cheeky enough to advise you to start buying 'The Times' on a Sunday.

**VB: Well certainly. Yes. It sounds quite...**

**NF:** If you get it on a Sunday, you get it half price--

**VB: Right.**

**NF:** Is one thing.

**VB: Right.**

**NF:** 'Course you get a coupon in it on a Sunday to buy Monday's Times for ten pee. Now ten pee, you don't give it a child for sweets.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** It's negligible in figures. Whether you agree with me or not, you don't have to. I'd like you to think there's a bit of sense in it. I don't know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** S'up to you. Entirely.

**VB: No, this sounds very...**

**NF:** What do you think of it? I would like your reply on that.

**VB: Yeah. Well I'd like to have a...**

**NF:** [Beginning inaudible] It's only a possibility. Will you do that?

**VB: Absolutely. Yes. It sounds like it would be a very useful source. Thanks very much for...**

**NF:** I was delighted when I saw that. I thought how useful it is. And I thought I'd like to get in touch with you to tell you about it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Which worked out in a different pattern of course.

**VB: Yeah. It's very good of you to do that. Thanks very much.**

**NF:** I don't know how you've got the patience to listen to me rambling on you know.

**VB: I'd be rambling. [laughs] I mean one thing I brought along that I thought you might be interested in having a look at was erm a film book from the 'Express'.**

**NF:** Other newspapers have got the idea.

**VB: Yes. Well that's from 1935.**

**NF:** Have you borrowed this from somebody?

**VB: Erm no. I bought that from--**

**NF:** Was it the library? Where've you got it from?

**VB: One of the second-hand bookshops in Glasgow.**

**NF:** Really!

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** Accidentally?

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** How marvellous. That is a book of marvellous films. I mean people, film buffs, people who are interested. People like Gerald Kaufman who's a writer with this. Do you know anything about Gerald Kaufman?

**VB: I know the name. I don't know very much.**

**NF:** If you read a lecture by Gerald Kaufman you'd know a lot more about the film.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** If there's any person to get into touch with, it's Gerald Kaufman MP. I've read a lot. I've never met him personally.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** But I've read a lot of his articles.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** And he knows what he's talking about.

[clattering of cups]

**VB: Oops.**

**NF:** S'only liquid. S'not a crime.

**VB: It's okay. Shall I get a cloth or something? I'll see if I can get something.**

[pause c. 1 min 30 seconds; loud voices in background]

**VB: [laughs]. That's great. Yeah, so anyway.**

**NF:** Where we up to?

**VB: Erm I was just saying that I'd bought the book 'cause I thought you might like to take a look at it.**

**NF:** Well I wouldn't like to keep it.

**VB: No. No just to have a look.**

**NF:** When you were talking to the other lady...

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I'll borrow it.

**VB: Okay. If you like.**

**NF:** With your permission.

**VB: Yeah. That'd be fine.**

**NF:** I'll do it. Okay.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Now is there anything else that you want to know that I could help with?

**VB: Erm, well I mean some of the stars that we were talking about last time that were mentioned, I wondered if I could ask your opinion about them.**

**NF:** Yes, you can do so. Question me.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** If I can advance on it--

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** It'd be progress.

**VB: Yeah. I mean people like for instance George Formby cropped up a bit.**

**NF:** Yeah. Well he made a few films.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** And he had a certain style, apart from his banjo. He was always smiling. He was a very, a very eh, marvellous facial. You could like him right away. Some people are like that. They get a taxi right away. In fact I'm told, men and women fall in love by that. Whether it's true or not I don't know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Some kind of magnetism. I can't explain it of course. Erm but he was very well liked. I wouldn't say he was a marvellous, he was very, very good. But what I'm trying to say, is personality was even, [pause 2 seconds] it advanced on his music. Put it that way. Which is to say in a sentence. It helped him. He was always smiling. You could like a fella for no particular reason apart from just looking at him. Now people like that, you know, in school call them 'Smiler' or something like that you know.

**VB: So it was his personality.**

**NF:** He was very professional. I mean eh it always had the same tune you know. All his music had the same type of tune. I don't know if you recollect it. 'When I'm Cleaning Windows', for instance. And all the others. Had the same kind of rhythm. Same kind of poetry attached to it in a way. In a way. And I liked it. And to this day people copy it, try to, you know, when they're going for shows. And eh they still buy his music. So for a man to have his popularity over thirty, forty years is a great thing.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** You know. Without being a Pavarotti. You know. World famous person.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** And he made a number of films you know. Which was very good. I don't know if you managed to see them 'cause I think they were in black and white.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** Do you see any?

**VB: I've seen one or two.**

**NF:** Do you see them. Really.

**VB: Yes. Yes I mean like the one, the TT races on the Isle of Man [referring to *No Limit*]. I forget what it's called.**

**NF:** Yes I saw that one. Yes.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** Saw that one.

**V: Yeah.**

**NF:** Eh, the other question I wanted to ask you. Do you ever get to know what the actual programme of the British Film Institute is? For people, film buffs who are interested enough. Do they have a programme saying they have special films for members and so on? Do they have that?

**VB: Erm I'm not really sure.**

**NF:** You have to delve into it.

**VB: Well I've been to the Film Institute in London.**

**NF:** You've been to it.

**VB: Yes. I'm sure they do things like that.**

**NF:** Well how did it go on with regard to PR? Did they tell you things like I'm mentioning?

**VB: Erm, not really, no. No. I mean they have a lot of publicity material lying around.**

**NF:** Yeah. But no advance on that.

**VB: No.**

**NF:** In other words, although they're called the National Film, it's not so national then really is it?

**VB: Not really. No. As far as I can make out.**

**NF:** I mean if the average person can't say, say in London in particular. "Oh the Film Institute are putting a marvellous French film on." As an instance. So they don't give them kind of publicity. Now am I right or wrong? I don't know.

**VB: I mean, possibly. I don't know that much...**

**NF:** And you've never had any literature from them, have you?

**VB: No.**

**NF:** No.

**VB: No. Erm and I've only ever been down...**

**NF:** Well that's the quickest approach. To subscribe to their members eh, what's going on--

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** In the industry in particular of course.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Mhm.

**VB: Yeah.**

[pause 3 seconds]

**NF:** I'm making you smile. That's something.

**VB: Yes. [laughs] I'm sorry I can't help on that one but I just don't really know. Erm I mean the other sort of people that we were mentioning as I say that I wanted to ask you a bit more about. Gracie Fields was someone else that cropped up.**

**NF:** Well eh, I mean, what's the name of that film? *Casablanca*, for instance.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** How many times people, you know, take him off. "Play it again, Sam" and so on. It was [inaudible word] so often.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** Even now. Became famous slogan almost. "Play it again, Sam" you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** In certain instances you can't forget films.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** I mean the chariot scene in *Ben Hur*. *The Ten Commandments* in the biblical scenes.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** You know. I'd call them epics to a certain extent. 'Cause if you can remember them twenty, forty, fifty years later, there must've been something to lie in the grey matter.

**VB: Yeah. Did you enjoy these epics at the time?**

**NF:** Oh yes. Yeah. Yeah.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** But by the same rule, as a child, I enjoyed serials. 'Cause you was gonna to know when the girl in it was on the rail tracks and the train was approaching, would it kill her or not? Would she get hurt? You was worried. You couldn't get to the pictures the week after what happened. You know. Great big question mark in your mind, you know? Particularly as a child.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** As a lesson and so on.

**VB: So did you enjoy...**

**NF:** It made you think.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** You see. That's something.

**VB: I was wondering just when you mention these two types of films together. Did you like films that had a bit of adventure in them. Excitement.**

**NF:** Oh yes! Oh! Tom Mix. Bang bang, you know. Trigger. His horse. Animal pictures. The famous dog. Just forget his name. Eh, child pictures like eh. [pause 2 seconds] The one with the curly hair. Very curly hair. Little girl. What was her name?



**VB: Oh Shirley Temple?**

**NF:** Shirley Temple. Couldn't think of her name.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I mean eh those names and the activities you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Really remain there.

**VB: It is interesting. I mean I've got some stills with me as well just now.**

**NF:** Yeah. She was a beautiful-looking girl too. Child I mean.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** As a child.

**VB: I think I had one of Shirley Temple in one of the pictures. Yeah. I'm not sure what one that's from.**

**NF:** That's exactly how she was.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Of course. Yeah, yeah. And who doesn't love a child?

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Specially if you can act like she did.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** Yeah. The expression. Just sheer expression'd blow you.

**VB: Yes. [laughs]**

**NF:** Marvellous you know. As a film.

**VB: Yeah. As you say I mean, it is that appeal.**

**NF:** And if you weigh it up well you think she must've been six at the time.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Yeah. Very good. I like the expression. Marvellous.

**VB:** Yeah. **Don't know what other ones I've got here as well.**

**NF:** Did you think this would further your interest of a career. A film critic or something like that?

**VB:** Erm...

**NF:** I'm speaking on personal.

**VB:** Yes.

**NF:** Don't answer me if you don't wish to.

**VB:** Right. Well possibly I am,

**NF:** Are you interested enough?

**VB:** Yes. I'm very interested. Yes. Yes.

**NF:** All comes from that one word. Interested enough.

**VB:** Yeah.

**NF:** Good. Great.

**VB:** Yeah. So I don't know if I've got anyone else here that's eh, among your favourite stars.

**NF:** Well eh when you see them you remind yourself. Oh yes. Her. Or him. You know.

**VB:** Yes. 'Cause I know we did talk a little bit about Astaire and Rogers.

**NF:** Oh yeah. On the subject of dancing, the daddy of them all. Daddy and mammy of them all.

**VB:** Yeah.

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**NF:** The dancing along, the movements were superb. To this day they want beating. As a pair. I mean how can you forget 'Singin' in the Rain'? It's impossible to forget that.

**VB:** Yeah. That's right. And I mean scenes like, in films like *Top Hat*. I mean,

**NF:** No, no. The actions.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** The speed of his dancing alone wanted keeping up. You know. To keep it up for ten minutes, say. Or even five! Constantly moving your feet, in different directions. Almost gymnastics! Unbelievable.

**VB: Yeah. So that sort of display really impressed you.**

**NF:** You think to yourself, I'm sure he's gonna fall any minute. You know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** The gyrations are long, you know.

**VB: Yeah. So it must've been quite impressive. Especially...**

**NF:** Oh, without a doubt.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I mean particular with dancing people. Dancing people. I'd love to do a little bit of that, you know. I get impressed.

**VB: Yeah. 'Cause I've heard some people say that watching a film like that you would think yourself into...**

**NF:** It ventures on their interest--

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** If I can put it that way. I don't know. I might be using the word interest too much. I don't know.

**VB: Yes. I mean were there any of the stars that you felt inspired you?**

**NF:** Great word for it. Inspired. A great word. It is.

**VB: Yeah. Were there people that...**

**NF:** Inspired. Inspiration. Exactly. Exactly.

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** Couldn't say it better.

**VB: [smiles]**

**NF:** Couldn't. Just learned something.

**VB:** [laughs] **I mean were there, did you have favourites of the stars themselves? Were there, were there people that you particularly liked?**

**NF:** Well eh [pause 2 seconds]. Well you don't have to agree with me here. There were a picture on just now. On television called [Brammo?]. And I don't know if you've seen it all.

**VB:** **I haven't. No.**

**NF:** No, that is my style of picture. And I'm gonna tell you why.

**VB:** **Mhm.**

**NF:** Again, I've got to repeat myself. You don't have to agree with me. I like anything to do with the working class. Particularly their struggles and when they've overcome them. Pictures about a strike. Deliberately. As an instance. And why they show. Not because of the strike, but why did they strike? And what was the end product of the strike? Did they advance? Or did it make life worse? For instance, the miners' strike. That's a classic example. Anything to do with the working class. I've read all the classics of working-class literature. I have. I can't say all, not quite truthful. Many. Is a better word. 'Cause I was a bit choosy. And to me they're an inspiration. How human beings can conquer life itself in adverse conditions. Sheer poverty. How they can [?] and come to the top. In the film industry. As an instance Warner Brothers, Goldwyn-Mayer. D'you know what I mean?

**VB:** **Mhm.**

**NF:** As an instance.

**VB:** **Yeah.**

**NF:** Nothing to do with them being Jewish, by the way.

**VB:** **Yeah.**

**NF:** I couldn't care if they were atheists.

**VB:** **Yeah. I see what you mean. The appeal of that sort of film. I mean what did you think of the way someone like Gracie Fields,**

**NF:** Gracie Fields.

**VB:** **Yes. I mean she sort of tried to...**

**NF:** The whole attraction of Gracie Fields was because she spoke about working-class ideas. To her, to be able sing a song called 'The Biggest Aspidistra in the World' when workers' homes, if they got an aspidistra, they thought they had something green in their homes. They had no garden. That's the way to look at it. Objectively with regard to, how did poverty enhance their lives? That's the way I look at it. Again, I've got to use that sentence. You don't have to agree. It's just my own ideas.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Because, every day, to me, is a battle of ideas. If they find a new, a new thing for cancer tomorrow, laser treatment. You name it. It's a continuation of the battle of ideas. That's how they found penicillin and things like that.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** But you've got to be willing to learn every day. Got to be willing and interested enough.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** Haven't you? Really.

[pause 3 seconds]

**VB: It's a good philosophy. [laughs]**

**NF:** I'm almost sure I can read your thoughts that I've got a right queer fellow here.

**VB: Not at all. Not at all. Erm, cause I mean it is, as you say people like. I've got a couple of stills here from I think *Sing As We Go!* And as you say very much giving a different idea of life to the ones you get in the Hollywood pictures.**

**NF:** Well it's not all eh, what shall I say eh, glamour. Life isn't all glamorous at all. For the majority of the people. Not a minority. The minority that have got wealth, eh, they don't need to buy glamour by going to the pictures if you like.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I like pictures like *On the Waterfront*. *The Grapes of Wrath*. Now those, those are Social Realism.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** Things that matter. Paul Robeson. Singing his most famous song. About "lift that veil" [referring to 'Ol' Man River']. See that to me is my particular interest.

**VB: Uhuh. So did you feel that you learned something,**

**NF:** Because without the working class you wouldn't be sat at this table. Somebody had to make this table, chairs, floor and ceiling.

**VB: Mhm.**

**NF:** Lights and paper. Cups of tea.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I go the whole gamut. Don't mess about! [laughs]

**VB: Yeah. I mean did you feel that you learned something? You know you're talking about your philosophy of learning every day. Did you feel you learned something from watching someone like--**

**NF:** Oh yes! Sure!

**VB: Say Paul Robeson singing.**

**NF:** It reminds us that from the very depths of the working class you can get a singer like Paul Robeson. From the cotton fields to fame. [pause 3 seconds] Eh by his endeavours of a lovely voice but [inaudible] is what he is. Now Paul Robeson was hounded as a Communist in America by the American Committee. So did Charlie Chaplin. And they were allied to the working class.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I'm not propagating anything but it's so true what I say.

**VB: Yeah. Yeah. Well, nice to see you.**

**NF:** Well if it's time, just say.

**VB: We'll maybe just leave it at that for just now.**

**NF:** That's sufficient. That's sufficient. I hope that one or two of my ideas on the newspaper--

**VB: Yes.**

**NF:** I hope you take to it.

**VB: It was very kind of you to bring that.**

**NF:** Oh well eh, I thought it was a quick way of getting to know more than I'll ever know.

**VB: Thanks very much. I appreciate that.**

**NF:** I'm glad you do.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I would like to know if you found it useful.

**VB: Yeah.**

**NF:** I would like to know.

**VB: Thanks very much.**

[inaudible]

**NF:** I'll come back with this in about ten minutes.

**OP:** Who told you to come? Who told you to come?

**NF:** Well eh, it's quite a question that.

**VB: [laughs]**

**NF:** I'll go and wash my handkerchief. I'll come back in about quarter of an hour with this. All right.

**VB: Yes. Fine.**

**NF:** You don't mind?

**VB: No. Not at all.**

**NF:** Now enjoy your conversation with this lady.

**OP:** Have you finished with her now?.

**NF:** Oh yes. She's on the clock.

**VB: [laughs]**

**OP:** He tells a load of lies! Don't believe him.

[End of Interview]