

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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\* Oldham, Greater Manchester, 10 May 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Mick (Percival) Mitchell

\* Transcribed by Claire McGann/Standardised by Annie Nissen

\* PM = Mick Mitchell/ MM = Margaret Mitchell/ VB = Valentina Bold

\* Notes: First of one interview with Mick Mitchell; Sound Quality: Good; 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.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[tape introduction by Valentina Bold]

**VB: ...make sure I've got everything. That should be it. So we'll put that, see, maybe over on that wee table.**

**PM: Okay**

**VB: That'll be fine. [rustling 5 seconds] And that should pick us, pick us both up. Everything's working, erm [pause 2 seconds] I'm one of these people that's not very technically minded and sometimes [both laugh] things tend to go wrong. I'll just make sure that's on now. [rustling 3 seconds] That's on fine.**

**PM: I have a little erm Olympus erm Olympus, uh Olympus machine.**

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** But it's erm I think it's jammed, jammed somewhere so I'm having a bit of a problem.

**VB:** Yeah. These, these are quite good, I find erm--

**PM:** Pardon.

**VB:** It's, it's quite good that the pick up on it.

**PM:** Oh right, oh I'll just put it down there.

**VB:** That, that seems to be okay now, I think it was just a wee bit loose, erm one thing, the first thing I really wanted to ask was to make sure that I'd got all your personal details right.

**PM:** Right.

**VB:** Umm I mean n--nothing too, too gruelling but just so I get an idea of your background as well erm you were born in 1926, is that right?

**PM:** Yeah, uh, I was always robbed of one year. I was born on--

**VB:** Oh?

**PM:** I was born at 10 o'clock at night on--

**VB:** Yeah.

**PM:** [date redacted] [laughs]

**VB:** Ah dear.

**PM:** So, I was always, I was always, uh, too young for certain things, and, and too old for other things. It was, when I, later on in life when I, when I, put a job in for a an application, they'd say, oh, you're a bit old uh, and I was uh too, too, erm 1926--

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** And difference between 1927. [date redacted]

**VB: Yeah, oh [both laugh] erm and it was Liverpool you were born in?**

**PM:** I was born in Liverpool.

**VB: Right. Can I ask what is was your father did?**

**PM:** Uh, my father worked in a, a sugar, sugar works.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** Umm, as a labourer, and erm the fellow Macfie sugar, which was taken over by Tate & Lyle, I think.

**VB: Oh right.**

**PM:** But, that, that went closed down in round about 1937.

**VB: Yep.**

**PM:** So we're working class background, erm, I went to local, local erm what we called in Liverpool a council school and erm I, I had no formal qualifications when I left school. I left school at fourteen.  
[pause 3 seconds]

**VB: Right, and what, what was the first job that you went into after that?**

**PM:** Erm, the first job? Yes, my erm uh my my aunt was a, a midwife in uh Neston in on the Wirral near uh Chester.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** And during the war, erm we were evacuated to North Wales and my mother went to live with my aunt, and when I left school at fourteen I went to live with my aunt and I worked at a small [air] factory there.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** Then [coughs] I left, I left there and went to work for a builder's during the war, repair, doing lift's damage. Erm, then I went to work in the film industry. [laughs] [pause 5 seconds]

**VB: Right and I remember you, you were telling me, about the film--**

**PM:** That's right, yeah.

**VB: Yeah, right, so quite, you've had quite a few different jobs, then you were saying just now you were--**

**PM:** Yeah, I mean it's one of those things, you [cough] you erm you go through life with a, oh I had a, I had a variety of jobs and I--

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** Until I went in the Army.

**VB: Right. [pause 2 seconds] I see, erm, and you lived in Liverpool then, uh when, when did you leave Liverpool?**

**PM:** Erm, well I lef, I, I basically, I left at, at eighteen to join the army.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** And I came back, I, I went abroad.

**VB: Yep.**

**PM:** I went to Egypt, erm, I went to Greece during their civil war.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** I went back to Egypt, and I came home when I was twenty-one. And I lived at home for about a year.

**VB: Mhm.**

**PM:** Probably two years. Then I erm, went to work at a firm called uh A-- A.T.E.

**VB: Mhm.**

**PM:** And they installed, uh, automatic telephone equipment.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** I went to work with them and my first job was in Manchester.

**VB: Ah right.**

**PM:** And it was where my wife was the telephone operator there.

**VB: Ah [laughs] well a, a lucky move then in terms of jobs for you.**

**PM:** Yeah

**VB: Erm can I ask what year you were married in?**

**PM:** Pardon?

**VB: What year you were married in?**

**PM:** Uh, 1953. March 1953.

**VB: Right. Erm, and does your wife work? Or has she worked?**

**PM:** Yeah, she, she worked when, when we married she worked as a telephone operator.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** We, we moved to Newcastle-under-Lyme, in Staffordshire.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** Where she, she worked as an operator in the North Stafford Royal Infirmary.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** And then, our first daughter, erm, was born in 1958.

**VB: Mhm.**

**PM:** And then, then from then on 'till oh, [pause 2 seconds] 'bout fifteen, twenty years ago she-- she did house work.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** She got like, got another little job.

**VB: Right. And is it just, just the one daughter you have, or?**

**PM:** No, I've got three.

**VB: Three, right. That's great. Erm, and the, the last thing I wanted to ask, or actually, two things I wanted to ask erm, one of them was whether you had any strong political views?**

**PM:** I'm a Labour supporter.

**VB: Right. And the other one was, again it's just to get an idea of, of your background erm what religious, what religion were you raised in? Or?**

**PM: I was C of E.**

**VB: Yeah, right.**

**PM: But I'm an atheist now.**

**VB: Right, ok. Uhh oh, and the other thing I wanted to ask was if your own mother had worked at all?**

**PM: Umm, oh isn't that funny, I don't know she ever worked, or she never worked all the time I can remember. Even though we, we were in a-- we lived in a very [pause 2 seconds] poor area of Liverpool.**

**VB: Right.**

**PM: Uhh, it's now flattened.**

**VB: Right. And did you have sisters and brothers yourself?**

**PM: Yes, I have erm, er, one brother.**

**VB: Yep.**

**PM: And two sisters.**

**VB: That's great [pause 3 seconds] I seem to have come out without a pen today, which is quite--**

**PM: Oh dear, here.**

**VB: Oh that's okay, 'cause that's the only thing I need it for really anyway. Umm, the other thing I was wanting to ask--**

**PM: I'm not gonna have you be [inaudible].**

**VB: Right [laughs; rustling 6 seconds]**

**PM: Just check that one, oh I'll--**

**VB: Right.**

**PM: Have you got sufficient paper?**

**VB: Uhh, I, I don't actually need any paper.**

**PM: Oh, that's okay, yeah.**

**VB: It's just, just for that form.**

**PM: Yeah, is that okay?**

**VB: Uhh, yeah that one's a wee bit faint actually.**

**PM: Try that one.**

**VB: That's great thanks. Yeah, that's fine.**

**PM: That okay?**

**VB: That's great.**

**PM: I'll put that one there as well, just in case.**



**VB:** 'Cause the only other thing I really wanted to ask in terms of sort of official business was erm because I'm taping this, as I, as I was saying, it'll probably be kept in the University. Erm, we're asking people to sign a form to say that basically you don't mind it being kept in the University.

**PM:** No.

**VB:** And that you wouldn't mind if--

**PM:** No, not at all.

**VB:** Researchers looked at it, in the future.

**PM:** That's fine, yeah.

**VB:** Just to stop you suing us. [both laugh]

**PM:** No problem.

**VB:** Uh it's just that bit, at the top there. That's great. And then I'll sign it as well erm--

**PM:** What's the date? Sorry.

**VB:** The tenth I think [sound of page being signed 2 seconds] Just to keep the lawyers happy I think.

**PM:** Oh, it's no problem.

**VB:** That's great. Thanks very much. So I'll just sign that to keep it straight [sound of page being signed 2 seconds] that's great. Erm, so well I think, probably some of the questions I'm going to ask you, you've already answered. Erm, I mean one of, the first thing I was really interested in was erm the cinemas that you knew when you, when you were growing up.

**PM:** I've got a list of some of them, some of them I remember.

**VB: Yeah. Erm, did, did you have any favourites out, out of that? I mean you, you mention places like the Capitol, and the Coliseum.**

**PM:** Favourite cinema?

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** [sighs] Not, not really, in, in those days erm, there were a lot of uh, erm, the, our local paper was 'The Liverpool Echo', and uh there were columns and columns of uh cinemas. And you probably might have seen them on microfilm. It had like, well, in Glasgow for example. And erm it was just a matter of, of the picture you liked. Well, you know, I mean, we looked at the adverts, and uh, either alone, or with friends, and go and see and I, I had a pretty catholic taste in, in film. Umm, I didn't just go to cowboy films, or just to gangster films. Erm, the, the ones I didn't like, were the mucky ones [laughs].

**VB: Right. Erm, so I mean, did you go mainly on your own? Or did you go with, with friends?**

**PM:** Oh, I went with a friend. In fact, uh, this friend of mine, my, my school friend, and work friend. Uhh, a chap named Jack Edge. And, uh, we worked together. And then he, he joined the, uh, as it was then, GPO, which is now Telecom. And uh, he moved round the country, in various telephone exchanges, and he, he went to erm, he's now in Hayling Island, in Hampshire? Dorset? Whatever. I got him on the phone the other day we were talking about cinema and when we used to go. And we used to go nearly every night, [pause 2 seconds] you know, we'd have a, you know, liked the cinema. And uh, erm, I've probably, I've probably been to the cinema more times in a month uh when I was a boy, or lad, or teenager, a month, than I've been since married. It's a funny thing. And yes, I watch, I watch the old films on uh Channel 4, and BBC, the old grainy black-and-white ones. And erm, uh, I can remember the uh long forgotten actors, and oh I, I like the cinema [pause 2 seconds] I like the film, but I wouldn't say I'm a film buff. Erm, as I say, I can, can recall certain uh actors and actresses from way back and erm even some of the, even some of the scripts although most of, most of them, most of them use the same script anyway. [laughs]

**PM:** So, uh yes, I, I went alone, and erm, but more often uh I met my friends. So uh, that basically--

[sound of door opening]

**MM: Hello.**

**VB: Hello.**

**PM: This is Margaret, Mrs Mitchell.**

**MM: How do you do?**

**VB: Pleased to meet you, hello.**

**MM: I'm cold. [laughs]**

**VB: Oh it is chilly out there, yeah.**

**MM: Right, I'll get on for now.**

**PM: And then, erm, erm, I, I put down there about going to cinema in the Army. Uhh, Army cinemas. And erm, the, the various cinemas I went to in Greece and Egypt. The, the, the different ambience, shall we say?**

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM: And uh, but as I say uh the, the only films I watch now are what's televised, films, but do you know I, I like a good musical.**

**VB: Yeah. Did you like musicals when y--**

**PM: No, not when I was younger, no.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM: Erm, uh, there was a, in that day there was erm uh James Cagney, and Bogart, and Robinson uh they were uh very much desired like uh to watch and erm in my notes I put that there was a cinema**

local that were-- was called The Majestic, and I dunno, I don't even know if that's still a cinema. And they showed mostly erm, uh Warner Brothers films. So, you, you could always know, knew that they was going to show a Bogart film, or, or Cagney, because they were contract uh actors with Warner Brothers. Erm, then erm, yeah when I came out the Army, erm, I went with a couple of gals, erm going to the cinema. Uhh, but not on a regular basis. No, all [inaudible].

**VB: [laughs]**

**PM:** Then, as I say, the notes there cover Army, erm, that I went to erm cinemas in uhh, well I mentioned before, cinemas in Egypt, which were open air, open air, and if you, now and again we went on leave, we'd say, go to a little town, and we used to stay uh at these uh little pensions, and then we'd, we'd get to the top floor, and we'd, we'd watch the film. And they were all in Arabic anyway so, didn't make much sense. But erm, I always remember, erm, in those days, the, the Warner Brothers film used to have a social conscience as they call it. And uh, you probably know that, and it was after the, after the war when they, they had the Un-American Activities Committee in America, that uh that, that sort of social trend was, was phased out. Erm [pause 2 seconds] any other, any other side you want?

**VB: Well I, I was interested when you say that, that the stars you liked were people like Cagney and Bogart, Edward G. Robinson. What was it that, that attracted you to them do you think? What was it you liked about them?**

**PM:** I think it was all the, blood and thunder. You know, the uh real teenager. I was, I was, when they were in their heyday, erm, those actors and actresses, were, I was about fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. So, used to enjoy their film. Now, when I watch them on television, you can, you can see the joins. You can see the joins both in story and in the action. But erm, there was no, erm I think it were just excitement. You, you enjoyed it. Umm, oh and we liked er we liked cowboy, we were into cowboy, we went to see cowboy films. Umm, and adventure films, like the Errol Flynn. Errol Flynn type film. Umm the, the cinemas weren't much in Liverpool, uh the, the one nearest me was called The Coliseum. And it, it what we used to call the bug house. It were you know, a real dump. And I made a little note there, a little rude note, that, uhh, the first time I took my cousin, and erm, I think I must have been about seven, six or seven, I can remember it very, very well, and uh uh the seating were foams, like for the cheap seats. And I said to him, ah, his name was Gordon, and uh I was going, "Gordy?" I was saying to him "Gordy, Gordy, I want to go for a wee". And he said, "Oh, hang on,

hang on". So I said, "no I want t' go". he said, "Do it on the floor". So when we went out, we went out down the aisle, and out the exit, and by that time, a big pool on everybody [laughs] ah, I used to like boasting about those sort of things, nowadays at my age... [laughs]

**MM:** [in the background] Terrible that isn't it? [all laugh] Really is.

**PM:** But erm no, we, we, we had a mixed diet of erm, uh film-going. Umm [pause 2 seconds] well it, well thinking about it now there was nothing else to do was there?

**MM:** No, no.

**PM:** I mean, erm, there was sports clubs, but not so many where I lived. So, a lot of us survived on a diet of films, didn't we?

**MM:** But in those days as well, you had three different programmes a week, didn't you?

**PM:** That's right, yeah.

**MM:** You had Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, there was one film.

**PM:** Mhm, mhm.

**MM:** Uh, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday uh, Friday, Saturday. No, tuh-- Thursday, Friday, Saturday, another.

**PM:** And it was only later--

**MM:** And Sunday there was another one altogether.

**PM:** Well that was only later that they opened cinema on Sunday, wasn't it? Because at one time--

**MM:** Oh it was yes, yes.

**PM:** There was, it wasn't, there was, well, keep, keep Sunday--

**MM:** That's right, yes.

**PM:** Sacred.

**MM:** And uh [laughs] so you could, go in at, at one o'clock, and you could stay there all day if you wanted it was just continuous you know, and you could--

**PM:** Well 'til, until you got thrown out.

**MM:** That's right, yeah, 'til they realised you'd been there.

**PM:** Also, also in Liverpool. I wasn't going to go there. In Liverpool there was erm a cine-- two cinemas, and there were two in Liver-- and uh Manchester. Umm, one was called [pause 2 seconds] The Tatler.

**MM:** Oh yeah.

**PM:** In Liverpool.

**MM:** Was in Manchester.

**PM:** And it was a diet of, erm, small, one or two reels. All like, uhh, the, you didn't see a feature film. It was a--

**MM:** It was the cartoons, and uh--

**PM:** Cartoon, Mickey Mouse.

**MM:** Just short films, and newsreel, weren't there.

**PM:** Umm, and uh the old uh [pause 2 seconds] Max Fleischer cartoons. Uh, *Popeye*, that were there.

**MM:** Oh, *Popeye*.

**PM:** But erm, no it's uh, ha, you'd pass a cinema, or look in the paper, and the, the features, like you'd see them all for, they used to, used to advertise uhh, uhh, *Each Dawn I Die* for, for let's say, three days, and then when you looked, when you looked--

**MM:** Well it might be--

**PM:** They'd show a trailer--

**MM:** for the next three.

**PM:** for erm the next few days, wasn't it?

**MM:** That's right yeah, that's right.

**PM:** Another thing I remember seeing uhh, ere uhh these erm *Pathé Gazette*, these were uhh, uhh, have you heard of *Pathé Gazette*? Yeah, they're erm they're a form of advertising. Umm, and I, I always remember, and if you, you-- I've never seen one for years. And I, I liked the application of this. They used to show erm if a, the, the adverts was in the form of a magazine and the, the page used to open and there'd be the script below, text below and the picture. And there'd be a picture appertaining to the advert, advertisement. But, on the, on the *Pathé Gazette*, on that script it was always the same, and it was, it said something like this, "We were pleased to see him stagger as he ...". Now that, that's all I can remember. But whatever the product they showed in the picture of like, whatever--

**MM:** Oh yeah right, yeah.

**PM:** the script was always the same.

**MM:** Same script, yeah.

**PM:** So have you ever, did you ever see that, just make a note of the uh. The, the script under the, the picture.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** The erm, I can't, can't remember the advertisements from when I was young.

**MM:** No.

**PM:** I've never been uh, I don't like advertising anyway, so erm, I mean, we, we have a little, we have our bleeper and when the, when we're watching a film on Four or, what you call it, on ITV, we bleep over to something else rather than watch the adverts. It's one of those things. Umm so I can't remember too much of the adverts on the uh uh--

**MM and PM:** [in unison] On the cinema.

**PM:** Umm we always used to notice though that the trailers were, th-- there seemed to pieces in the trailer that didn't, weren't in the film.

**MM:** That's right yeah, yeah.

**PM:** That's a thing I noticed.

**MM:** They seemed to erm--

**PM:** I mean for argument's sake, we'll say [pause 2 seconds] in a trailer, the burning building, the, the flames were forty foot high, though in the film itself, when you saw it, the flames were only, the flames are only coming out one window [all laugh] so I think were like boosted up the trailers in those days.

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** Do you-- do you see trailers yourself?

**VB: Umm**



**PM:** Or do you—do you have them on file or no?

**VB:** Not really, no.

**PM:** Oh.

**VB:** [coughs] I mean the thing that came to mind when you were saying that, someone was saying to me that they remember going to the serials and at, at the end of the serial it would be say someone jumping off a cliff--

**MM:** Oh yes!

**PM:** That's right.

**VB:** And then the next week it would be as if that hadn't happened at all [laughs].

**MM:** That's right yeah, yeah that's true.

**PM:** That's right yeah.

**MM:** On Saturday afternoons matinées wasn't it, with uh *Flash Gordon* and all those you know.

**PM:** Yeah.

**MM:** Oh it were brilliant.

**PM:** We uh, I can remember seeing erm I can't remember now if it was a, a serial or just a film, but erm it was Tom Mix, a cowboy, cowboy star. Appa-- apparently he was a real, a real Marshal in Texas. Or maybe an honorary Marshal. And he was in a film called *My Pal, the King*. And I think it was the trailer, but I've got uh, erm Halliwell's 'Filmgoers Companion', and it mentions him, it just mentions *My Pal, the King*, but it doesn't mention whether it was a serial.

**MM:** Oh right, I don't know.

**PM:** But other serials that I remember was uh, erm [pause 2 seconds] *Last of the Mohicans*.

**MM:** Oh yes.

**PM:** That was, that was black and white.

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** And that was with erm I think, I think Randolph Scott was in it [referring to 1936 version]. I think Harry, Harry Carey, and Magua was played by an actor called Bob, Bob Corm-- Kortman [referring to 1932 version]

**MM:** Oh he remembers the weirdest things.

**VB:** [laughs]

**PM:** Now then--

**MM:** He told me the name of a waiter in a film, I couldn't.

**VB:** [laughs]

**PM:** Anyway , I was, you were talking about the diet of film we used to watch. And uh it was fairly catholic, wasn't it?

**MM:** Yes.

**PM:** In later life we enjoyed erm, the, the spectacle films, like, or oh, we always enjoy musicals. But uh we are talking now about those days. Uhh personally anything lovey-dovey uh as we say, give that a miss.

**MM:** Oh the road films we used to like those, didn't we? With Bob Hope in.

**PM:** Similar, similar prices. Yeah, isn't that strange, that just brought something, something to mind erm the, the cinemas were like little local, they, they advertised the, the films not only on posters, but they used to send erm like a little poster to your local shop. And I can remember going to our local shop, uh our local chip shop, and as I passed, in the window, was a strip, and it was Bob Hope in *Some Like it Hot*. I remember that now.

**MM:** Oh.

**PM:** Yeah. That's where he sings, uh I think that's, that's where he sings-- he sings, sings, I'm trying to remember it.

**MM:** Oh right.

**PM:** So that was basically, so, so, the, the, like, our diet of cinema. So the other thing was erm we used to take in our own uh our own sweets. Um, because the ice-creams were a bit dear [laughs] out of budget. But erm my, funny, my-, my uh my aunt, who was my dad's, my dad's sister-in-law, uh she was an, an usherette in a cinema called the, Olympia, Olympus, Olympia, in Liverpool. And we went there once, I can always remember with the, the torch you know going down, backwards down.

**MM:** Backwards.

**PM:** With the ice-cream, as the film was uhh as the film was finishing. Umm [pause 2 seconds] I've made a note of the cinema there look. You used to get in by giving jam jars. That was payment. The uh, erm [pause 2 seconds] oh the uh price wise uh in those days the [coughs] I think it was tuppence or thruppence. In the uh in the stalls.

**MM:** Yeah, yeah.

**PM:** And uh like, for children. I don't think they used the-- I don't think where I went they used the balcony, uh, the circle. When for something--

**MM:** Ah well for matinées.

**PM:** The children matinées then.

**MM:** The matinées was only downstairs.

**PM:** Because in the, erm as far as I can remember erm, you could go to the cinemas and there'd be erm, like, uh, there'd seem to be like, looking back now, fifty odd year ago, uh a varied diet of uh uh cinema. But after the war, when the record management came in there seemed to be, to me, I might be wrong, they had these uh, Saturday clubs and they set, uh, the, uh as the cinemas came in to groups, they seemed to have, seemed to be showing, showing the same diet.

**MM:** Same films.

**PM:** Yeah, the same programme, didn't they? So, erm [pause 2 seconds] yes, ice-cream was a bit dear. That, that would have been a thruppence.

**MM:** Oh yes.

**PM:** And it'd already been a tuppence to get in, so... [laughs]

**MM:** That's all we were getting to go, wasn't it?

**PM:** Mhm, mhm. And then the--

**MM:** We used to get about thruppence, tuppence for the eh cinema and a penny for sweets. That's all.

**PM:** And then the, uh, it was always uh an occasion where the uh firemen used to come round with a sprayer of antiseptic strong perfume. Um, I used to go down there all the [laughter] I think it used to kill the smell from the kids I think [laughter].

**MM:** Mind you we were totally different, 'cause Mick was in Liverpool, and I was brought up here. You know.

**VB:** Oh I see, yes.

**MM:** So uh, totally different environment really.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** I was different to him. Think he had it a bit rougher than I did when I was little.

**VB:** Yep

**MM:** But uh, basically the same though. The cinemas were the same, weren't they? [pause 2 seconds]. I mean the price to go now, it's ridiculous, to go to the cinema now. Well I suppose in those days it was a lot, wasn't it? Especially if uh there was a lot of you--

**PM:** Oh that's another thing I've just remembered now, uh, was in those days erm, you-- you could get in to an evening performance and erm we used to, to say to someone like can you take us in?

**MM:** Oh yes, yes.

**PM:** So--

**MM:** Yeah, children couldn't go in on their own unless they were accompanied by an adult. So you'd just ask anyone to take you in.

**PM:** You had to be careful even then. I mean, we weren't, we weren't too uh we weren't too sexually aware, but we knew like, what we called bad men.

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** And erm, if you wanted to go to the cinema, uh, very young, you made sure that you, you saw a married couple going in, or uh not so often, a single uh woman or lady.

**MM:** No, no.

**PM:** More often than not, a couple and you'd say "can you take me in, please?"

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** So you could get in the cinema.

**MM:** So you could get up inside [laughs]. Oh dear.

**PM:** Umm, what else was there? [pause 2 seconds] Any other, any other--

**MM:** Questions.

**PM:** Yeah, questions like that.

**VB:** Well one thing that I was going to ask when you mentioned that uh seeing the adverts for the films in the shop windows, how did you, did you choose which film to go to? Or did you just more or less go to everything that was on?

**PM:** Well we, we--

**MM:** No, we--

**PM:** We were very uncritical. We, I mean--

**MM:** We never bothered we just saw a film.

**PM:** We'd get the local paper, and there may, there may have been uh uh a criticism in there, but uh basically erm I think a lot of it were influenced by the poster.

**MM:** Yeah if it looked--

**PM:** If it looked garish.

**MM:** Yeah or whatever.

**PM:** You know blood and, blood and snot as we say, we'd go and see it [laughs] but, but the other one was uh the, the shop ones were just basic. Umm, some of them was like the old music hall erm posters. There'd just be a strip.

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** And they'd say "The Capital Cinema" erm "Three days" or whatever erm.

**MM:** Yeah, but there were always two films on, a main film and then a B film, as well wasn't there?

**PM:** That's right yeah, yeah, a second feature.

**MM:** Yeah, a second feature. You always got--

**PM:** That's right.

**MM:** You got your money's worth in those days.

**PM:** Oh yeah that's right, but, yeah, yes it would start with erm uh, when you went in the cinema erm in those days, uh. We haven't been for ages have we? But in those days you'd go in and they'd--

**MM:** Oh, it's been two or three years since I went to the pictures.

**PM:** Uh if you'd entered a good cinema, like the Odeon, in Liverpool, uh, the Para-- well which was the Paramount, it's now the Odeon, and the cinemas that were there, they were after, they were a, like a higher class of cinema. And uh when you went in there was uh in the Odeon an organist. Um, and, they used to have this subtle change of light.

**MM:** Yeah, yeah. They did in the Odeon Manchester.

**PM:** Um, when you'd get, when they'd play a record, or an organ, and then there'd be variation in colours of light, and in the, in the big cinemas. My local cinema, I mean that's when [frayed it?]-

**MM:** That's it, they went out [laughs].

**PM:** To look at it all. And erm they used to show, they'd show, they'd show a little feature. No, they'd sh-- it no, no, they had--

**MM:** They'd show the small feature.

**PM:** They had a small feature, the B film.

**MM:** Then, uh the news.

**PM:** Then an advertising feature.

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** Uh, which was *Pathé Gazette* in my cin-- in my case. Afterwards, a lot of the Pearl & Dean [advertisements].

**MM:** That's right, it was Pearl & Dean, last time we went, still doing that.

**PM:** And, then there'd be the news, and erm, there again it was different. We, we watched different erm, different editions.

**MM:** It was *Pathé News*, weren't it mostly?

**PM:** Uh, in, in the Paramount local I think-- I think they showed erm 20<sup>th</sup> Cent-- *20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox News*. And the Gaumont in Liverpool they showed erm.

**MM:** Was it Pathé?

**PM:** *Gaumont-British News*.

**MM:** Oh yeah, of course.

**PM:** That's what I handled, that, that news reel itself, uh with a job.



**VB: Right.**

**PM:** So, erm, then.

**MM:** Then it would have been the big film, wouldn't it?

**PM:** Yeah, the, the main news I remember was, were erm, Universal, erm Pathé, *Pathé News*, where they used to have the cock.

**MM:** Yeah, *Pathé News*, that's right yeah, a cock-a-doodle-do-ing, yes.

**PM:** Crowing in the middle. And uh, Gaumont-Univ-- no Universal-- no, Gaumont-British. Think there's three, yeah?

**MM:** Pathé and erm Gaumont-British and Universal. And Pathé.

**PM:** Mhm.

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** And that was-- that was basically the programme wasn't it?

**MM:** Yeah, yeah.

**PM:** Oh, uh oh yes, so then in between shows, uh either before or after, they'd show you the trailer.

**MM:** Oh that's right, yeah the trailers.

**PM:** And as I say, some of those were a bit. I think they wouldn't pass the trade description act now  
[laughs]

**MM:** But also--

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**VB:** I was just thinking I might move that mic, because we've got a tape recorder on [laughs]

**MM:** Oh well don't worry about me, I'm, mine are only little bits.

**VB:** No, it'll be interesting too, 'cause it'll just be picking up, where it was now it'll just be picking up wee traces of the other side of the room so uh. No, 'cause I was interested when you were saying that about like the big cinemas in town. Did you go mainly locally or did you go in to town to see?

**MM:** Umm mainly locally, I did anyway.

**PM:** Yeah, when, yeah.

**MM:** Just a treat, really when we went.

**PM:** Because uh--

**MM:** Or when you got older you went to the bigger cinemas in town.

**PM:** It was purely economics, erm, the, the-- you know it's all you could do, I mean I remember paying uh thruppence, tuppence and thruppence to go in the, the cheap matinées. But to see a good film, like the latest, I made a note of it there, that in, in Liverpool, the main cinemas there were the Odeon, the Odeon, the Trocadero, the Forum, and the Majestic. And uh, I always remember the Majestic mainly Warner Brothers films, so there might have been a tie-up financially with the, with the cinema and, and Warner's. And erm, uh [pause 2 seconds] so well uh if it was erm if someone said to you "I've been to see the latest Bogart film", or "James Rob-- uh Edward G. Robinson". I'd say "where'd you see it?". They'd say "The Odeon". Well you knew perfectly well then, he'd paid eight pence. So you'd say "well wait-- we'll have to wait". And there was, then, it might be four to six weeks, before that feature, that brand new feature, came to your cinema erm--

**MM:** The local ones, you know.

**PM:** The local cinema.

**MM:** They put the big, the films on in the big cinemas first.

**PM:** But I mean to, I also noticed that erm I became, I could go in to the cinema and more or less tell [pause 2 seconds] I don't want to exaggerate this, I could tell that the company that had made it, from the film. Because, it was uh, you've got the disadvantage now of uh of seeing the stock, film stock fifty years old. I was-- we was seeing it six weeks, or six months old.

**MM:** Mhm.

**PM:** And I can always, I can always remember Monogram films, and Columbia. They were, muddy. They, they-- the film stock was very muddy. It were, it were-- well apart from the bad acting erm Monogram was noted for the bad acting. And erm, I think Colum-- oh yeah Columbia was rough, until I think it was as far as I can recollect, it was 'til Harry uh Cohn uh took over. And I believe he was a, a right so-and-so in that, in Hollywood. Anyway, you could, you could tell [pause 2 seconds] 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, were all, were sort of uh needle-sharp, and uh, the other thing of course, was they had in uh in those days they had their own individual fonts, and uh uh scripts, and uh when you saw the titles and then the cast, you, you knew it were 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox film or an MGM. And uh MGM, I think they still use it now, it was like a sort of a, I'm looking at me computer now, it was like a Times Roman script. Um, Warner Brothers, uh, they, they showed a lot of colour in those days [coughs] im, I remember seeing [pause 2 seconds] oh what was his name? It was a colour film about fire fighters in America, and uh, that's right, there was a, a production company, and they were called Pine-Thomas, and they used to churn these things out, well they used to do sort of erm sort of a, an early form of 3D. Remember when we saw 3D films in the Fifties? Uh, they had a similar system where they'd, they'd move even though it was a mono uh a mono-film they'd move the, the scenery, to make it fit in with the script.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** Uh, you sometimes see it in the old erm, *The House of Wax* with Vincent Price in the Fifties.

**MM:** Oh yes, yes.

**PM:** And the, the scenery would move to, to give the stereo effect. So, erm, yeah we could tell the difference between erm Monogram, which was uh an el cheapo company, and they used to churn out some weird, I can remember them, I can remember them churning out erm serials. But I can't remember the name of, of any of them. But you, you can see them, look it up, hand painted in black and white [PM and VB laugh]

**MM:** When we see some of the old black-and-white ones now, you realise--

**PM:** Oh th-- yes.

**MM:** just how stilted and everything the erm the conversations were. You know, it's uh it's really weird. Films we used to enjoy! Cos we've been watching the old *Sherlock Holmes* ones--

**PM:** Oh yeah.

**MM:** More recently, you know, and uh we really enjoyed them when they were made, but looking at them now you think "oh!"

**PM:** You see the holes, yeah.

**MM:** They were terrible you know. But at the time we really enjoyed them.

**VB: The Basil Rathbone ones?**

**PM:** Basil Rathbone.

**MM:** Yes, yes. Oh they were great, I really enjoyed them.

**PM:** We always think, we always think he was-- we always think he was the definitive Sherlock.

**MM:** Oh yes, he was, Sherlock Holmes.

**PM:** These, these TV uh characters uh, no.

**VB:** No, and Nigel Bruce as, as Watson [laughs].

**MM:** That's right yes.

**VB:** Wonderful.

**MM:** Oh yes, yeah.

**PM:** Yeah, we used to always--

**MM:** They don't make films like that anymore.

**PM:** That were another thing too. That, yes, I'd forgotten all about that and you, you brought that back. When you said before, uh that we rely purely on the erm, uh, just, just go to, go to the cinema uh, now and again we used to get erm 'Picturegoer'. And, erm that was when we could-- when the budget allowed it. Uh, you, you didn't leave-- well we didn't leave an order with the sh-- with the for 'The Echo', we'd only buy 'The Echo' when we could afford it.

**MM:** No, no.

**PM:** But erm, yeah that uh that was, to the best of my knowledge, was all printed in sepia. I've not seen one for many, many years. Uh, erm we had erm [pause 2 seconds] on a, on a, on a jump level, we had uh Film—'Film Fun' [annual], with erm--

**MM:** Oh yes.

**PM & MM:** [in unison] Laurel and Hardy.

**PM:** 'Film Fun'.

**MM:** and erm uh Harry thingy--

**PM:** But uh, yeah, yeah we, we'd get some idea of a, of a film, but the, the 'Picturegoer'-- it seemed to me uh uh erm, it seemed to me like it to, to a competitive timescale. The uh the, the film would be shown in London on January the 1<sup>st</sup>.

**MM:** Mhm.

**PM:** And, it'd be shown in, in Liverpool, about the 14<sup>th</sup>. And that, it was just, just a comparison. And then our local cinema, it'd probably be on the, the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**MM:** That's right yeah. Yeah.

**PM:** So, you, you might read the, the 'Picturegoer' but, well, uh, you'd-- not 'Film Fun' obviously for, for criticism, and uh, somebody writing erm [pause 2 seconds] writing about a certain film. But uh, there, there was no fire. You know, nowadays I mean a film, a film's mentioned on uh erm what's our friend? *Film '90, Film '94, '96*.

**MM:** Oh, erm, thingy, Bar--

**PM:** Barry.

**VB: Barry Norman.**

**PM:** Barry Norman.

**MM:** Oh.

**PM:** And you said "oh that looks good", and you go and see it next week, you know, huh.

**MM:** That's right, that's right yeah. Oh there was none of that, you just--

**PM:** In those days, in those days you'd uh by word of mouth.

**MM:** You just went didn't you really, it was something to do basically.

**PM:** You went by word of mouth. And erm, uh, very little by-- we were, we were un-critical film, cinema goers.

**MM:** No.

**PM:** In those days.

**MM:** We just went.

**PM:** Umm it was, well obviously, it were before even television. Umm, I don't know if you're a telly addict, let alone-- but you come home, you go back to your student flat or whatever, and you switch on the telly and you're watching *Mastermind* or whatever. But in those days, erm we had radio.

**MM:** Yeah, the radio was the biggest one, no television.

**PM:** I don't, I don't remember film being discussed on radio.

**MM:** No.

**PM:** But erm, I-- the cinema was reasonably, well, reasonably cheap--

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** without a television

**MM:** One and six.

**PM:** Well that was later on though.

**MM:** Later on.

**PM:** Yeah, yeah, that were later that.

**MM:** Well we-- I only went to children's matinées when I was little, I didn't go to the cinema when I was, you know, not the night time ones, the adult ones, but erm I remember paying one and six, and that was in the stalls [PM laughs] Two and six for the balcony, you know [laughs] two and six, that's what? Twelve and a half pence? Isn't it [gasps]?

**PM:** I can't do any of, I can't do many of those now for, erm, ah. I probably uh it's one of those things, you know. You mentioned there about "how did we knew the film?" Well, I said, like, I remember 'Picturegoer'.

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** Um, there's was another film magazine, wasn't there? Another one in those days.

**MM:** Uh uh, oh it was--

**PM:** 'Picturegoer' and--

**VB: There's 'Film Weekly' as well, is that?**

**PM:** I don't remember that, Film Week--

**VB: Yeah [pause 2 seconds] I've actually got a couple of sheets, just by coincidence, of 'Picturegoer' with me. Um, just copies [rustling] I think. There should be [rustling 3 seconds] somewhere erm, maybe I don't actually. I did have a-- a copy of-- Oh no this is it [MM laughs]**

**PM:** That's a bit like my filing system.

**MM:** [laughs]

**VB: It's erm just one of the fashion features about-- it's got people like Bette Davis in it. And uh... [rustling noises continue]**

**PM:** Oh.



**MM:** Ah yes.

**PM:** Oh, that's right yes, hmh.

**MM:** We've not got the actors and actresses, that they had in those days.

**PM:** That's right.

**MM:** Definitely not.

**PM:** Femme fatale.

**MM:** You won't remember them like you remember those.

**PM:** That's right, femme fatale.

**MM:** The present day ones.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** You'd probably forget them if they didn't make a film for two years you know?

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** But, these--

**PM:** Yeah.

**MM:** They'll live forever won't they?

**VB:** Yeah.

**PM:** I've made a-- I've made a note there of a of erm...

**MM:** [looking at magazine] Oh yes!

**PM:** Of going to erm, uh, when you mentioned about film, uh film magazines.

**MM:** [looking at magazine] Oh yes [chuckling]

**PM:** We, we went to for erm we went to Prestatyn in North Wales, on a school holiday.

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** And in those days they had, erm, if you were what they called 'deprived', deprived family, they-- an organisation would take you for a holiday. And we went to North Wales. And there was a erm there was a magazine, I can't remember the title of it now.

**MM:** [murmurs in the background] Norma Shearer.

**PM:** But, it was composed of stills of a feature film, and I made a note of it and the bubbles, bubbles of conversation were actually colour.

**VB: Ah!**

**PM:** And I bought, I bought the magazine, and it featured *Gunga Din*. The film *Gunga Din*. And that was about 1938. And when we got to Wales, the film was on. So I took it along with me, and it was like trying to follow [VB laughs] like going to the orchestra, and trying to, trying to follow the score. And uh, actually, the, the first picture obviously was the, the title *Gunga Din*, and then from then on there were huge chunks missing out of the script. But, as you watched the film, obviously.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** But that was the-- I made a note of it, the quality of this magazine was quite well done. Umm they, they were, probably they had a type of three colour, three colour printer. And uh I think, uh, I'm not too sure who was in *Gunga Din*. Um, I think it might have been Sam Jaffe. But anyway.

**MM:** [handing back magazine] Thank you.

**PM:** Um, that was the only—that, that was the only cinema I went to like outside of Liverpool. In those days, in the Thirties erm--

**VB: How did it compare to the cinemas in Liverpool?**

**PM:** Pardon?

**VB: How did it compare to the cinemas in Liverpool?**

**PM:** Um, oh smaller.

**VB: A lot smaller.**

**PM:** You know. They uh, this Capital cinema. Actually, it was quite big erm, and it was shaped erm, it had a like a [pause 2 seconds] the seating arrangement, the seating were like, like erm a hexagon shape, like that. So erm, it's now a erm a supermarket.

**MM:** Oh, I thought you were going say a Bingo Hall.

**PM:** No a supermarket, no [laughs].

**MM:** Most of them are, aren't they?

**PM:** Yeah. But the, the town cinemas were very good. Um, we mentioned before about the, the décor erm--

**MM:** Oh they were very ornate, weren't they? You know, the, the town cinemas.

**PM:** I'm probably, I'm probably cheating here, here really because erm I've seen, I've seen a book rece-- well not recently, but over the last few years, and it was on cinema architecture. And they, they compare like Moorish, no, no Alhambra, and thing like that.

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** So you think-- sometimes you think, you think its coloured by that, by being brought up to date. But erm, the, the local cinemas, were cheap and cheerful, you know they were--

**MM:** Oh yeah.

**PM:** They weren't too-- you didn't get too many facilities with them.

**MM:** No, no.

**PM:** The erm, the Odeon in Liverpool, which used to be called the Paramount, was quite a comfortable one. Um, the Forum in Liverpool was quite comfortable. Uh oh that's right, I'd forgotten about that one. There was a, a cinema in Liverpool called the Palais de Lu-- Palais de Luxe, Palais de Lu-- we used to call it Pal de Lux. And uh it was, it was an old Victorian theatre, converted into a cinema. And if you couldn't afford the first two circles, uh, not the circle, the first two circles, there was one there, and uh, it adopted the old Victorian name 'the Gods'.

**MM:** Oh yeah. 'Right up in the Gods'.

**PM:** And that was, that was a deck, you know, the floor [MM laughs] the floor must have been about forty-five degrees, or steeper [VB and MM laugh] and the picture up there, was like a postcard.

**MM:** [laughs]

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** But erm, uh, we used to go up there, I mean there, there was such a wide variety of erm film. I mean, uh, we, we-- between here and Oldham there, there was three locations, three sites of cinemas on one road. And one, one is now a church.

**MM:** Oh the, yeah.

**PM:** One is erm, it's burnt down. It's uh, you went to it, it became club.

**MM:** Oh that's right yes it was Frank Sinatra's.

**PM:** And that's now the Prince of-- on the site. And then uh, there's the--

**MM:** The Roxy--

**PM:** The Roxy cinema. Which is still, still a cinema.

**MM:** It's still there. Yeah.

**PM:** So. Oh and then further up there, there's a bingo hall, near Oldham. Eh Hollinwood. Um it's off-- just off Hollinwood-- uh off Manchester Road.

**MM:** Oh.

**PM:** And that's an old, an old cinema. But there was such a [cough] erm by looking at the paper, I mean you. In school, someone'd say to you, or at, at work, erm, somebody'd say, "have you seen that so-and-so?", "have you seen the James Cagney, or have you seen whatever?" And I'd say "no". Well they'd say, "you've missed a good film". And there wasn't a lot-- there wasn't then much point in waiting until Channel 4 repeated it.

**MM:** That's right yeah, you'd just wait 'til you saw it at the cinema.

**PM:** And so you'd look in the paper, and there'd be say a little advert, probably about three inches by half inch. And erm, it might be erm erm some, you know some cinema, a good walk or a tram ride, I mean, the tram was finished in Liverpool dur-- just after the war. So you'd get tram rides in the Thirties, to see, to actually go see the film, because it'd had been recommended by word of mouth. Uh, we weren't all Barry Norman's in those days [laughs].

**MM:** We didn't have anybody telling us. As you say, unless they'd been to see it themselves.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** But as I say. As I said in the—on, on the notes there. Um. One of my jobs I wor-- this was a job erm when you [pause 2 seconds] I'm trying to think why I went to the. That's right. Uh, I went to work for a builder. And we were doing bomb, repairing bomb damage. And, erm the, the, the director and the manager got caught fiddling the government out of, whatever, the compensation. And they went to prison. So I was without a job and I went to the employment exchange. Minister, Ministry of Labour.

**MM:** Ministry of Labour, yes.

**PM:** And erm

**MM:** It's like a job centre.

**PM:** And they said, "there's a job here, in films". They said, "in films". I said, "oh you know that's good" [all laugh] I said, you know, I must admit, they took me, you know. So I went to-- went to this firm, and it was erm General Film Distributors.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** And they handled uh Universal films and the *Gaumont British News*. And our, our job was just packing the films, and putting labels on and sending them to the cinemas. And these-- the, the, the film containers erm, in those days, and they're probably in a museum somewhere, they were erm, a metal box with a wooden, wooden interior. And a carrying handle, and a padlock on. Well uh, a hasp for locking. And that, that-- they were like one fil-- one, two and three until you, feature film. And erm, I can remember, I can remember handling, uh, I, I know now what I handled, but, but it's been after the event. But I remember handling a, a film called *Back Street*, with erm uh uh Boyer, Charles Boyer. And uh, our job was just to get the films, check them, and they had a couple of gals with a, they had a, in a little erm, little room, where they used to have a splicing machine. And they'd rep-- run through the film, and check it for any uh breaks, and re-- repair it with a splicing machine, and masking tape, or whatever it was. And then erm, the front of the container had a little slot, and we used to just fill-- write a card that out, the-- the Regal cinema, the Devon cinema Failsworth. And this was collected by the erm, General erm, FGS film transport services. And you-- they had a very distinctive van, it was like, I think I can remember, black and gold, black and gold, with uh, their initial on the side. And a lot of the films we, we handled in, this we're talking about now about 1942

or 3, and these, these films were going to RAF stations. And we always used to have, used to have erm RA-- RAF Holyhead. Or RAF Burtonwood. Or RAF, what's that one in Middleton? What's that one?

**MM:** Oh erm.

**PM:** Ro-, no, no, I don't remember.

**MM:** Yeah, Roads, uh.

**PM:** Anyway, so that, that was the job, but uh, one of the, a little job I had was erm, a film was delivered to one cinema and I had to go and deliver it to another. I had to go to the cinema, collect it. I think I think I got about a shilling for, for doing this. So. And it, and it was in the blackout. So, we'd got to the cinema. And we'd call it Cabbage, Cabbage Hall, that's the actual name of it, at uh if you look at the Liverpool A to Z, the actual area of Cabbage Hall is still there, but I think the cinema's gone. It became, might be a bingo hall, or a beauty parlour--

**MM:** Bingo Hall!

**PM:** I don't know. And uh, that used to be my business, to go and see the feature, then get the film, uh uh when the film was erm shown, the, the news reel was shown, I'd put it on the container, and I'd put it on the handlebars of my bike, and I used to go to the r-- Regal in Utting Avenue, Regal cinema, Utting Avenue. And uh, I'd watch the back half of another film there [VB and MM laugh] And then from there it was collected by FGS to be sent somewhere else. And erm, the other perk was getting free show tickets. Um, these were handed out, obviously by erm reps.

**MM:** I remember those.

**PM:** And they were given to my-- our manager, and uh he erm he, he gave me ones that he didn't want see himself, basically, you know. And many a time I've been to a cinema and uh, I'd like-- there's-- the whole cinema has about ten people watching [all laugh] the uh- watching the film. It's quite, quite interesting.

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** And uh, that, I made a memo too, that-- and uh my manager came in one day and said "I want you to look in the-- look in the files, in the sh-- in the rack, in the vaults, in the film vaults. There's erm uh a film missing, and it was uh a Dutch film that had been uh liberated. Well, not 'liberated', it had been brought to this country, before the, the occupation. And it'd been lost. The film was called *Cross-Patch*. I always remember this one. So he said look in the vault, so we erm, I don't, have you ever been in to an old time cinema vault?

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

**PM:** You've not been in one. The, I think, well, erm, there's, there's a erm a site in Liverpool, a street in Liverpool, and it was like, I even made a note of it, it was what, what you might call Liverpool's Wardour Street. And there was erm Universal Films, Warner Brothers, Paramount, and at the back of them was the other, what was the other one? Re-- Renown. Uh no, Republic, Republic Films. That was Herbert, Herbert J. Yates I think it was. Anyway we uh, all this, Republic film, they moved out. Anyway, we went to look in the vaults, and I had a cousin working for Warner Brothers, quite by accident, I didn't know, didn't know he was working in film packing. And uh, he erm, he oh he said, "our boss has been in and having a look round for this film. And it's just, just disappeared, and it's supposed, supposed to be in Liverpool, and it's just, just disappeared". So, erm, he said the company's report was just, it wasn't in the vaults, so quite, quite out of luck, the vaul-- the vaults was a room, I would say, each room was probably this wide, which I'm pointing, it probably about five, six foot wide, by about eight foot. And it was protected by a erm, safety old fashioned fire door. But they, they used to have angle line racks on either side, and the fil—the, the films were stacked reels standing up, on like a penny on edge.

**MM:** Mhm.

**PM:** And erm, there was-- by law they had a chimney, which an agile young lad could climb it, inside it, like a, like a Victorian chimney sweep.

**VB: Mhm.**



**PM:** And we actually, we went into the-- just a couple uh weeks later, we went in to this Republic vault, through the, through the ventilator. And we climbed down like, with our, on our hands and knees like wedged, wedged either side.

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** I went roaming round the office in the, the building. And there was this film. This, this *Cross-Patch* film.

**MM:** Oh.

**PM:** So, we, we came back up the same way, and reported the manager, and we had to, had to tell him what we'd done like, but it was on our break time so, it wasn't really like, well it didn't, didn't sink too much of the job like. So uh, that was recovered. But another, another time erm, up in uh, a place called uh Maghull, Maghull in Liverpool, outside of Liverpool, which from our office erm and warehouse must have been, actually let's say five miles, and they, they had a store of all film there, a wooden building, and I think it was the old film which had, you know, you look at it and it blows up you know what I mean [VB and PM laugh] and there were stacks of old film, and the place was crawling with spiders and webs and the timber was rotting. And apparently there were, they were erm silent films. And when, when I left there, I wasn't in that uh months I was in that job. And, when I left there, erm I lost interest in that. So, whatever happened to that film stock, I don't know.

**MM:** Mhm.

**VB:** Mhm.

**PM:** It'd, it'd make a fortune now.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** That chimney's still there, isn't it?

**PM:** Huh?

**MM:** Remember when we went to Liverpool?

**PM:** Oh yeah, the chimney's still there.

**MM:** Last year.

**PM:** The place, the place is still there. Yeah, yeah.

**MM:** You showed me the-- where you used to work--

**PM:** Yeah.

**MM:** For them. And you said, "I remember coming down that chimney".

**PM:** That's right. Yeah.

**MM:** "I came down that chimney once". Yeah, that's still there now.

**PM:** So it's erm, the-- our boss was a fella named, uh uh, the, the-- we had a sort of Under Manager named Ken Jones, and the, the other manager, the head bloke was a Jewish chap. And I think his name were Blund. And I think, later on in life, and I might be wrong here, later he had some connection with the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool. Uh from like uh, like on a Director come--

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** Promoter, sort of. But that was my chief, brief interlude with the film industry.

**MM:** The film industry.

**VB: Mhm.**

**PM:** Well my, my--

**MM:** Not a film star but ...

**PM:** My, my, my cousin erm, now dead, uh was a heavyweight boxer. Before the war. And uh, he, he's actually in a, in an old film with Douglas Fairbanks.

**VB: Really? Mhm.**

**PM:** And erm, the, the film is called *The Amateur Gentleman*. And it's a Regency film. And in a, a-- when I say "my cousin's in it". In one episode, erm, in the, the film Fairbanks is, is, is erm what's the word? Uh make a-- make a bet-- someone makes a bet with him to have a fight with a boxer. With a bareknuckle boxer. And they have the ring. And the actor, he's actually fighting my cousin. So if you ever see *The Amateur Gentleman*—

**MM:** [laughs]

**VB: Oh, I'll have to look out for that.**

**PM:** So if you ever see.

**MM:** *The Amateur Gentleman*.

**PM:** If you ever see *Amateur Gentleman*, with Douglas Fairbanks. I don't think he's even credited in it, but. But erm, he were-- he's about six foot six. Uh, he was in the army during the war. And uh, I think that was the only, the only film he made. But, his, his wife, oh yeah this, this is another thing of interest. His wife was named-- I think her name was Pamela-- we weren't a very close family. Um what, what. We're a family where when we meet after like two or three years, we say "as I was saying".

**VB: Yeah [laughs].**

**PM:** One of those families. And his wife was an extra in films in the Thirties and [pause], I'm trying to think what her name was. Faye something. Uh. She was only an actress, she wasn't uh. In my mind, I associate 'Once Upon a Time' with Faye Compton, but it wasn't, you know, it's not her at all. I know this definitely. But, they made a film, I think it was erm, uh, *Sixty Glorious Years*, with erm, I think Anna Neagle's in it.

**MM:** Anna Neagle, yes.

**VB:** Oh right.

**PM:** But this, this wife, was actually erm Queen Victoria in *The Long Shots*. She stood in for Anna, Anna Neagle.

**MM:** Oh right, yeah.

**VB:** Right.

**MM:** Yeah.

**PM:** Yeah, and erm, uh, my-- I can rememb-- I can remember my cousin during the war, he came to see us. Uh, he lived down, outside London. Maybe in Kent. And he said, "You must see our film". And we said, "Uh". And he said, "If you look down", he said, "that long shot of so-and-so, you can see that's" [laughs] "that's my-- my wife, Faye" [MM laughs] so that was the *Gentleman*, erm--

**MM:** And--

**VB:** That's interesting yeah.

**MM:** [laughs]

**PM:** The boxer is my cousin. Big, big six footer. Uh, my other. Uh, that, as I say, that was my brief uh interlude with the uh cinema. But erm, I erm, uh twenty, 1970, I was a—my, my, my job basically, I spent a long-time welding. And then erm about thirty ago, thirty years ago I went selling welding for them, I was a representative. And twenty erm, 1970, wasn't it? The year of that bookmark, I joined Pepwell.

**MM:** Oh yes, my erm.

**PM:** Yeah, I joined with Pepwell, and we stayed at this guest house, well little country house, hotel in erm Ramsgate. And probably about twelve bedrooms. And the owner was a Canadian called Bill Nick, N-I-C-K. And he'd been erm badly wounded in the uh in Italy during the war. He'd, he'd stepped on a mine, and it were a German-- what you'd call a German shoe mine. And it's a, it's a wooden box filled with erm, what they call in engineering, swarth. All these like little curly pieces of metal.

**MM:** Oh yes.

**PM:** And you might have seen them in an engineering shop.

**MM:** Oh yes, shaved off bits.

**VB:** Yeah.

**PM:** And they used to, used to fill them with that. And he walked over it and passed it, and then when it jumped out the ground. They, they, that's the idea, they had a small charge, which blew it out of the ground, and then it exploded.

**MM:** Oh right.

**PM:** And he had about hundred odd pieces of swarth in his back.

**MM:** Ooh.

**PM:** Anyway.

**MM:** Nasty people.

**VB:** Mhm.

**PM:** He went into the film industry, and uh, as an extra, and uh I said "did you see my cousin? Uh in that-- did you see that *Amateur Gentleman*"? I keep sayi-- I keep meaning to ask uh, write up to Channel 4, and ask if they'll ever show it, cause they're bound to one time or another, cause they show a lot of films you know from the olden days. Anyway, uh he became an extra, and he was an

expert in uh erm horse riding parts. And in this hotel, in the foyer, there's a Roman sword, and he said, he said "I used that in a film". Sorry, I can't remember the film now. And, it's made of wood, you know, aluminium, painted aluminium.

**MM:** It'd give you a nasty bruise.

**VB:** [laughs]

**PM:** And he said like, he said, he said, "all this-- all this", he said, "it's all sound effects".

**VB:** Oh right.

**PM:** You know uh, as I said before, you, you see *Amateur Gentleman*, you see my cousin. Now, if you see it again, which you're bound to see, *The Colditz Story*. The old one, the, the black-and-white one.

**MM:** The original, yeah.

**PM:** He was in that, and he, he did a stunt where, in the, the storyline is that the-- in the French, the Frenchman, French section decide to leave.

**MM:** Escape it.

**PM:** I mean no one, as I say, no one wants to stay in prison, do they?

**MM:** No, they don't, I don't know why [laughs] good life.

**PM:** And one of them escapes, and they get on to the roof, and the Germans shoot him and he falls about thirty foot, dead, and this-- the actual bloke falling was this stunt man Bill Nick.

**VB:** Right.

**PM:** And he used to always used to talk about the. Oh, he used to be an interesting character about the film. He said erm, he told me about uh uh Laurence Olivier, uh Larry, that were uh everyone called him Larry.

**MM:** Of course, Larry.

**PM:** Those were the uh, "sweeties", weren't they? [laughter] And he said, "Hang on a minute", and he came back and brought a shoe box, and he said--

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

**PM:** Um, some of them were really erm, uh, really friendly to the extras. Uh uh, and, well, some had a different like-- some had, must have been that little stage higher obviously.

**MM:** Yeah, than extras yeah.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** And they said the, the erm, the worst actor, the worst actor/producer he ever met was uh Cornel Wilde.

**VB: Um.**

**PM:** He said erm I hope that's not. I don't-- is Cornel Wilde still al-- I mean, he might sue me for a million pound [all laugh] he said he was a real S-H-, you know, he said he was an unpleasant character. Ay he said erm nobody got on with him, uh. He might have been like uh came over well on the, on the screen.

**MM:** He was, he was very nice.

**PM:** He said but erm ruthless. Uh didn't give a damn for the staff. And he said that and the, the other character he, he worked with was Victor Mature. And he said, "Look." He said, "What a character he was." He said erm, he used to have erm, uh when you stay in a hotel, he said, he used

to say “I want to take”-- he’d say to, to the film, film crew or whatever, he said, “I’m having a, having a few days off.” And he’d go in a hotel room, with three girls. Three or four girls. And he’d stay there for about four days, so they were probably playing scrabble.

**MM:** [laughs] Oh of course, yes, yeah.

**PM:** And he said, uh, “Oh, Victor Mature.” He said, “He came over as all like this He-man, and all of that.” But, they, they were filming in uh they filmed in Africa. And, erm, the idea was that for Victor Mature was rescued somewhere, from this river. And there was crocodiles in it. So they said, “Right Victor, all you’ve got to do is walk, walk to the river edge, like, just walk in to it, then from there we’ll put the, we’ll put the extra, uh the stunt man in to do it.” You know. So I’m not going try the American accent. But he said, “You’re not gonna get me near that river!” [VB and MM laugh] they said, “Look”, they said, “look, we’ve got three, three white hunters with us.” Like marksmen. And they said, “If there’s-- if there’s a movement of a fish, uh uh a reptile, near, it’s dead.”

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** You know, it’s dead.

**VB: Yeah.**

**PM:** You know. And he wouldn’t. He, they actually, he he-- I think it’s one of those, whatever the film was. He said, himself, he said-- you can obviously see the join. Uh, it’s where, where Mature were, were like that or like that— [laughter] Or when he goes into the river you can see the difference [laughter]. But as I say, Laurence Olivier, was erm--

**MM:** He was kind.

**PM:** He was a gentleman to everybody. He said, he, he, really erm uh erm looked after the people, and remembered, remembered them. He always said he sent him a card like. So erm, uh I can’t remember talking with him about any other films. But erm, yeah as I say, he used to specialise in horse, horseback, horse riding. And uh, as I mentioned, after Colditz, so if you see that fall ...

**VB: [laughs] I’ll have to look out for that.**



**MM:** Oh.

**PM:** So that was, that's basically our full--

**MM:** Yes.

**PM:** Any other questions we can...?

**VB:** Um, well I mean I think we've covered quite a lot, I mean [all laugh]

**MM:** I think we have.

**VB:** From cinema-going as a child, right to Victor Mature and Laurence Olivier. Erm.

[PM and MM laugh]

**MM:** Victor Mature being a coward.

**VB:** Yeah. I can't really think of anything else that, that we've missed out.

**MM:** No [pause 2 seconds].

**PM:** I put, I put one or two erm uh recollections of cinema-going erm in arm army service

**VB:** Yeah.

**PM:** AKC, Army Cinema Corps. Or, Kinema Corps it was, or it might have been Kinematica Corps.

**VB:** Yeah.

**PM:** But we used to call it AKC.

**MM:** Who's arguing? Would you like another drink?

**VB: Erm**

**MM: Coffee?**

**VB: I'm just thinking, actually, I should maybe just go fairly soon, 'cause I've got to be back into Manchester.**

**PM: Oh, right yeah.**

**MM: Oh.**

**VB: But, it's been very good of you to talk to me at this sort of length and tell me all this, 'cause I really appreciate this for the project, and uh ...**

**PM: Do you, do you know what they say--**

**VB: It's really valuable.**

**PM: Always-- always beware of Greeks bearing gifts.**

**MM: Bearing gifts.**

**VB: Ooh.**

**MM: Oh, now what? Ah [PM's footsteps walking away] So you're interested in the--**

**VB: Yes.**

**MM: old days, the cinema.**

**VB: Yes.**

**MM:** Yeah. Thing is, we did it, you never think anything about it, you know. It was just, it was just life, you know.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MM:** But uh, I can always remember we used to, when we went to matinees, we'd uh, we'd see *Flash Gordon*, and we'd all come out with our coats as a cape round our shoulders, you know, and we'd all run home, you know, "I'm Flash Gordon!" You know. Or if we went to see a cowboy film, we'd all go home, you know, slapping ourselves, you know. And uh oh it was really mad when you came out. But erm yeah, they were really, they were really good.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MM:** In the old days. I think. A lot better than. I mean, you only get one film now, don't you, and some adverts. No, it was really good.

**VB: Was it this sort of area that you grew up then? Or?**

**MM:** I grew up erm, in Moss Side actually.

**VB: Right.**

**MM:** Yeah. Grew up in Moss Side.

**PM:** [re-enters the room] lost my sheet.

**MM:** What have you lost?

**PM:** [rustling] I did a print out about my friend, Fidders.

**MM:** Hey?

**PM:** [crash as microphone is moved] Oops.

**MM:** You're alright you've missed it. Um, oh I don't know. [rustling noises continue]

**PM:** That were there, I--

**MM:** Watch the wire!

**PM:** I also am doing a project.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** I'm trying to write a book, about inventors and discoverers.

**VB: Um.**

**PM:** And people, you know, who invented the submarine, firearms, compass uh, anemometers, various scientific instruments. But, they're all clergymen.

**VB: Right!**

**PM:** And, I've been trying to get some information on that chap.

**VB:** Hmm [pause 3 seconds] right. [pause 4 seconds] well I'll certainly see if I can come across anything. Well obviously I can't promise, but--

**PM:** No, no, no.

**VB:** Uh, but I will, hmm. He certainly sounds like an interesting chap actually, doesn't he? [pause 4 seconds]

**MM:** Got quite a lot of names, haven't you?

**PM:** Mhm.

**MM:** About two hundred.

**PM:** Two hundred.

**MM:** Mhm.

**PM:** Like I say, I've only been working on it now about four years, so--

**MM:** [laughs]

**VB:** Oh wow.

**PM:** So it might, might see publicity in about another three.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** What do you think? [papers rustling]

**PM:** Yeah I'd appreciate that. I mean, don't, don't, obviously don't erm make a big deal out of it, but if, if you're in conversation, you know.

**VB:** Yeah, if I come across anything.

**PM:** With one of your, medical comra-- comrades.

**VB:** Yeah, yeah.

**PM:** Have you got many calls now, in Manchester to do?

**VB:** Um, a fair, a few more erm. I've, I've been down for a couple of weeks now so I'm going up next, back to Glasgow, uh next Tuesday.

**PM:** Mhm.

**MM:** Oh right.

**VB: I've still got two people to see so--**

**PM: Oh right.**

**MM: Are you staying in Didsbury?**

**VB: Um, I'm staying in uh the University halls of residence, at Owens Park.**

**PM: Oh right.**

**MM: That's not far from where I was brought up, is it?**

**VB: Oh right, yeah.**

**MM: I was brought up over there.**

**PM: Our son-in-law's, son-in-law works up there, doesn't he?**

**MM: He does yeah.**

**VB: Ah, does he?**

**PM: On security.**

**MM: He's a security guard, yeah.**

**VB: Oh right, I've probably seen him around then.**

**MM: Probably, yeah.**

**PM: That's him up there.**

**VB: Right.**

**MM:** Oh that, you wouldn't recognise him from that Mick. It's more, probably this one. Oh no, he's, he's lost a lot of weight since then.

**VB:** It's a lovely photo that, it's really nice.

**MM:** That is more like him now, actually. He lost uh he came out of the army, and erm, when he got married he came out of the army.

**VB:** Oh right.

**MM:** And he went on uh a diet. Oh and he lost, what was it? Three stone?

**PM:** Mhm.

**MM:** He lost a lot of weight.

**VB:** It's a big difference.

**MM:** Yeah, well he was stationed in Germany, just before they got married.

**VB:** Right.

**MM:** And he said, all they had to do really was drink and that, you know, and eat.

**VB:** Yeah.

**PM:** That's our complete family.

**VB:** Wow. Your daughters are very bonny [pretty], aren't they?

**MM:** Mhm.

**VB:** They're lovely.

**MM:** All married now.

**PM:** We had the erm--

**MM:** That's the eldest there.

**PM:** The eldest, Lynn--

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** she used to work at Telecom, but was made redundant.

**VB: Mhm.**

**PM:** This other girl, worked for cable manufacturers.

**VB: Right.**

**PM:** And the youngest works for Virgin Airline.

**VB: That'll be the high life. Working for the airlines [laughs].**

**MM:** [laughs] yeah. Well she had erm she had her first baby last November.

**VB: Right.**

**MM:** And, but she'll be going back, she's going back flying, June, isn't she?

**PM:** Yeah.

**VB: Uh.**

**MM:** So--



[End of Interview]