

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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\* Harrow, Middlesex, 27 July 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Rosalind Avadis and Mick (Maurice) Bloom

\* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Annette Kuhn

\* RA=Rosalind Avadis/ MB= Mick Bloom / VB=Valentina Bold

\* Notes: First of two interviews with Rosalind Avadis and Mick Bloom; Sound Quality: Good initially/Poor.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

**VB: That's better. Right so, eh, I know you were born in 1921. Can I ask where you were born?**

**RA:** Eh, North Kensington.

**VB: Can I ask what your father did?**

**RA:** My father?

**VB: What sort of work he did.**

**RA:** He was a tailor.

**VB: Right. That's great. And did your mother work herself?**

**RA:** Eh no.

**VB:** No. Erm, can I ask how many of you there were in the family?

**RA:** Six. Six children.

**VB:** That's great. Erm, and can I ask where you've lived?

**RA:** Since? Oh well, when... oh we went to live in Neasden--

**VB:** Yeah.

**RA:** After North Kensington.

**VB:** Yeah.

**RA:** Notting Hill. Eh, place called Dollis Hill.

**VB:** Right.

**RA:** And then I got married from there and went to live in Leeds.

**VB:** Ah.

**RA:** I lived in Leeds for eighteen years.

**VB:** Yeah. When were you married? What year?

**RA:** Eh 1946

**VB:** 1946. Right. And how long have you been in this area?

**RA:** In this area?

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** Erm, thirty years.

**VB: That's great. Erm, and can I ask what sort of work your husband did?**

**RA:** Well he was a designer of ladies' clothes.

**VB: A-ah!**

**RA:** A genuine designer. He went to all the big houses and that kind of thing. Dior and all the others.

**VB: Ah!**

**RA:** He was... he'd do all... he was very artistic.

**VB: Yes.**

**RA:** He did the whole thing. But eh, he was er... he lost... the firm went broke. And that's why we came back to London.

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** Then he had three kinds of jobs. He taught French to English--

**VB: Right.**

**RA:** A little. He worked on the telephones. International. So he could talk, because he knew about six languages.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** 'Scuse me a minute. And he was very bilingual.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** 'Cause he lived part of his life in England, and when he was twelve they lived in Paris.

**VB: Ah.**

**RA:** So erm, he was. And then he had trouble through the war. That's another story.

**VB: Yes.**

**RA:** And erm, but he survived.

**VB: Yes.**

**RA:** And eh, let me see now. Yeah, that's about it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** And we came to live... when we left Leeds we came to Harrow.

**VB: Right.**

**RA:** Yes.

**VB: Erm, and do you have children yourself?**

**RA:** Myself, I have two daughters and a son.

**VB: That's great.**

**RA:** Yes.

**VB: So that was all I wanted to ask. Oh the other thing is, eh, if you had any strong political views or--**

**RA:** Well I'm certainly not Conservative.

**VB: Right. [laughs] I'll put that down.**

**RA:** Definitely not.

**VB: Right. That's great. Erm, and, can I, can I ask you the same questions, Mr Bloom?**

**MB:** Yes.

**VB: I won't write it down 'cause I've not got a form. But I can always get it off the tape afterwards. Erm, can I ask where you were born?**

**MB:** Eh, London. East End.

**VB: Right. Eh, actually I'll maybe just make notes on the side here.**

**MB:** Within the sound of Bow Bells.

**VB: Ah!**

**MB:** That is a true Cockney.

**VB: True Cockney.**

**MB:** A true Cockney.

**VB: That's great. Erm, and what did your father do?**

**MB:** Eh, he was a tailor.

**VB: Right.**

**MB:** They were all tailors in those days. Every one of them.

**VB:** Yeah. And did your mother work?

**MB:** No. No women worked in those days.

**VB:** Yeah. Can I just check I've got the right year you were born in? 'Cause I know I've got it--

**MB:** Yeah. 1909.

**VB:** 1909.

**MB:** December 1909.

**VB:** That's great. That's hard to believe actually. [laughs]

**MB:** Mhm?

**VB:** I find it, it's quite hard to believe you were born in 1909.

**RA:** 'Cause he's very young-looking.

**VB:** Very young-looking. Yes. Ah. And did you have sisters and brothers?

**MB:** Yeah. Eh, two brothers and a sister. There was four children at home.

**VB:** That's great. Erm, and do you have any strong political views at all?

**MB:** Eh, oh yes. Not Conservative anyway.

**VB:** Right.

**MB:** Always voted Labour.

**VB: Yeah. That's great. Erm, and can I ask where you've lived throughout your life?**

**MB:** Eh, yes, eh, I lived in West Ham--

**VB: Uhuh.**

**MB:** That's further east in London. West Ham. Eh, then I lived in Bognor.

**VB: Uhuh.**

**MB:** During the bombing we got bombed out so we had to evacu-, no, we did our own evacuation. We went to Bognor. Lived in Bognor. Right throughout the war. From 1940 to '46.

**VB: Uhuh. And how long have you been living here?**

**MB:** Eh, forty year, about forty-four years, in Harrow.

**VB: Ah. That's great. And are you married yourself?**

**MB:** Yeah.

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

**MB:** Pardon?

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

**MB:** Thirty-two.

**VB: 1932. And does your wife work or did she work?**

**MB:** No.

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** But she does lots of voluntary work, Mick.

**MB:** Oh yeah.

**RA:** His wife does wonderful voluntary work--

**VB:** Yeah.

**MB:** In the hospital. Yeah. Over there. Northwick Park.

**VB:** Ah I see. Ah. I think that's the hardest kind of work as well.

**MB:** The hospital's over there, you know.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MB:** Northwick Park

**VB:** And do you have children?

**MB:** Yeah.

**VB:** Erm, how many children?

**MB:** Eh, four children.

**VB:** That's great.

**MB:** Three boys and a girl.

**VB:** Right. And the other thing that I'd like to ask you from a sort of official point of view is erm, because I'm tape recording the interview, erm--



**MB:** Is it being recorded now?

**VB:** It is recording just now, yeah. Erm, there's a form that we ask people to sign. Basically to say that you're aware that I've got a tape... that I am recording it--

**RA:** Yes, don't worry--

**VB:** And that if you have no objection we might quote eh--

**RA:** Anything from it.

**VB:** Yes.

**RA:** Yes that's quite all right.

**VB:** Is that all right?

**RA:** How about you, Mick?

**MB:** Yeah.

**RA:** You don't mind if she quotes, if they quote anything that we have said?

**MB:** No.

**RA:** Right.

**VB:** Right.

**MB:** That's the idea, isn't it?

**VB:** Yeah, [laughs] that's right. Ah it would be a bit funny if you disagreed. But erm, anyway, so there's a form that eh, if I could ask you to sign it, that would be great. Erm, if you want to read it obviously, that's--

**RA:** What's today's date?

**VB:** It's the 26<sup>th</sup>, I think... No, it's the 27<sup>th</sup> actually, isn't it? Tend to lose track of things. [laughs]  
**Sometimes.**

**MB:** S'not the 27<sup>th</sup> is it?

**VB:** Erm--

**RA:** 27<sup>th</sup>. It is the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**VB:** Got a paper here.

**RA:** Do you want me to put two names there?

**VB:** Erm, yes, maybe we should. Yeah.

**RA:** Do you want to put in on there Mick?

**VB:** If you want to sign it just beside there. That would be great.

[signing papers]

**VB:** I think these days people are terrified that we're going to get sued--

**MB:** [coughs]

**VB:** As well. That's great. Thanks. I'll use that one 'cause I've to sign as well. That's great.

**RA:** [inaudible] signature. Very flowery.

**VB:** Yes. [laughs] Illegible I think is another way of looking at it.

**RA:** [laughs]

**VB:** Erm, yeah 'cause the first thing I really wanted to ask is eh, how often you went to the cinema in the thirties? Did you go pretty regularly?

**RA:** I went twice a week. When I was a youngster.

**VB:** Yeah.

**RA:** Oh yes! I loved films! Very much. And I started, my sister took us when the very first film, talkie began. And 'course she was years older, and she took us as children. To see *The Jazz Singer*. With erm, Al Jolson. But from then on, I would go at least twice a week. You know, in the thirties. 'Course that was '29. So then it carried you into the thirties. And eh, you name it, I saw it. I loved Deanna Durbin. I loved musicals. And erm, anything by Frank Capra, the director, I knew would always be good. And I used to read the directors' names. And also whoever designed the clothes. I liked to see who did that.

**VB:** Uhuh.

**RA:** Well, when Mick went they used to have a very vast programme of two films--

**MB:** Oh yes. For sixpence in the afternoon. Sixpence, two and a half pee, you'd go to one of the super cinemas in the East End. The Troxy--

**VB:** Ah!

**MB:** That is the name of one of them. They were a company. They had the Troxy, Trocadero. Eh, Troc-ette. In South London. They had a few more. The Hyams brothers [referring to Hyams and Gale], they were the owners. And they were noted for giving a very good programme for... And eh, lots of people were out of work in those days. Consequently, they had nothing to do but go to the cinema. And up to four o'clock the eh, the price was sixpence.

**VB:** [laughs]

**MB:** And eh, for that money, you saw two large films. Two big films. A newsreel. A comedy. And a good hour's stage show. So you saw a programme for about three-and-a-half hours for sixpence. And the cinema was full then. Lots of people used to go. And eh, saw some very good turns. In the cinema. Eh, Sophie Tucker. Being the East End they had a lot of Jewish turns--

**VB: Mhm.**

**MB:** Like Sophie Tucker. Eh, eh, Ted Lewis and his band from America. I remember. Billy Cotton. All those turns.

**VB: All the big names.**

**MB:** Yeah. All for sixpence. And they were crowded. People had to queue up. To get in. And eh, you couldn't get in all at once. Cinema would be full. And being a continuous programme, you see, there's no break or interval or anything like that, it went right through. And eh, as soon as you came to the part where you came in, eh, everybody used to--

**RA:** In the middle of it!

**MB:** Get up and go out and then people'd take their place. And there'd be a commissionaire at the door. And he'd call out in the queue eh, "Two only. Three, four," whatever. And eh, you'd go in. In the dark.

**VB: [laughs]**

**MB:** You couldn't see a thing. Grope your way around. Till your eyes got accustomed to the darkness and then you'd sit down.

**VB: A-ah.**

**MB:** I used to live in France as well. And I went to the cinema in France. That was in the twenties. The silent era. And eh, I remember my cousins taking me to the cinema. And eh, upstairs in the gallery, and I'd never been there so I didn't know anything. Anyway I couldn't see a thing--

**VB:** [laughs]

**MB:** I couldn't see the lights. The camera. Or the projector shining onto the screen. I couldn't see anything. Tell you why. Eh, anyway, I felt, I'm going in darkness, I felt my way. I felt the seat and I sat down. And eh, I couldn't see anything--

**VB:** [laughs]

**MB:** And I put my hand out and there's somebody's legs. They'd been standing up. That's why I couldn't see the screen.

**RA:** A-ah. They were in front of you.

**MB:** They stood up. They stood up, you see. Stood on the seat and I sat down and I couldn't see. And eh, eventually, you know, my eyes got accustomed to the darkness and I stood up then.

**RA:** What, everybody was standing?

**MB:** Yeah. [laughs]

**VB:** A-ah.

**RA:** Everyone! Oh heaven!

**MB:** The seats, well, I can't... dunno know why they were standing.

**RA:** It was pretty high up I expect.

**MB:** It was high up.

**RA:** And you possibly couldn't see the film. Very low down.

**MB:** Possibly. Yeah.

**RA:** Yes.

**MB:** And I was sitting the wrong way round.

**RA:** [laughs]

**MB:** The screen was that way and I was sitting this way.

**VB:** [laughs]

**MB:** So I couldn't see anything!

**RA:** [laughs] So you couldn't see anything. Anyway, carry on.

**VB:** I mean it's interesting that you both come from different areas as well. I mean what were the cinemas like where you were?

**RA:** Well I used to go to, there was a place, a cinema--

**MB:** Not the fleapit.

**RA:** Coronet [probably referring to the Coronet Cinema, Notting Hill Gate].

**MB:** Oh yeah, that was a, that was a [nice?]....

[tape cuts out; inaudible due to crackly interference on tape from 00:13:44-00:14:42]

**RA:** There was another film, 1930s definitely, with Ronald Colman. And Greer Garson. And eh, that was called *Random Harvest*. [crackling; inaudible] I know it was very enjoyable. Really good meaty picture.

[audio missing for following section of transcription until 00:17:25]

**VB:** 'Cause it's interesting, the stars you mention. Erm, Deanna Durbin. What was it about her particularly that appealed to you?

**RA:** Well she was fresh. And young. And very very funny. You believed [rest inaudible]. And eh, she was so innocent. That was it. Oh, she was in a film called *One Hundred Men and a Girl*. With Adolphe Menjou. She was very very poor. I think he was her grandfather. She wore the same hat. With a feather. And she got into this theatre. She kept trying to get them to hear her. Was it her father, or grandfather, who was the musician? And all these musicians were out of work. And she got [inaudible word] to hear--

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**RA:** They came into the hall. They desperately desperately [inaudible]. They look like tramps. [inaudible; very crackly]. [The little hat with the feather?] [rest inaudible]. And they're wearing evening dress. It was so wonderful!

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** But it was the innocence of it that was so marvellous. *One Hundred Men and a Girl*. Is that right?

**MB:** And her voice.

**RA:** Oh her voice is superb!

**MB:** The songs that she sang [she sang all classical stuff?]. Opera, ballads. She had a marvellous voice.

**RA:** In the film *His Butler's Sister*, she did 'Nessun Dorma'.

**VB:** [gasps]

**RA:** 'Nessun Dorma'.

**MB:** Yes. [inaudible] Oh yeah, in all her films she sang beautiful. She had the most beautiful voice. She was young. A young voice and beautiful eh, in tune. Everything was right.

[audio available for following section of transcript; crackly]

**MB:** And eh, she sang classical music And eh, who knew about classical music in those days. 'Yes We Have No Bananas', and things like that.

**RA:** Well we got it from Mario Lanza.

**MB:** Yeah.

**RA:** But with Deanna Durbin erm, the songs fitted the mood. I mean she'd break into song. But it was like a story song. It was part of the story. It didn't matter. It all went together. Didn't sort of break the film in the middle of a song, like a concert. It was part of it. [loud crackling]

**MB:** There was also, what was her name? She died in a crash. Eh, she sang--

**RA:** Was it Grace Moore? [crackling]

**MB:** Grace Moore. Now she was an opera singer.

**RA:** Oh yeah.

**MB:** And eh, she was in films singing opera. And she was very very good. Grace Moore.

**RA:** She had a superb voice. She only made one film. [Note: according to IMDb, Grace Moore made nine films in all].

**MB:** Soprano.

**RA:** Mhm. She did make one film. But she was then, I would imagine, in her forties. But they tried to make her much younger.



**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But it worked. It worked. The storyline was good. A lot of it was, I think was waltzes, Mick

**MB:** What?

**RA:** I think there was a lot of waltzing.

**MB:** Possibly. Yeah, yeah.

**RA:** Waltzes.

**MB:** I do know one song that she sang. Eh, Alone. [sings]. "Alone, de, de, de de, de, de."

**RA:** That's a lovely song [possibly referring to 'Thine Alone'].

**MB:** D'you know why I remember it?

**RA:** No.

**MB:** I'd a shop. And I used to sell pianos. And a boy who worked for me, he played one song, and that was 'Alone'.

**VB: [laughs]**

**MB:** He played it all the time.

**RA:** [laughs]

**MB:** "Come on," eh, "Eric." His name was Eric. "Come on, Eric. Let's have 'Alone'".

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** That's a lovely memory.

**VB:** Mhm. You mentioned some of the other stars there as well like Ronald Colman. What was it about him that--

**RA:** Oh he was very very, well later on you got to know that he was really not very tall. But that didn't bother me because then I believed everything. But he was very very typically English. Full of English charm. He was a thorough thorough gentleman.

**MB:** Who's this?

**RA:** Ronald Colman.

**MB:** Oh yeah. And she was a typical eh, lady. Very ladylike, Greer Garson. You would never imagine her saying a rude word or a swear word, you know. Or doing something, she was so, she was so right. She did a film called *Pride and Prejudice*. With Sir Laurence Olivier, Lord Laurence Olivier. She was brilliant in it. And you couldn't help but fall in love with her, although she--

**MB:** My most favourite one, her most famous film was--

**RA:** *Mrs Miniver*.

**MB:** *Mrs Miniver*.

**RA:** *Mrs Miniver*. That's it.

**MB:** It's about the war. Eh, it must be the First World War.

**RA:** Second World War. It was 1940, that she made it. '45. Something like that. Yeah.

**MB:** Can't remember.

**RA:** I'm trying to think of the man she always played with. The actor. She played with a certain actor, all the time, with a moustache. D'you remember his name?

**MB:** *Mrs Miniver*.

**RA:** Do you remember his name?

**MB:** Yeah. Walter Pidgeon.

**RA:** Yeah. That's right. Walter Pidgeon. She made quite a few films with him. In one she was Madame Curie. I can't remember the film. The title. But she was Madame Curie [referring to *Madame Curie*].

**MB:** Oh yeah. That's about the discovery of eh, X-rays.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** Yes. You see, that's how, somehow how one was educated too. Through films. In a way. It didn't teach you how to be worldly. Not really. Not if you're an innocent type of person. But it did teach you erm, about maths. And about French even, and so on.

**MB:** All the historical films were, they taught you a little bit. It wasn't true. They used to make the films to suit the eh--

**RA:** [laughs] Suit the story.

**VB:** [laughs]

**MB:** Yeah.

**RA:** Yeah.

**MB:** But eh, for all that, you saw some, they taught you quite a lot.

**RA:** They did. Sorry. They went together with your school lessons, in a way.

**VB:** 'Cause I was thinking when you said that, with films like erm, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* with Charles Laughton, and *Victoria the Great*.

**RA:** Yeah.

**VB:** Did you like that sort of picture?

**MB:** Yes. Oh yes.

**RA:** That was lovely. That was good because it was fairly realistic too. And you suddenly felt that the royalty were human. Especially when, [laughs] he makes a burp [referring to *The Private Life of Henry VIII*].

**VB:** [laughs]

**MB:** [laughs]

**RA:** Very loud.

**VB:** [laughs]

**RA:** I remember that quite clearly. And there was, one of his wives was someone called Binnie Barnes. Erm, I can't remember the others, oh, Merle Oberon! She was one of the wives.

**MB:** Ann Boleyn she was.

**VB:** Ah.

**RA:** Yeah, yeah.

**MB:** And there was eh, several others. Elsa Lanchester. She was one.

**RA:** She was the wife who got away. She was the one who got away in the end.

**MB:** She was the wife of eh, the true wife of Charles Laughton.

**RA:** Yeah. She was Mary Parr, I think [referring to Katherine Parr]. Might be wrong. The one who he did not behead.

**MB:** You wanna know who's in it? There's a book there. On films.

**RA:** I know. I'll show it to you if you like. It gives you all the storylines. Just shows you, I've always been interested in film.

**VB:** Oh MGM, I see!

**RA:** It gives you... At the end, I think it gives you the film stars. Yes. If you look at their names and then it gives you their films.

**VB:** Right.

**MB:** Was eh, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*. Was that MGM?

**RA:** Yes. But here it's got the names of the cast. Of the actors and actresses. But through the film, it's probably got it. But I think this book only began 1940.

**MB:** You see a true film fan.

**RA:** Oh no! Look '34.

**VB:** A-ah.

**RA:** They were marvellous. He always used to act as a villain, until he made--

**MB:** Who's this?

**RA:** Erm, William Powell.

**VB: William Powell.**

**MB:** Oh. And then he gradually became a comedian. He was brilliant.

**VB: Oh wonderful! With his dog and--**

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

**MB:** I remember—

**RA:** Did you ever see those films? [referring to *The Thin Man* series]

**VB: Oh great. Yes.**

**RA:** Did you see them, Mick?

**MB:** Yeah. Yeah. Eh, I remember eh, her, what's her name?

**RA:** Myrna Loy.

**MB:** Myrna Loy. In a film eh, *The Desert Song*. She was in that. And she played the part of an [Arab girl?].

**RA:** Oh really?

**MB:** Yeah. John Boles was the singer.

**RA:** Does he sing?

**MB:** Yeah. John Boles.

**RA:** Yeah.

**MB:** And eh, I can't remember the other girl. But all the songs from *The Desert Song*.

**RA:** Who was his leading lady? Do you remember?

**MB:** I can't remember her. [audio crackly] But Myrna Loy was in it. As the eh, Arab girl, dancer.

**RA:** Well she always looked slightly oriental. She was very very good-looking, in her own way.

**MB:** [inaudible; crackly] She was in *The Desert Song*.

**RA:** She was a lovely actress.

**MB:** I saw that about ten times.

**VB:** [laughs]

**MB:** I did! About ten times. Every time it came back, I went to see it. [inaudible] a week, or a few days.

**RA:** What, they'd show it for longer than a week?

**MB:** Then it would come back to another cinema. *The Desert Song*. And then a few years later, I'd see it again. Oh yeah. My favourite that was.

**RA:** Well actually, they do that now don't they? They hold onto a film that's paying well--

**MB:** That's right.

**RA:** And they keep it for weeks.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MB:** *Gone with the Wind* keeps coming back and back and back.

**RA:** Yeah.

**MB:** But--

**RA:** Now that's a funny thing Mick, I only enjoyed that the once. I didn't feel I wanted. It was so dramatic, I didn't feel I wanted to see it again.

**MB:** No I wanted to see *The Desert Song* because of the songs in it.

**RA:** Yeah.

**MB:** I bought a record. The English version from eh, eh, Drury Lane Theatre, they had that. I saw that.

**RA:** Oh it was a play wasn't it? The musical.

**MB:** Yeah it's a musical.

**RA:** 'Course.

**MB:** Harry Welchman was in it. And, English actor, he sang. And eh, I think there was a well-known English actress who sang as well. Can't remember her name.

**RA:** Wasn't Evelyn Laye?

**MB:** No. Edith Day, or something like that it was.

**RA:** Edith Day.

**MB:** Yeah. In those days she was a well-known--

**RA:** Actress.

**MB:** Singer. Yeah. Musical comedy actress. Singer.



**RA:** Did she make films? If she did it would be in here.

**MB:** One or two. You have a look in there.

**RA:** Edith Day.

**MB:** Edith Day. The name's right.

**RA:** Funny sight. Glasses off.

**VB:** Some of the other stars that you mentioned erm, like Merle Oberon. Did you--

**MB:** Merle Oberon. Yeah.

**VB:** Yeah.

**RA:** She was a lovely, very very good-looking.

**MB:** She was part Indian. You see. And eh, there was never mentioned, although I did read about it, that she was eh, born in India. Merle Oberon. And she was eh, part Indian. She came to England, educated. And eh, she's very beautiful in her sort of way. Oriental-way.

**RA:** Well I read about her this week and she apparently made 'Napoleon' [referring to *Désirée*]. I don't know if it was called 'Napoleon'. With Marlon Brando.

**VB:** A-ah.

**RA:** That's fairly recent.

**VB:** Yes it is.

**RA:** I don't think it was her last film.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** Erm, you said Day didn't you? [pause 4 seconds] She's D, A, Y.

**MB:** Night and day. No I don't think she, she, no I don't think she was in films that long. Eh, she was more musical comedies as a singer. And on the stage in the West End.

**RA:** Well this Nancy Davis was the wife of Ronald Reagan.

**MB:** Who?

**VB:** A-ah.

**MB:** Nancy Davis, she was the wife of Ronald Reagan. Then she was a film star, film actress.

**VB:** Did you ever read any of the film magazines in the thirties? [tape hissing]

**RA:** Oh I used to buy 'Film Show', 'Picture Show', or whatever you call it. 'Picturegoer'. Well my older brother, he used to draw very well. He'd draw the portraits. And erm, he bought them. And he bought eh, he used to do Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell. That's right. They were his favourites.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** Then I tried to copy them when I was only about nine or ten, and I did Greta Garbo. And eh, it was all right. I could do it. I found I could--

**MB:** It's very good.

**VB:** Mhm. I was hearing about that actually, when I was at the synagogue there. Sort of saying about the--

**RA:** That was my first oil. My one and only oil.

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

**RA:** Up there. And the other two round there. One's in chalk. And one's in [watercolour?]. But erm, my best thing is doing faces.

**VB: Ah. What was it that made you do Greta Garbo?**

**RA:** Oh, because I wanted to prove I could do as well as my brother.

**VB: Ah.**

**RA:** I saw some of her films. I didn't particularly like her. Erm, I remember, you remember her films Mick?

**MB:** Who?

**RA:** Greta Garbo.

**MB:** Oh yeah. Hated the sight of her. I was too young.

**VB: Really?**

**MB:** Oh yeah. I mean we wanted to see eh--

**RA:** She was always very sad. I think that's why--

**MB:** No. I never went to see Greta Garbo.

**RA:** Oh I saw her in one good film, *Ninotchka*--

**MB:** *Ninotchka*

**RA:** Yes. And she's happy in that.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MB:** Russia.

**RA:** Yeah. Melvyn Douglas. He was her lead.

**MB:** He's still, he's still about.

**RA:** Is he really?

**MB:** I saw him on a film on TV. We-ell, he's still about. Yes he is.

**RA:** Now he must be pretty old. But he was very good-looking. And he was Jewish, yes he was.

**MB:** Yesterday I was watching the TV and eh, he said, eh, what was his name? You know, eh, he used to play eh, Latin lovers.

**RA:** Cesar Romero.

**MB:** Cesar. Yeah.

**RA:** Romero.

**MB:** He was in a film--

**RA:** Something like that.

**MB:** And I couldn't recognise him.

**RA:** He was in a film last night.

**MB:** Last night, that's what I'm saying.

**RA:** There was Don Ameche.

**MB:** Don Ameche! That's it.

**RA:** Film called *Cocoon*.

**MB:** That's it. Cocoon. Yeah. I was watching that.

**RA:** Yes.

**MB:** But I couldn't recognise Don Ameche.

**RA:** Well he's an old man.

**MB:** I know.

**RA:** He's changed out of all proportion.

**MB:** I'm looking for a young bloke. With black hair.

**VB:** [laughs]

**RA:** [laughs]

**MB:** And a thin moustache.

**RA:** Yeah.

**MB:** As I remember him.

**RA:** Yeah.

**MB:** And suddenly there's a few old men floating around. And I thought to myself, which one is Don Ameche?

**RA:** Well he's become also, he used to have a round face. And he's very, very thin.

**MB:** Is it?

**RA:** Yeah. You wouldn't recognise him.

**MB:** No.

**VB:** Did you like his films in the thirties?

**MB:** Ye-ah, [inaudible] about three times a week. In the thirties. Eh, and when I was called up in the Army, I was stationed in Scotland, [inaudible]. Dingwall?

**VB:** Oh right.

**MB:** Heard of it? I was stationed at Dingwall [Orkney]. It had one main street and one fish shop.

**RA:** Oh really?

**MB:** Yeah. I'd go to the fish shop. Have something to eat. Went into the cinema. And I had nothing to do. I didn't got drinking. So I'd have something to eat, go back into the cinema again.

**VB:** [laughs]

**MB:** And see the same film. Fall asleep.

**RA:** It passed the time for you.

**MB:** Mhm. Oh yes. Didn't wanna go back to camp. [inaudible] They didn't have fish in Dingwall. They had kippers. Kippers and chips.

**RA:** Good Lord! Never heard of that. Kippers and chips. But I expect they were very fresh. Because don't forget, during the war we were on rations--

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** And if you could get anything that was edible, you took it.

**MB:** Oh yeah. They didn't have [inaudible] fish. It was more to do with the sea and the fishermen had quite a job, you know, to go fishing because--

**RA:** Well they were bombed. They were bombed and things during the war.

**MB:** They were attacked by the German whatever.

**RA:** Mines, they were called. Mines.

**MB:** So eh, we had kippers.

**RA:** Well if they were fresh they were very nice.

**MB:** Oh yeah.

**RA:** Erm, carry on, Valentina.

**VB:** Ah. Well one thing, I brought with me some adverts and things that I thought you might be interested in. Erm, from Harrow area. [tape becomes very crackly] I think some of these cinemas are probably ones that you, eh--

**RA:** Oh Judy Kelly. Judy Kelly. I don't remember Judy Kelly. Do you remember Judy Kelly, Mick? The name rings a bell.

**MB:** Who?

**RA:** Judy Kelly. I can't say I remember her. Oh, [inaudible]. That's ever so old. Only just about started in the movies. It's fairly old. Are you going to this?

**MB:** Wealdstone Odeon, oh!

**RA:** January the second... 1939---

**VB: That's when--**

**RA:** That's when it was on. Well no wonder I was telling you they're old. Right. Oh look that's the prices, Mick! Sixpence, ninepence, a shilling and one and six.

**MB:** [laughs] Yeah. Now George Brent. Always, in every film you saw George Brent.

**RA:** Well he did *42nd Street*.

**MB:** Yeah.

**VB: A-ah.**

**MB:** Kay Francis. See that was... quite an old film. On the Sunday they showed oldish films. Kay Francis, she was eh, early thirties, that was.

**RA:** She was in only British films. That's right.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MB:** Doesn't say the year.

**RA:** Yes. This is 1939. Look at the side of it, Mick. If you show it to me I'll, you look at this one.

**MB:** Oh I see. You've got a different one--

**VB: I'm not sure if I got a date for that one actually.**

**MB:** Belmont. Oh!

**RA:** Douglas Fairbanks in *Jump for Glory*. Yeah that would be thirties.

**VB: Mhm.**



**RA:** [*Let Them Live?*] That was a marvellous film. That could be late thirties.

**VB:** Mhm. [inaudible]

**RA:** Yes I saw that one. [inaudible] That was with Nan Grey. She was very pretty. English. She was with erm, a Polish actor.

**MB:** Who?

**RA:** Nan Grey. Oh I might be wrong. *Let Them Live*. Oh, you didn't know.

**MB:** Basil Rathbone. He was a marvellous actor. He was the original Sherlock Holmes. And he looked it. He was a real, his face, his acting, beautiful English accent. He was marvellous. Basil Rathbone. Always went to see him.

**VB:** He was quite often a baddie wasn't he?

**RA:** He did a film with Dickie Bartholomew, Dickie Bartholomew [referring to Richard Bartholomew]. Erm, Great Expec-, not *Great Expectations*. *David Copperfield*.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** He was a real... I wanted to kill him.

**VB:** [laughs] 'Cause I was thinking of the eh, in 'Robin Hood' [referring to *The Adventures of Robin Hood*] where he's the Sheriff of Nottingham. [tape very crackly]

**MB:** That's right.

**RA:** That was the original, that one.

**VB:** Wonderful film.

**RA:** Yeah.

**MB:** And there's Fred MacMurray, Silvia Sidney and Henry Fonda in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*.

**RA:** Ah.

**VB:** Ah.

**MB:** Fred MacMurray. He was originally a, a football player.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MB:** American... You know one of the, in armour, you know, shoulders... and then he became an actor. Very good actor too. Silvia Sidney.

**RA:** Oh she was beautiful.

**MB:** Yeah.

**RA:** As a young person.

**MB:** She played... she was in films for years and years.

**RA:** Mhm. She still is. Believe it or not. She's in her eighties and she still is. Now I remember all these people. Erm, Claudette Colbert. No, sorry that's Claude Hulbert. There was an actress Claudette Colbert. And she did the first *Cleopatra*.

**MB:** Who was this?

**RA:** Claudette Colbert. But she did a famous film with Charles, with eh, Clark Gable.

**MB:** Clark Gable. *It Happened One Night*.

**RA:** *It Happened One Night*. 'The walls of Jericho were [formed?]' That was a famous part of it. Did you see the film?

**VB: Yes. Is that the one where they have to spend the night together?**

**RA:** That's right.

**VB: And have a sheet to separate them.**

**RA:** [laughs] It's a blanket. That's the one. Yes she did. [It's a classic?]

**VB: Oh! They were very good together, weren't they?**

**RA:** Oh they were brilliant together! [crackling increasing]. Eh, erm, I would say these were all in the thirties.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Certainly not later than the late thirties. He was, he was the singer.

**VB: Dick Powell.**

**RA:** Yes.

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** A very high voice, which nowadays they would hate.

**MB:** Which one is that?

**RA:** Dick Powell.

**RA:** He was a singer.

**MB:** He was a [high?] tenor.

**RA:** Yes. Yes.

**MB:** He was married to Joan Blondell. The actress. But erm--

**MB:** D'you know I've got a record at home of eh, eh, Dick Powell. With all his songs.

**RA:** Oh really?

**MB:** Yeah. I've not listened to it.

**RA:** No, because his voice irritated some people.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** It was very high. It was like a woman. Almost. But erm, Kay Francis was very very good. Have you seen any of her films?

**VB: I've seen some of hers I think.**

**RA:** Yes. She was very dark. But she was also a bit like Irene Dunne. I don't know if you've come across any of her films. She was also very dignified. You couldn't expect her in a, well she was in comedies. But she always kept her dignity. Anyway, that's about... yeah these are, these are well worth having.

**VB: Erm, here's another one with George Arliss.**

**RA:** Oh, that was the first talkies. English talkies [probably referring to the American-made *Disraeli*].

**MB:** Which one?

**RA:** George Arliss.

**MB:** Oh yes. Oh yes... He was marvellous, George Arliss.

**RA:** You probably saw that film, Mick.

**MB:** [*East Meets West?*] Oh yeah. Possibly I saw it. Henry Wilcoxon. My goodness. I remember him all right.

**RA:** And this is James Cagney, Pat O'Brien. These were... He was a comedian. He was a gangster.

**VB:** Mhm.

**MB:** Where'd you get these from?

**VB:** From the Library at the Civic Centre.

**MB:** Oh. 'Course, I've got some originals that they used to have outside the cinema. The originals.

**RA:** Oh I'd like to see those, Mick.

**VB:** Oh-h!

**MB:** We went to eh, Sothebys. And asked what they were worth. You remember those--

**RA:** I don't remember that.

**MB:** Of course you do. You went there.

**RA:** What, with posters?

**MB:** Posters. Real genuine posters.

**RA:** Really?

**MB:** Eh, what were they? Eh, can't remember. Some well-known ones. Some well-known films--

**RA:** You must bring them and let me see them again.

**MB:** Yeah. Well-known films.

**RA:** Let me see them again. I mean, oddly enough my granddaughter's doing films.

**VB: Ah.**

**RA:** She's in her third year now. Will be.

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** And she wants to be behind the cameras. Possibly. Eh, she's good at writing. But she's got to somehow get things together... She's in Canterbury. Erm, and eh, she'd be very interested in posters, Mick.

**MB:** Yeah.

**RA:** She really would. She asked me to try to get some. I'll tell her about this.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** You got them from the Library. Was it this library?

**VB: Yes. The one in the Civic Centre. Yeah.**

**RA:** IN the Civic Centre?

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** Oh I must try to do that. 'Cause she asked me to try to get old posters. She said that they're very very good. She needs them. Oh this is wonderful.

**MB:** I can't remember those that I've got-- [tape crackling]

**RA:** Can't remember you showing them to me, Mick. If you did... You show them to me again. Oh Jessie Matthews and Sonnie Hale.

**MB:** She was married to him.

**RA:** Yeah, there was a lot of, sorry, controversy because she's supposed to have taken him away from another, from Evelyn Laye.

**VB: A-ah.**

**RA:** She made one or two films.

**MB:** Erm, I'll have to be shooting off now, because...

**RA:** Will you Mick? Would you like a quick drink?

**MB:** No. I've got somebody coming. Eh, there's... next door's got a dog. A big Alsatian. And this next door woman, she goes out quite a lot and leaves that dog outside--

**RA:** What? Barking.

**MB:** And it barks, non-stop. It doesn't bark. It howls.

**VB: Mhm.**

**MB:** It lifts its head up and, "Oo, oo!" Like that. Howling away. And this is going on every day, and every day, and every day. So, the chap from the Council is coming.

**RA:** To listen.

**MB:** And she'll be in, and you don't get a whimper from it. As soon as she goes out, see, it's a young dog and eh—

**VB: It's a shame--**

**RA:** It'll keep you awake at night.

**MB:** No, you don't hear it at night.

**RA:** Ah.

**MB:** During the day. I can't sit out in the garden without the bloomin' thing [roaring?] away there. And er, you know, I thought to myself, it's about time something ought to be done about it.

**RA:** What, you wrote to the Council?

**MB:** Yeah.

**RA:** Mhm. Oh well, good luck. What time are they coming?

**MB:** Eleven o'clock. So I'll have to be going.

**RA:** Yeah. I, I will make a very quick cup of tea.

**MB:** No, no, no. I'll be off.

**RA:** I'll leave these with you and go and make a cup of tea.

**VB:** That'd be lovely.

**RA:** Eh, is that on record?

**VB:** Eh, yes. [laughs]

**RA:** I am now about to make a nice strong cup of tea.

**VB:** [laughs]



**RA:** Here you are, Val. You can have a little look at this book.

**VB:** Yes. I'd like to. Thanks.

**VB [to MB]:** It's been nice meeting you. An unexpected pleasure. It was lovely.

**MB:** My granddaughter [inaudible; tape crackly]. I'll be seeing you. Bye.

**VB:** Bye.

**MB:** Hope everything's all right for you.

**VB:** Right. Thanks a lot.

[End of Side B]

[Start of Side A]

**VB:** They're the sort of things that must've been thrown out mainly, I would imagine.

**RA:** Well, that's it, they did then.

**VB:** Yes.

**RA:** They did then. But now, apparently, erm, when they did this new film, *Batman*--

**VB:** Yeah.

**RA:** I went with my granddaughter eh, to see something else. [tape crackly] Saw Jack and Harry. That's right. And erm, they said that there was a queue for the actual stand-up posters. And they'll... they do sell them all.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** But they charge about £12 each.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** And eh, there's a queue for them--

**VB:** Yeah.

**RA:** So you won't even get them... I'm sorry this is all I can offer you--

**VB:** Mhm. This looks lovely. Thanks very much.

**RA:** They're a bit bent. They're okay. [talking about cakes or biscuits?] They're a week old. They go a bit stale.

**VB:** They look nice. Thanks. [pause while eating]

**RA:** Oh we're all film addicts. Even I have a grandson of thirteen and he goes every week. Oddly enough, more so than his own mother.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** She used to like films, but we only took them to films that we selected.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** Have you, you're married?

**VB:** Yes.

**RA:** Have you a family?

**VB:** No I don't, no.

**RA:** And what part of Scotland do you come from?

**VB:** Erm, I was born in Edinburgh but erm, raised mainly in Fife, in the countryside so.

**RA:** Lovely, lovely. Well eh, I have a Scottish sister-in-law.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** She comes from a place called Clarkston, I think.

**VB:** Mhm!

**RA:** Something like that.

**VB:** Yeah I know it. Just outside Glasgow.

**RA:** Is it near? Ah, yes, she's still got family there.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** Erm, my daughter, one of them writes. Used to write. Now she's an architect. She's one of these people who's good at anything she starts.

**VB:** Oh. [laughs]

**RA:** And she's the mother of the daughter who's doing film. So she started, she wrote, she started... she worked as a junior secretary for the BBC.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** She was always good at writing. So they got her to write words to people's music. Quite famous people. And she did one for many famous people. But eh, she did an exam there, as a mixer. A dubbing mixer. And erm, because she was only seventeen, she got it, but they wouldn't let her have it. So she, very indignant, she left. But erm, she wrote a show that they put on in Edinburgh.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** She wrote a ballet. Erm a friend, a boyfriend, not going out together--

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Just that kind of friend. He wrote the music, she wrote the words.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Then eventually, she wrote words and music. The music came to her, she said, in her dream. She's very, very artistic. She was never down-to-earth. Eh, and eh, it was on television. It was on twice on television.

**VB: That's great.**

**RA:** With Paul Jones. I don't know if you've heard of him. He's a singer. Jazz singer, actually. He's still quite nice-looking. He was her leading man. And eh, I went there and they treated her like a goddess.

**VB: Mhmm.**

**RA:** 'Cause all the actors and actresses were young and they all wanted the parts, and so on. It was very exciting.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But eh, she gave that up because she didn't get an agent--

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** To push her. She's quite... she's not pushy at all. She's just talented, but not pushy. Erm, and then she wrote, actually, three shows. And eh, some of them were recorded. And she has a lovely singing voice.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** So she was a lead. She's very pretty too. And the other daugh... my other daughter is very tall and very slim and very mannequin-type. But they've never got on. [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** Because they're totally different. The other one's a teacher.

**VB: Ah.**

**RA:** 'Scuse me. And she was very good at ballet. And she's got the son of thirty. But Simone, that's the one who writes, she has twin sons of eighteen and a daughter of twenty.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And interspersed , she's got two degrees.

**VB: Ah. [laughs]**

**RA:** Yeah, she's all right. Very good. Well, my husband died when my son was only ten.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** So it's been... I've tried to be mother and father.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And Simone was due to be married. She's a lot older than Laurie.

**VB: Yes.**

**RA:** So I said, "Yes, you get married." But it... it was hard going. And it was very sad. But erm, they're very clever. They take after their father. [laughs]

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** They're very very clever. Laurie's a solicitor. He was self, you know, he was self-motivated.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Which was wonderful. Jackie's a superb teacher. And she's marvellous at making anyone learn to read. She's got a natural ability to really, well, she'll talk to parents and talk to the children. And she'll bring out the best in them

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** She's very good. And we're great chums. Her and I. [laughs]

**VB: Do your children live locally?**

**RA:** Not too far. Well Simone lives reasonably near. She lives in Bushey. Which is about a half hour ride. And Jackie lives the other side of London, which is--

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But we meet at least once a week. Yeah we get on very well. They like their mother. I don't know why, but they like their mother! [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** I get on very well, I get on very well with the grandchildren too.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** I become young, with them. With Simone and Jackie, they like my opinion. So I give it. Simone likes my opinion artistically. So I used to give it.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But it all worked out all right. Very nice.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But erm, what about yourself? Have you brothers or sisters? Come on.

**VB: I don't actually. No. I'm the only one.**

**RA:** Aw. That's hard.

**VB: Yeah, so... My husband comes from quite a large family so.**

**RA:** Mhm.

**VB: So that makes up for that. [laughs]**

**RA:** Mhm. So lots of nieces and nephews.

**VB: Erm, a few, yes.**

**RA:** That's lovely. And are they from Scotland?

**VB: Eh, yes. Although they're erm, my father-in-law's working in the north of England at the moment but they live in the Borders.**

**RA:** Mhm. Mhm.

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** I took Laurie when he was only thirteen to Rothesay.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** To Rothesay.

**VB: Mhm!**

**RA:** And we've been to Edinburgh of course. I love it. I love the Scottish people. So nice. Much nicer than Londoners. [laughs]

**VB: Aw. I don't know. I've found people very friendly. Yeah.**

**RA:** Well they'll always help you.

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** They'll always help you if you're... if you don't know where that is or so on.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Well because my brother loved films too, and he used to draw. Erm, well we were very, we were a lot younger.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But we were very very interested. We'd read a thing from beginning to end. We'd know their whole life story, you know. That was very nice.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And I used to love to know who directed the film and who... you know. You learnt... You got to know the good ones from the bad ones.



**VB: Mhm. Mhm. 'Cause you were saying you were interested in the designers of the clothes as well.**

**RA: Mhm. I was.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA: I always have been. Well my own mother taught herself to sew. And use a machine. Someone bought her a machine. And she always made my clothes. So as a little girl, she always matched up the little knickers with the dress. And although, I mean I'm over seventy now, she was never old-fashioned. My dresses used to show my little knickers. Whereas other kids used to wear dresses down to their ankles.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA: Not her. Not her daughter.**

**VB: Mm.**

**RA: And I was a little blonde then. And petite. And my sister learnt court dressmaking. And she used to make dresses for her friends. And she had a lot of eh, friends. Yes she had a lot of friends 'cause my eldest brother was very handsome.**

**VB: Ah. [laughs]**

**RA: And they all used to fall for him. But every time they got married, her little sister had to be bridesmaid. And I was bridesmaid about twenty times.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA: Yup. They seemed to think I was nice, you know.**

**VB: Mhm. It sounds as you're describing the dresses, I was thinking of the sort of Shirley Temple--**

**RA:** Oh yes! Yes.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** Well, my sister-in-law was what they call a GI bride.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** That was interesting too. And when Shirley Temple was quite famous, they made dolls in America. And she bought Simone and Jackie a doll each. They've still got them.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** Yeah. Yeah she was gorgeous, Shirley Temple. [pause 3 seconds] But I liked a good film with a good actor or a good actress. And so on.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** I was quite discerning.

**VB:** Mhm.

**RA:** Because we talked about it a lot.

**VB:** Did you like comedies as well? 'Cause we didn't really talk about that.

**RA:** Oh indeed. Oh yes! Yes, I liked to just roll up, real tummy laughter, you know. And my brother Maurice, he would make me laugh too. Oh and my father used to, he spoke to us in Yiddish.

**VB:** Oh.

**RA:** Not all the time but, he used to come up with phrases in Yiddish.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And it was always you'd got to respect at the table. And we all learned to behave very well at the table. But my brother would sit opposite me. He had hu-uge brown eyes. And he'd suddenly pull a face. I'd be sitting near my father. And I would die.

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** I would just die! [laughs] 'Cause I had a good sense of humour. But he was always doing tricks like that.

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** My father, sitting there quite stern, you know. I'd just make an excuse and go out of the room and just--

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** Roar with laughter in another room. And Pesach time, he would read it to us.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And eh, quite stern. But there was one part of it that was almost a Yiddish word. And he'd stop and say that word. We didn't know the meaning of it. But it would make him laugh. And he had a wonderful voice. A wonderful speaking voice. Lovely tone. And erm, that would make us all very happy.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** A very happy household.

**VB: It sounds like it from what you're saying.**

**RA:** Indeed. We absolutely worshipped one another. Well we still do. My mother used to have open house. And people used to come to her for advice. She's a very wise woman.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And of course, being able to read Hebrew and English and Yiddish and English, they'd come to her if they received letters from abroad.

**VB: Ah.**

**RA:** She'd read them to them. And she had our sense of humour. She'd try not to laugh, but she did. At all of us. It was lovely.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Yeah it was lovely.

**VB: She sounds like an exceptional woman really. Someone that--**

**RA:** She was a very, very intelligent lady.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** She really was. She would hurt more with words than if she gave me the odd slap, which I did deserve. But I was [laughing] naughty. I was only human.

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** I was very good at doing things that people dared me to do. You know.

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** And I did them. And the worse of it was, I was very blonde. And eh, I cried easily 'cause my brothers used to give me a good bashing. But then I would never say anything, I'd never tell on them.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But I gave myself away because I cried. And I'd wipe my tears away with dirty hands!

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** So you saw all the marks! A real giveaway!

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** Have another, darling. Go on. Please.

**VB: Thanks. They're really nice these.**

**RA:** I bet you've had no breakfast.

**VB: Yeah. Yeah I had some toast.**

**RA:** Long time ago. Aw-w. Well you must have them all.

**VB: Oh no.**

**RA:** I'll be buying some more!

**VB: Yeah.**

**RA:** You go ahead. And then I shall go out. I shall kick you out. Go on. So I had three very very handsome, four very handsome brothers.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** My parents were very good-looking. My mother was as dark as my father was a blonde. She had like you, big brown eyes. And she was Mona Lisa type.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Superb face. Superb structure. And wonderful skin. Wonderful skin. We were all envious of her skin. [laughs] 'Cause she wasn't, see I'm quite hairy.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** She had no hair, although she was dark. Not a hair anywhere. Very unusual.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And my father was a real blonde. He had a blonde moustache. Very classical features.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** A wonderful retroussé nose. And, we were none of us, we were all good-looking in our own way. But no way good as near as our parents. They were just wonderful. My aunt used to prove it. She was my father's sister. She used to tell us about him. As a young boy. And he was a brilliant dancer.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Russian dancer. He danced his shoes away. In one evening.

**VB: Ah.**

**RA:** He did. He danced all these Kazatsky dances.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And funnily enough, Laurie can dance. Suddenly, we went to a wedding about a year or two ago-

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And then, there was a lot of clapping. And people said, "Oh you must come and see this man dancing." And it was Laurie!

**VB: [laughs]**

**RA:** He was reacting to the music. Doing all his own steps.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But somehow they worked.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** It was sort of part-Russian, part-pop. I don't know what it was. But it worked. It was [laughs] very funny.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Animal instinct. [laughs]

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** But I could dance. I still react to music.

**VB: Did you enjoy going dancing?**

**RA:** Yes.

**RA:** Oh yes. Loved it. Ballroom or anything. I once had, there was man who was a lot older than me. He actually did cartoons in the '[Daily] Express'--

**VB: Mhm!**

**RA:** And in the '[Daily] Mail'.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Quite a well-known person. But he took me dancing. We went rambling, that's right. And he got them to turn on some Tangos. And he held me. He got me to Tango, where you finish up, you bend in half. I don't know how I ever did it. But whenever he got me to do it, and I did. I did it. The old-fashioned Tango. Yeah. I was very very light.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And eh, I could do it. But come on.

**VB: No I'm fine.**

**RA:** You can't be an old maid.

**VB: No. [laughs]**

**RA:** 'Cause you're not an old maid. [laughs]

**VB: No I'm okay really.**

**RA:** Oh go on darling.

**VB: No.**

**RA:** You've got to have it.



**VB: Maybe a half.**

**RA:** It'll make me, no, have it all... it'll make me buy some more. Go on.

**VB: Put like that.**

**RA:** Yes.

**VB: They're very nice these actually. I've never, never had them before.**

**RA:** Apparently they come from one of these big stores.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** I'm just trying to think. It was Safeways which is now closed. But there's another store. Possibly Tesco--

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Does sell them.

**VB: They're really nice.**

**RA:** Either that or Waitrose. I should go to Tesco though. That's nearer.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** I purposely put a little bit of cold in there.

**VB: That is lovely.**

**RA:** Because otherwise it's red hot.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Didn't want you to burn yourself.

**VB:** That was very nice.

**RA:** Straight from the kettle.

[pause 4 seconds]

**RA:** So are you actually living in London or are you just here?

**VB:** No erm, I've just been here for a month.

**RA:** Oh right. So who are you staying with?

**VB:** Erm, I was staying erm, with a family. Eh, but now the lady who is in charge of the project has a flat in London, so I'm staying there for a few days.

**RA:** Oh wonderful.

**VB:** So that's nice.

**RA:** What part?

**VB:** It's about halfway between Euston and Kings Cross. On a triangle. So it's quite near Russell Square.

**RA:** Oh that's very useful. You just walk to Russell Square and you're in the heart of book land and all theatreland. Everything.

**VB:** So that's lovely. I'm enjoying that.

**RA:** Have you taken a walk round there?

**VB: Mhm. Yes.**

**RA:** There's so many places of interest.

**VB: It is. I mean just walking around the streets, it's--**

**RA:** And it's all history too.

**VB: Wonderful.**

**RA:** Yes, 'cause they haven't knocked the buildings down.

**VB: That's right. It's really lovely.**

**RA:** That's why when Mick talked about the fleapit, that was actually in, it still is, in the Portobello Road. The famous Portobello Road. It's still there [referring to the Electric Cinema].

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

**RA:** Yeah. Yeah. If someone, if you walked with someone.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** It's the end near to Kensington Park.

**VB: Right.**

**RA:** Not the end that, where there's a lot of stores.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Actually, it's in the middle of the stores.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** It's on the other side of the road. Yes. Well when I lived in North Kensington. That's where we used to go there. And to the 'State' in Kilburn [referring to the Gaumont State Cinema]. And the Coronet. Which is in another part, Archer Street I think it was called. Had another name. I can't remember it. But it was halfway to town.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Between Kensington and town. And they were very, somewhere near Bayswater.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Very smart shops there. But regarding fashion, my own mother who as I say would make me little dresses. And then she'd make herself the most superb clothes.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** She was brilliant. And very modern. Didn't matter her age. Erm, when she was about seventy-five to eighty and even much more--

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Well into her eighties. She'd make her own clothes. And she look wonderful. You'd think she'd stepped out of a fashion book. Never old-fashioned. Then, you'd have people of sixty who dressed old and looked old. But she never did. We never remember her as old. She lived to ninety-six.

**VB: Really!**

**RA:** Yeah. But sadly, at eighty-nine, she had a severe heart attack.

**VB: Aw dear.**

**RA:** And she lost oxygen--

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** To the brain.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** And she went fuzzy.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** She never forgot the graces though.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** She constantly, the nurses loved her. We got... My brothers got her into a home where it wasn't Jewish. But she was con... very conscious of being Jewish. But she wasn't by then. Although I think it would've broken her heart. So she was constantly thanking them. And in the end she called everyone her, meine Kinder [my children]. Her children.

**VB: Aw.**

**RA:** She went back to being, speaking in Yiddish. And she called all the nurses, some were black, some were red, some were [grey?], some were Chinese! [laughs] They were all her children.

**VB: Aw.**

**RA:** And she was full of thank yous and pleases. They adored her. She was a wonderful character. If only we could've written down her knowledge. How she went on to seeing films. That was brilliant. That was a whole story in itself. Because she came over to England in 1914. War had broken out. And how she got through the German... That story is wonderful.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Because my sister was only six. Had a brother of three and one of six months. And she left my sister, aged six, holding the brother and she went out to get a kettleful of water and they wouldn't let her back on the train.

**VB: Oh-h dear.**

**RA:** Imagine. And eh, my sister remembers all this. And eh, a gentleman, my sister said, in full evening dress. She thinks he was a Viennese--

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** He distracted a guard who wouldn't let my mother back on the train. And she got under his arm. Otherwise it would've been a different story.

**VB: Oh! Terrible.**

**RA:** Yeah. And then my father was called up. And then he came back and started another family. So it was all very interesting.

**VB: Mhm.**

**RA:** Anyway, I'll kick you out now.

**VB: Right. Okay.**

**RA:** [laughs] Otherwise I'll go on forever. I have so many--

**VB: I know, it's—**

**RA:** Different episodes, you know. Even my late husband was taken a prisoner of war.

**VB: Ah dear.**

**RA:** He went... he managed to escape from France to Switzerland. But it was German Switzerland. They made him a prisoner of war. Aw it's shocking.

**VB: Terrible.**

[End of interview]