

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.

* Transcript ID: RH-95-201AT002

* CCINTB Transcript ID: 95-201-16a-ad

* Tapes: RH-95-201OT002

* CCINTB Tape ID: T95-151

* Length: 0:42:19

* Middlesex New Synagogue, 27 November 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Ralph (Raphael) Hart

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Annette Kuhn

* RH= Raphael Hart, VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: Second interview of two with Raphael Hart (audio unavailable for first interview, which took place 24 July 1995); Sound Quality: Fair.

[VB tape introduction; date of interview incorrectly stated as 28th November, 1995]

[setting tape up; general conversation; voices in background]

VB: Just make sure this is all working okay. Seems to be. Erm, I mean you mentioned just now...

[conversation in background] One of the things I wanted to ask you about, 'cause you mentioned a lot of different films and film stars that you enjoyed. Erm, and I wondered, would someone like say, Madeleine Carroll, you mentioned just now the film *I Was A Spy*.

RH: Yes.

VB: What was it about a star like that that appealed to you?

RH: Well. You see this film came out in 1933 according to Halliwell. And we mostly saw it in 1934. And in 1935 our school party, which I always remember, went to Bruges. And we were taken round the battlefields by our history master who had served in the previous war. Which, of course, ended only seventeen years earlier. And we were fourteen years old. I was born in 1921 and my father,

although he never went abroad, could tell me things that happened. And we read about it. And, of course, it was, it was history, only seventeen years ago. The period in which that took place was of course 1915, 1916. Which of course was only twenty years earlier! So we are now, in terms of today, that would be 1970, when my daughter, my daughter was ten years old [amazed voice]. And yet she doesn't know what happened in 1945 but we certainly remember what happened in 19, here. We certainly remember what happened in 1970.

VB: Mhm.

RH: And it was modern history. Now, though we did not do it for the equivalent of GCSE, which in those days was called General Schools, our history actually stopped at 1914. All our, well most of the adult teachers, over forty shall we say, had served in the war. And they'd even retain their title of Captain in a couple of cases. And when they, and when they didn't want to tell us about Tudor history, told us about the Battle of Jutland and the Somme and Passchendaele. And we grew up with it, you see. And every boy at the school had read these 'Boys Own' papers. Well the equivalent of it in those days. Forget, eh, 'Hotspur' and 'The Wizard'. And they knew exactly what went on. The Battle of Loos in 1915. And the Somme in 1916. And of course and they saw the films which brought it to them, which were recorded for them only twenty years earlier you see.

VB: Mhm.

RH: It was bringing the characters, bringing the things they'd read about to life.

VB: That's interesting. So it must've--

RH: That was the whole, that was the background to it.

VB: Yeah.

RH: I mean the Prime Ministers, Mr Wilson and Mr Heath, it's only twenty years, after all, it's twenty years, but it's only twenty years ago for a lot of us.

VB: Mhm.

RH: In our generation. It's yesterday.

VB: Mhm.

RH: And particularly for the school masters it was yesterday to them. And the boys, it was the day before yesterday. And every boy knew that the British fleet had won the Battle of Jutland even if they didn't know how many losses there were or not on each side but we knew the German fleet never came out again. And we knew that we lost a million men in the Battle of Somme or thereabouts. And we didn't want it to happen again if we could possibly, if anything could be done about it. We knew we got the League of Nations. As it was hopefully there would never be another Somme or Passchendaele or [inaudible] the French. But that was it. Prevailing attitude of the time for school boys. But it was history. It was living history. Living history. Okay?

VB: It's interesting. So obviously it had a more of an immediate--

RH: Absolutely!

VB: Impact on you.

RH: And particularly some of the American films, though not so much the British films, showed up the war. And newsreels of course. We're still only twenty years again! And they were shown almost in every film. That came up in those days. The background. I mean I could, look up *The Dawn Patrol* please.

VB: Right.

RH: Look up *The Dawn Patrol*.

[pause 6 seconds; voices in background].

VB: [reads] "*The Dawn Patrol. 1938*"

RH: Exactly.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Who was in it please?

VB: Erm, Douglas Fairbanks Junior.

RH: Ye-es!

VB: James Finlayson.

RH: No.

VB: Richard Barthelmess.

RH: Barthelmess. Yes. Barthelmess, yes.

VB: Yeah. Were they stars that you liked?

RH: Yes. Yes. Yes. But certainly Douglas Fairbanks Junior. Oh yes!

VB: Yeah. Directed by Howard Hawks.

RH: Classic film, classic film.

VB: Yes. I haven't seen that.

RH: Classic war film.

VB: Yeah.

RH: *The Dawn Patrol*. With the fighters that went up, in the early, in the dawn, to see what was going on. They were in the enemy lines. And got shot at all the time. Even before the anti-aircraft, before the fighters had a chance to go up and look and see what they was doing.

VB: Mhm.

RH: And stopping them taking pictures. Because that was the only way of gaining information about what was going on behind enemy lines. [inaudible] visible by camera. However, that was a classic film.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Well then, there were other films. This was probably a silent film. Try, look up 'When Fleet Meets Fleet', please [referring to *Wrath of the Seas*].

VB: Right.

RH: That was, be silent. Might not be there. 'When Fleet Meets Fleet'.

VB: Was it the, was it the sort of serious films that appealed to you more?

RH: Absolutely!

VB: Right.

RH: Without question!

VB: Yeah.

RH: Not really glorifying, certainly not glorifying war but showing the war in most of its horrors as far as the American film directors could portray.

VB: Yes. That doesn't seem to be there.

RH: No, it was silent.

VB: Yeah.

RH: It was silent. Showed the Battle of Jutland.

VB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: Erm, now what else can, what else do you know of that period, you know, your thing. You ask me.

VB: Well, the thing that I wondered as well when you were describing these films.

RH: Yes.

VB: I mean, what for you actually made a good film?

RH: Action.

VB: Action. [laughs]

RH: Action. And for boys, for boys, [inaudible] action.

VB: Yes.

RH: Action, action and action.

VB: Yeah.

RH: No, ah, always complete absence of women.

VB: [laughs]

RH: Unnecessary, unnecessary padding to the story! But realism.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Action and realism. Because we did not want too much, too much blood split, if you could avoid it.

VB: Mhm.

RH: But action.

VB: Yes.

RH: Action. Particularly flying action. Or tanks.

VB: Mhm.

RH: But action. For boys of fifteen, sixteen, that was all that mattered. I mean in the case of *I Was A Spy*, that was drama, that was a drama because he was the character, main character. No loving. Please, [laughs] no loving.

VB: That's interesting.

RH: No. What the boys called sappy love.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Sappy love interest. No need. My mother would've... [pause 1 second] If she ever saw a war film, which she did under sufferance, she'd want a bit of love. But for a boy, No. Maybe for a girl.

VB: Yes. That's interesting. So Madeleine Carroll was acceptable when she was in an adventure.

RH: Absolutely. Because she was the heroine, was she not?

VB: Yeah.

RH: More sinned against than she was a sinner. If you can call a spy a sinner, but she got away with it.

VB: [laughs] Yeah.

RH: May not have been as bad as they said they was. Although the Germans said she was a spy. Who knows? But she was shot.

VB: Yeah.

RH: And that sort of ranked more, oh yes. Oh erm, other films of course that showed not so much, well less war. If I remember rightly, there was never a film with the sinking of the Lusitania. But the Titanic was of course always, it was shown on the, the eh survivors were shown on newsreel.

VB: Yes.

RH: Even into the late thirties, they talked about the Titanic. Well I don't know what any particular film was made of that. The [late last?] film was more recent wasn't it? *A Night to Remember*.

VB: Yes.

RH: But that certainly was a drama that every schoolboy knew about.

VB: Yeah.

RH: But not so much, oh! *Q-Ships*. Look up *Q-Ships* please.

VB: Right.

RH: Look up *Q-Ships*. One word. One letter Q.

VB: Right. 'Q-Planes'. I've just got 'Q-Planes'.

RH: Aw.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Q-Ships were a favourite thing. They were disguised armoured cruisers masquerading as merchant ships. That comes [on top?] of the submarine. That starts to open fire on it. Down goes the side of the ship, down goes the side of the ship [laughs] and out of a cannon, a small cannon opens fire on the submarine, into the submarine.

VB: Ah I see.

RH: The Germans said that was against the rules of warfare. When you're guarding your own convoys, and trying to save the country from starvation, any method is acceptable.

VB: Yeah. I was interested there when you said--

RH: Now then!

VB: Sorry.

RH: Now then, we come to another episode which I told you about. The jet plane aircraft were all right when they were on our side.

VB: Mhm.

RH: And only acceptable if it was the Red Baron. See if there's anything under, see if there's anything under eh, Richthofen or Red Baron [referring to Manfred von Richthofen], please.

VB: Right.

RH: Something of that nature. I don't know whether they actually called him the Red Baron.

VB: Mhm. Not got anything there.

RH: No. Not the Red Baron. Or Richthofen. Richthofen squadron. [pause 3 seconds] He was a hero. It was the Germans and there's not much less to our Air Force.

VB: He doesn't mention that.

RH: Doesn't mention. Well they made more of it later. The Germans would have brought him out later. In later years. Goering I believe was in the same squadron as Richthofen.

VB: Ah I see.

RH: Yeah. Well then of course, in the late thirties you began to get newsreels. Of the [Spanish] Civil War. We call it Civil War but really, that's how it started.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Well then, 'course Franco brought Moors across and attacked the government. The Germans sent their aircraft as a trial run. And the Germans be it said, in the thirties, Goe-, erm, Goebbels, Goebbels was a master of propaganda. Much of what he put out was pure unsullied lies! [laughs] But that's about all one can say. It was lies! He showed the might of the German Army and the German tanks Panzer Division. And in fact they were probably never more than about twenty, at the time, there were never more than about half a dozen tanks made to look a lot more. But erm, as we now know, the German Army was still, even in 1940, dependent on horse transport to a great extent.

VB: Mhm.

RH: But of course he made them to frighten, put the frighteners on everybody. And the good lady Leni Riefenstahl, of whom you may have heard, was bringing things out... Kate would know about that. Kate! [calls person over] Kate, do you remember Leni Riefenstahl? Do you remember a film producer called Leni Riefenstahl? Who made films for Hitler. *The Triumph of the Will* and all the Nuremberg parades and all the rest of it. Pure, unsullied, lying propaganda. But that was how, she was a wonderful film producer with that sort of thing. Any ref, no, you won't find... Look up *The Triumph of the Will* please.

VB: Right.

RH: German. I was saying to my wife when she went to go out this morning. I said, "I'm going to go whether she likes"--

VB: Yes.

RH: *The Triumph of the Will.*

VB: Yes, I've got it there.

RH: What does it say about it?

VB: Erm, it's 1936.

RH: Yes!

VB: Erm, "The official record of the Nazi Party conquests--

RH: Yes!

VB: "At Nuremberg 1934."

RH: Yes.

VB: Yeah.

RH: All lies mostly. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

RH: When I say lies mostly. [laughs] But propaganda completely but lies partially.

VB: That's interesting.

RH: Because it was made up to look bigger and better than it really was.

VB: Yeah.

RH: It was only small. Nazis at the time were--

VB: Was that shown here? Round about that time?

RH: [wordless response]

VB: I see. I didn't realise that. Yeah.

RH: In places like the Curzon.

VB: Yeah.

RH: You had to go up West.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Oh yes. I saw it. Erm, part of the Olympic Games. In 1936. Part of the--

VB: Oh yes.

RH: 1936 Berlin Olympic Games [referring to *Olympia*].

VB: Yes.

RH: Propaganda for the games.

VB: Yes.

RH: Showing how pacifist the Germans, the Germans had become, you see.

VB: Yes.

RH: And how nice they were. They welcomed everybody. The Games and all the rest of it. And [laughs] Jesse Owens, Hitler wouldn't even speak to him when he won three gold medals!

VB: Oh.

RH: 'Cause he was a negro.

VB: I mean how did that go down at the time? Did people accept it?

RH: We-ell! The propaganda. We'd had enough, we'd had propaganda ever since nineteen..., well, well before I was born.

VB: Yes.

RH: I mean, we knew it was government propaganda. But it went down with a laugh. Everyone. They laughed at it. The Germans like a bit of parade. Always have done parades.

VB: That's interesting.

RH: The Kaiser liked parades. Let them have parades as long as they don't cause... But! When of course, the Spanish Civil War took place--

VB: Mhm.

RH: And German aircraft was shown, whether that was true or not. Bombing civilians at Bilbao. Then the fat was really in the fire because then people began to realise the Germans were not so nice as... They were Prussians rather than nice beer-drinking Bavarians.

VB: I see. That's interesting though when you say that people took it with kind of a pinch of salt.

RH: In this country, a laugh.

VB: Yeah.

RH: The British government, the British people were never really swayed by propaganda from abroad.

VB: Yeah.

RH: I mean, true enough there was a sort of erm, I suppose you would call it subliminal these days--

VB: Yes.

RH: Subliminal propaganda.

VB: Yeah.

RH: But more likely after 1939 than before that.

VB: Yes.

RH: But certainly, this country, until the Germans invaded the Rhineland, and sent their planes to...
[pause 1 second] Look up please erm, oh God. I tell you what really started the ball rolling in this country. *Things to Come* please.

VB: Right.

RH: H.G. Wells. *Things to Come*. Probably made by Korda. I'm not entirely sure.

VB: Mhm.

RH: But *Things to Come*.

[pause 5 seconds]

RH: Once the Germans had bombed Bilbao, eh, allegedly Bilbao or Guernica. Guernica.

VB: Yeah.

RH: *Things to Come.*

VB: Right. I found it. It's 1936. And as you said, Alexander Korda.

RH: Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Now that was shown the other night, or sections of it.

VB: Mhm.

RH: And it, what does it say about it please?

VB: Erm,

RH: I'm interested to know what that book says about it.

VB: It says, "War in 1940--

RH: Yes.

VB: "Is followed by plague, rebellion. A new class-based society and the first rocket ship to the Moon."

RH: That was H.G. Wells, in his, more or less by Korda. More or less *à la* Korda. But not the H.G. Wells 'Things to Come', which was a horrifying book--

VB: Ah I see.

RH: In its way. Really frightened me--

VB: Mhm.

RH: In places.

VB: Mhm.

RH: But erm--

VB: Had you read the book before seeing the film?

RH: No. Not sure. Contemporary. Probably would have got it from the library.

VB: Yeah.

RH: I was fifteen, just about in the adult section by that time.

VB: Yeah.

RH: It was a horrifying book. I know [inaudible] to this day. It was horrifying.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Horrifying. Especially the war. Description of the war.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Erm, but the film itself put the frighteners on people as far as air raids were concerned. And then it was government, government propaganda all the way to- the pressure on the government to increase the aerial defence of this country. That really, that frightened people when they saw that. Because they'd read about the German bombing so-called.

VB: Yeah.

RH: What we did not know. They did not tell us. We now know. Was that the Germans had hardly any bombers capable of reaching this country from Germany.

VB: Mhm.

RH: It was only the fall of France which put London at risk. What we also did not know was the British government had put down the order for bombers long before. Based on their, based on their control of the Northwest Frontier.

VB: Mhm.

RH: And the eh, Kurds--

VB: Mhm.

RH: In Iraq. Because a bombing policy was found to be effective on tribesmen. And they said "Right, we can" [voice very quiet; inaudible].

VB: I see. Yeah.

RH: They got a bit of their own coin. [inaudible] they paid us back. Germ-, we were building bombers long before the war. The Germans had only two engines. Aircraft not capable of reaching this country unless they had a staging post in France.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Okay. Next question.

VB: Well, I mean you mentioned--

RH: That is, no, that is the effect on people.

VB: Yes.

RH: I think, it was certainly mentioned in the film last night about the *People's Century*.

VB: Yes.

RH: Because it really... [pause 1 second] It was women particularly. Boys, well, we'd heard about. [pause 1 second] Many women had lived through air raids and the Gotha bombers in 1917. My mother certainly had. And the Zeppelins. But to the younger generation, this was something quite unknown to them. Also, the horrors of war brought out eh, can't think of a decent, good war film that really showed... [pause 1 second] *Forgotten Men* [possibly referring to *Forgotten Men: the War As It Was*]. No I'm not sure of the titles. Anyhow, believe me, the Americans were more, erm, probably more capable of eh, showing the real horrors of war than the British government or British filmmakers were willing to, because it wouldn't sell.

VB: Mhm.

RH: It wouldn't sell. They wanted, the Americans wanted realism from 1935 onwards. Well apart from the musicals. Eh, we simply wanted things like *The Private Life of Henry VIII*.

VB: Mhm.

RH: It's all in, it's all in that little book. I was checking up. And Hitchcock.

VB: Right.

RH: Oh people loved Hitchcock. [laughs] [inaudible] it's still wonderful.

VB: Did you enjoy sort of mystery films then?

RH: Oh! Definitely. Well, I did. I did and so did my mother. But as I've told you before, we eh, my mother was very intelligent. A clever woman. And I had already won scholarships to grammar school and was working to go to college, university.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Therefore I was a bit, although I say it now, a bit more educated. Intelligent. Educated. Than the eh, majority. And so we enjoyed a good mystery. But I think most people of adult years enjoy a mystery. Read Agatha Christie's book. Well, no, was Agatha Christie before the war? I'm not sure. Can't remember. Oh Edgar Wallace. [inaudible] . Any good detective. Detective stories are very, very popular, among schoolboys. And when they brought them to the screen, Sherlock Holmes! Oh yes.

VB: Oh yes! [laughs]

RH: Anybody, I mean, Basil, there's so many. Eh, should see what they've got under Sherlock Holmes. 'Sign of Four', try 'The Hound', try *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, try *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

VB: 'Cause my [inaudible; overtalking]--

RH: Try *The Hound of the Baskervilles* please, see what it's got to say on the subject.

[pause 3 seconds]

RH: There are so many versions of it you see.

VB: I know. Yeah. 1939 it has here.

RH: Bit late.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Yeah. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Eh, what else can we say? Sign of Four. Try *The Sign of Four* please. It actually should have been 'The Sign of the Four'.

VB: [laughs]

RH: But it was *The Sign of Four*. Oh Sherlock Holmes. That's Sherlock Holmes.

VB: Was that something you enjoyed reading as well?

RH: Oh very much so! Oh I could quote eh, Sherlock Holmes stories ad infinitum.

VB: [laughs]

RH: I know them inside out.

VB: Ah here we are. 1932

RH: Yes! *The Sign of Four*.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Who was in it?

VB: Ah, that's interesting.

RH: Yeah.

VB: It was Arthur Wontner.

RH: Arthur Wontner. Oh yes, he was a fine actor. Yes.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Yes. My mother liked Arthur Wontner. He was a good, craggy-jawed typical Englishman.

VB: Ah I see.

RH: Arthur Wontner, yes, go on.

VB: Yes. And Ian Hunter.

RH: Ian Hunter was a good, solid... [laughs] Can't think. Look it up.

VB: [laughs]

RH: A good, solid square face. One would have thought him a typical country doctor, country doctor.

VB: Ah I see. Yeah.

RH: Ian Hunter. As eh, Watson.

VB: Must've been. Yeah. Yeah.

RH: Yeah, as Watson. Don't think there was many women in it, particularly. No women. No women mentioned?

VB: Eh, it's got eh, Isla Bevan.

RH: Never heard of her.

VB: Ah.

RH: No. The women were secondary. In Sherlock Holmes stories the women were only the clients as a rule.

VB: Yes.

RH: Unless it's that woman.

VB: That's right. [laughs] Yes.

RH: That woman! [laughs] Don't mean Margaret Thatcher, either. That woman. I've forgotten her name. Anyhow, one of the characters. Right! Yes. Sherlock Holmes was the favourite.

VB: Yeah.

RH: There were of course others.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Erm, in America, it would've been eh, oh 'Charlie Chan'!

VB: Ah!

RH: Look up 'Charlie Chan' please.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Try 'Charlie Chan'. I'm quoting the famous ones I can think of, detective, detectives and their writers.

VB: Ah here we are. Oh there's a whole long list of them here.

[Other person says: I don't know who wrote 'Charlie Chan'].

RH: Earl Derr Biggers.

VB: Erm, I'm just looking. There's so many films mentioned.

RH: We want the writer. Earl Derr Biggers I think his name was. [inaudible]. Writers. Any of them.

VB: Mhm. I can't see it.

RH: Well they were probably written extra for the film.

VB: Yeah.

RH: And then there was of course erm, [pause 2 seconds] Raymond Chandler.

VB: Yes. Yeah. Was Charlie Chan one that you liked though?

RH: Well, yes. My mother always liked, "Number One Son" was his favourite expression.

VB: [laughs]

RH: "Number One Son". Yes. Oh he was famous. He was in America. But in this country, of course, there was no one, incomparable, erm, Sherlock Holmes.

VB: Yeah. Yeah. I didn't realise that series ran from 1931 to '49!—

RH: In America, yes, they liked a bit of mystery.

VB: It's amazing.

RH: Oh! Wait a minute. Look up 'Fu Manchu' please.

VB: Right.

RH: He wasn't really, he wasn't a detective. He was a horror man. Look up 'Fu Manchu'. Sax, Sax Rohmer.

VB: Yeah. The Yellow Peril.

RH: Yes! Oh yes, yes, yes. Oh yes, that reminds me. Of course that is a good point.

VB: Mhm.

RH: The great, the great enemies at that time, as far as the East was concerned, was China strangely enough. Not Japan.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Japan never really figured. As an enemy. Of this country. Until, ooh, nineteen..., well, they were allies from 1902 of this country, during the first war.

VB: Mhm.

RH: The little gentlemen of the Far East. Erm, the Chinese were the enemy.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Great oriental villains. However.

VB: That's interesting.

RH: Oh! Definitely. Fu Manchu.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Oh he was, yeah! Oriental scheming villain! Yes.

VB: Yes.

RH: Master of science. Horror. Yeah, I remember. He usually kidnapped someone. "I am going to try this gas. If it's effective you will not know.--"

VB: [laughs]

RH: "If it's ineffective I will soon hear."

VB: [laughs].

RH: And then he'd throw down the test tube into the trapdoor. A terrible scream. And then silence. And he turns round and he says, "It was obviously effective. The formula was correct."

VB: [laughs]

RH: [laughs]

VB: Ah dear.

RH: That's Fu Manchu. Yes, well, next.

VB: Well, one thing I wanted to ask you was erm, I mean seeing that sort of film, how did it make you feel when you were at the cinema?

RH: Not! Nothing! Nothing! I firstly was concerned for my mother, water off a duck's back, water off a duck's back. As far as I was concerned, I cannot speak for anybody younger--

VB: Mhm.

RH: Because my mother only let me go when I was about fourteen, thirteen, fourteen years old.

VB: Yeah.

RH: My father took me when I was ten, because, as I told you before, the cinema called The Screen opened in 1931.

VB: Yes.

RH: And eh, I saw films until we moved away. But I didn't go all that much until I was about twelve or thirteen. And from there on, it was ev-, once or twice a week.

VB: Yes.

RH: Mostly once, but occasion- if there was a film I particularly wanted to see, I would go down to the fleapit as I called it, The Grand in Herne Hill. And go and see *King Kong*. Look up *The Invisible Man* please.

VB: Right.

RH: My mother wouldn't, she said it was too horrific for her.

VB: Ah I see.

RH: Look up *The Invisible Man*. Claude Rains, please.

VB: Ah. Ah, 1933.

RH: Yes!

VB: Yeah.

RH: I saw that on my own. She let me go down and see it, because she said it would be too horrific. It had no effect on me whatsoever.

VB: That's interesting.

RH: There was one film I did see, which really [pause 2 seconds] upset me.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Will you please [pause 1 second] look up [pause 1 second] *Outward Bound*. Please. That's why I brought Halliwell along.

VB: Mhm. [flicks through pages]

RH: Will you please look up *Outward Bound*. [pause 2 seconds] Leslie Howard. Beryl Mercer. Can't think of anybody else in it offhand. But please see what they have to say about *Outward Bound*. Author Sutton Vane.

VB: Yeah. 1930, with Leslie Howard.

RH: What date please?

VB: 1930.

RH: Yeah, my mother shouldn't have let me go and see that.

VB: Yeah.

RH: I saw that, must've been when I was ten. 1931. What does it say please?

VB: Erm, it's got Leslie Howard, Douglas Fairbanks Junior.

RH: Don't remember him in it.

VB: Yeah. Beryl Mercer.

RH: Beryl Mercer! Yes! The old lady.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Always a Cockney lady. Yes. Go on.

VB: Erm, Helen Chandler.

RH: Can't remember her.

VB: Yeah. Alec B. Francis.

RH: No!

VB: Montagu Love.

RH: Just about!

VB: Yeah.

RH: What does it say about him?

VB: It says, "Passengers on a strange liner discover that they are all dead--

RH: That's it!

VB: "And heading for purgatory."

RH: And that upset me.

VB: Yeah.

RH: That really upset me. I have never seen a film since which upset me so much at the time. I didn't tell my mother. She should not really have let me see it. She should've taken me to see it. But then we did not know what we were going to see.

VB: Yes.

RH: It really upset me.

VB: Yeah.

RH: That was the story. But in those days, of course, people lived [voice inaudible] in the war years.

VB: Mhm.

RH: They were hardened. And eh, that was it.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Now, to my way of, to my eh, to my erm, memory, they never made a film of, not quite true... I mean, much later, the Depression.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Now we lived with the Depression in those years. My father had very little money. I remember hearing him, I should've been asleep, "How are we going to live on this?" Never, I'm trying to think of films that made anything of, we never, America, Yes.

VB: Mhm.

RH: I mean the song, 'Buddy, can you spare a dime?' [referring to 'Brother, can you spare a dime?'] was of course. But, it was all in the head-, newsreels. But they never actually made, one film... [pause 2 seconds] There was one film. I can't remember.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Erm, very few films made of the Depression itself. The effect of it.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Maybe you know it. Do you know?

VB: I don't, no. Really

RH: No. I can't think of a film. That actually showed the [Jarrow] Hunger March. Well, the newsreels did.

VB: Yeah.

RH: But it was more or less concerned, so that in 1940, by 1939, 1940 particularly, the people they were, those who were unemployed were beginning to find work again. In the armament factories.

VB: Yeah.

RH: But apart from that. In the American films, the *Gold Diggers* series. Look up the *Gold Diggers*. Gold Diggers of this, that and the other. 1936, 37. *Gold Diggers of--*

VB: Right. I'm just going to turn this over.

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: Oh there are a lot... [looking at book]

RH: Try 1936 or seven. 'Cause by that time Roosevelt was beginning to get a grip on things in America. And was beginning to get them back on the New Deal schemes.

VB: Right. Well the one of 1937 has got Dick Powell and Joan Blondell in it [referring to *Gold Diggers of 1937*].

RH: Yes. That was when they were beginning to budge. But, in those films they were also showing scenes showing the conditions of the ex-soldiers, American ex-soldiers. Eh, during the Depression. A policeman would come along to a man on a street corner. And he said, "Get up!" And as the man got up, he recognises he was one of his ex-officers or something like that.

VB: Yeah.

RH: And then of course they would have forgotten a song. [sings] 'Remember my forgotten.' And it shows scenes going back to the first war.

VB: Mhm.

RH: And showing what the conditions of the veterans as they call them now, the ex-soldiers were like.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Didn't show, 'course I suppose the prevailing mood in this country... [pause 1 second]. If you can look up Depression in the thirties.

VB: Yeah.

RH: In this book. See what they show. The Great Depression. See what films they made. I remember one film.

VB: Mhm. [pause 2 seconds] I don't think it's got subjects in the index.

RH: Oh, that's a shame.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Because the films of the thirties should have dealt with, should have shown some sort of realism.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Of the Depression.

VB: It's an interesting point that. So I mean you weren't getting erm--

RH: Everybody knew about it.

VB: Scenes at home.

RH: I think the idea of filmmakers was, that if they showed too much realism it wouldn't sell.

VB: Yeah.

RH: After all, it had to sell. They'd show their film to the widest possible audience.

VB: Yeah.

RH: I mean, films, there's eh, Korda. Historical, costume dramas. And Hitchcock is mysteries. But eh, [inaudible], never mind, carry on.

VB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: What else is there? Go on.

VB: You've raised a lot of different points.

RH: Yeah. I'll try and think of the name later. But that's it. There was one. [pause 2 seconds] I'm not sure, was it Richard Attenborough? Film made in 19... Something to do with marriage. Can't think. Well, it did show, anyhow.

VB: What I was thinking when you were telling me about that and the fact that you weren't seeing much about life at home.

RH: That's true. That is true. Except on the newsreels.

VB: Except on the news, yeah.

RH: Except newsreels.

VB: I mean what do you think that you--

RH: *Pathé Gazette*, in those days.

VB: Yeah.

RH: In those days. *Pathé Gazette*. Or Path-ay. We called it *Pathé Gazette*.

VB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: Later, *British Movietone*. Later. But *Pathé Gazette*. The eyes and ears of the world. Everybody knew it. [laughs] If someone was showing off a bit [amused voice], they'd say "De de de de. De de dedede." Yeah. Go on. [laughs] Yeah. Carry on.

VB: Yeah. I was wondering what it was that drew you to the cinema?

RH: Oh well my mother was a bit of erm, had a drab sort of existence really. Mother of a son. And she wanted a bit of relaxation. She wanted a bit of pleasure. A bit of colour in her life.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Obviously, she wanted a bit of entertainment! I told you! Just keep repeating it!

VB: Yeah.

RH: And she wanted entertainment. My mother wanted entertainment. And as I was growing up I wanted to see it for myself. I had no objections. I went along to the Regal once a week. With two ounce of glacier mints, which probably ruined my teeth--

VB: [laughs]

RH: For the rest of my life. 'Cause that was how it was!

VB: Yeah.

RH: I thoroughly enjoyed it.

VB: Yeah.

RH: So, as I say, she wanted entertainment and if she saw a film and she didn't like it, she'd say, "I don't call that entertainment!"

VB: Yeah.

RH: And then go home at night. I always wanted to see other films that she, certainly, she said, "Well, I don't want to see that. *King Kong*." Look it up. 1933, please.

VB: Yeah.

RH: I think it's *King Kong*.

VB: From what you were saying, it sounds like your mother was quite sensitive. She didn't like the...

RH: I told you! She was an intelligent woman.

VB: Yeah.

RH: She was a typist in the Ministry in the first war. And she pushed my father to get [inaudible] and she looked after my education. We had battles over my [pause 2 seconds] eleven, well we called it Junior County Scholarship. Teach me arithmetic. Battles. She usually won!

VB: [laughs]

RH: Mind you, in the end I'd too much homework. *King Kong*.

VB: *King Kong*. Erm, as you say, 1933.

RH: 1933!

VB: With Fay Wray of course.

RH: I went down to the Grand to see it myself. I enjoyed it to the nth degree!

VB: [laughs]

RH: I was not in any way frightened whatsoever! *King Kong* did not frighten me! I've seen it so often, I know the bloody story!

VB: [laughs]

RH: Fay Wray and Robert Armstrong and Bruce Cabot. Oh, I can tell you. I know it! I've seen it and seen it and seen it over and over again!

VB: Mhm.

RH: Didn't realise the full implication of it. That it was in fact 'Beauty and the Beast'. Fay Wray. Fay Wray brought about King Kong's downfall. But that was lost, that was not part of my category. What I enjoyed seeing was the dinosaurs and King Kong.

VB: I suppose the adventure again.

RH: The adventure.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Of course! Adventure, yes. Action.

VB: Yeah.

RH: I knew a bit about, I knew a bit about pterodactyls [inaudible] my encyclopaedias. But then of course, as I say, I was [whispers] a cut above the rest. Anyway. When you talk, when you talk to anybody else of that period, I was at a grammar school.

VB: Mhm.

RH: And to go to grammar school was, well. There were four of us got it, in 1932. [You felt you were sort of?] separate from the rest of the herd, who just went on [inaudible]. I mean even my relatives couldn't understand why I was going, why my mother wanted me to go, or why I wanted to go. [Why I had to go to a grammar school?]. Even if it meant taking money from a relative. [inaudible].

VB: Mhm.

RH: However! Just carry on please.

VB: Yeah.

RH: That's my personal life.

VB: Yeah.

RH: See I'm, admittedly, someone who's a bit above what most people you will ever see. Most men were working. I never actually worked in [defence?] Not that I didn't want to, I would've been incapable of doing so! When I had a psychological test in the Air Force they said, "Well you're obviously not fitted to use your hands. You're better in a mental job."

VB: Yeah.

RH: No fitter, or rigger or armourer. So there we are.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Anything else?

VB: It's interesting what you were saying just now.

RH: Anything else you've got to think of?

VB: Yeah. I brought along a book of thirties films and most of the ones that you mentioned--

RH: I'm sure!

VB: Aren't actually in here.

RH: Oh I'll look at it later.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Oh yes! 1938! Yes.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Oh I was seventeen!

VB: Yeah.

RH: Oh, Norma [Shearer]. Well, course, I didn't have much to do with girls. Being an only child and going to a club where there was [inaudible] as many girls as boys. From the time I was fourteen onwards.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Oh, this is a nice book. Oh! Oh a very young Carole Lombard. She was killed in an air crash 1942. Yeah, action.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Action Man. Action. Action, action. Spencer, oh yes. Now my mother adored Spencer Tracy.

VB: Ah!

RH: Ah! My mother. Yeah. It mentions Tom Walls and Ralph Lynn. [inaudible] actors. Eccentric. Katharine, very young! Katharine Hepburn. Oh, Don Ameche! Another one of my mother's favourites. Oh! She liked, well, do her a favour, God rest her soul. She had her human, female likes like everybody else! Women, of course, yeah, she liked men. Seeing men [inaudible]. Handsome. Well she said she liked, do you remem-, is it, well of course we haven't got [inaudible]... Jack Buchanan. Jack Buchanan. Now of course she liked suave, well turned-out men. There was a famous character, bit of history for you.

VB: Mhm.

RH: He was not, in fact, as far as I know, ever in a film. His name was Basil Hallam. He was killed during the First War. His parachute, his parachute didn't open.

VB: Mhm.

RH: He was the prime, Jack Buchanan. Suave, you know, dashing. His last film was 'Goodbye Girls I'm through' when he joined up. Erm, Charles Laughton was the actor par excellence. We mentioned that. Korda. Merle Oberon. Yeah, well. Dick Powell was a singer in those days! Now he became a good actor later. And he made war films of the Americans, the American Air Force in this country. But he was a singer, he was a singer in *42nd Street*, if I remember rightly. [Katherine?]. Oh here's your characters! That's what I was, you could run through. Erm, some of this, 'course these are all, bom bom, Don Ameche was good- looking man. 'Course he died recently. Fred, well, we've been through all this.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, without any question. Mischa. I'm all these, George Arliss was the great English actor. Now George, I'm not sure, I think he was [with Korda?]. Oh yes! Thank you [inaudible]. I mentioned George, 'House of', I mentioned historical films. My mother was quite interested in history but not quite so much as I was.

VB: Mhm.

RH: She liked the erm, the back-, the costumes. Same as my wife at the moment. Liked the costumes, backgrounds, not so much the action. *Voltaire*. Erm, I can remember seeing Cardinal Richelieu. *The House of Rothschild*. We all saw *The House of Rothschild*.

VB: Mhm.

RH: *The Iron Duke*. Yes. [loud voices in background]. However. Who worked the, who worked the, can't think of a name. Okay. Maybe you'll find someone. Sonja, she was only a ballet dancer. Paul Lukas, he was a good-looking man. [pause 2 seconds] However. These, yes, 'course, these are all, this is a great period.

VB: Yeah.

RH: This is a classical period. A heroic age sort of thing.

VB: Yeah.

RH: But 'course 1939 onwards it was war propaganda. It was government propaganda. Mentions that in some detail. The Crown Film Unit was very good. Started, I'm going beyond your remit now.

VB: Mhm.

RH: Erm, *Target for Tonight*. Was the first one. And then, of course, there was 'The Crown' film series. Wartime propaganda. Wish I could remember that film! A really dramatic film. [pause 2 seconds] I think it was Richard Attenborough... [pause 2 seconds] It may have been later.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Gracie Fields. Now Gracie Fields made films showing life, well, glorified life in the factories.

VB: Mhm.

RH: But mostly, later.

VB: Mhm.

RH: [looks through book]. Ruby Keeler, yes.

VB: Did you like that sort of film? The factory--

RH: Not really.

VB: Yeah.

RH: Only so far as it was realism. Only so far as it was realism, true to life.

VB: Yeah.

RH: My mother said it was more lifelike but without any horror, without any horrors. No! Not really. Not me. Eh, Ginger Rogers. My pin-ups, without any, I've told you before. I will say it again.

VB: [laughs]

RH: Was Ginger Rogers and Alice Faye. And I think that goes for most boys of seventeen! Sixteen, seventeen years old. There's one word I have not mentioned. It's spelled with three letters and I don't intend to mention it. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

RH: It didn't occur, it didn't come into our scheme of things whatsoever. Not me anyway. May have done others. I can't speak for others. That's why we liked people like Alice Faye. And eh, Ginger Rogers. Not, I repeat not, Betty Grable.

VB: That's interesting.

RH: Not really. Not really. She didn't do anything! She had no voice, she didn't do anything. Alice Faye was a dancer! She could sing. Dance. So Ginger Rogers was a dancer. You know my name is Hart. You know, surname. She made a film called *Roxy Hart*.

VB: Ah!

RH: And as soon as I got in the Forces everybody started calling me Roxy!

VB: [laughs]

RH: [laughs] I'm telling you! Telling you, that's true!

VB: Aw. [laughs]

RH: They nicknamed me Roxy, they nicknamed me Roxy from 1942 until 1946!

VB: [laughs]

RH: They all knew about Roxy. Ginger Rogers. [looking at book] Attenborough. No. Ah well, thank you very much.

VB: Well thank you very much.

[End of interview]