

Interview with respondent 0713

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Location: Norwich

Interviewer: Dr. Emma Pett

Interviewer: So what's really helpful for the recordings and the transcript, because obviously Melvyn will be working from these as well, is if you could just start off by saying a little bit about where you lived in the 60s, how old you were roughly from the beginning to the end of the decade, just to sort of set the scene a bit.

Respondent: At the beginning of the 60s I was still at school and lived and went to school on the East end of Newcastle, three miles from the city centre. The cinemas, actually we were well served by cinemas, there were three cinemas within probably walking distance of where I lived. Then in the middle of the 60s I went to commercial college and after that I went to work as a trendy young secretary. I thought I was really the bee's knees!

Interviewer: So how old were you when you started work?

Respondent: Eighteen.

Interviewer: And was that...did a lot of your friends go school, work...was that quite sort of...

Respondent: No very different, I didn't want to but unfortunately my father died just before I was sixteen, I wanted to be a teacher and I wanted to go to teacher training college but my mother didn't feel that financially she could support me. So I went to commercial college by default really, that's not what I wanted to do. So I had some friends who stayed on at school to do their A levels, which was my intention, I wanted to do an English degree, and some friends who left at sixteen and went to work in the Ministry of Pensions which was very big in Newcastle, it's where everybody worked that left at sixteen. Some went on to university and some, like me, at eighteen went to do something completely different, went to work. You know my best friend was a radiographer and things like that, so I suppose... and my now my husband, who I met and was my boyfriend in the 60s, he went to Newcastle University. So I had a mix of friends who...

Interviewer: Quite broad...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And there's quite a lot of different cinemas, wasn't there, in Newcastle in the 60s.

Respondent: Loads, loads

Interviewer: Were there ones that you went to more than others?

Respondent: Yes, absolutely the ones, my husband just reminded me this morning, the one we went to most was called the Black's Regal and I'd never thought of

that name before, it eventually became an Odeon, but it was called Black's Regal... I don't understand why. And that was about half a mile away. But when I was slightly younger, I used to go to The Lyric which was..I'm sure it was half a mile away, and there was also the Scala, but I don't ever remember... I went to the Scala as a child you know in the afternoon for the matinees but it was a bit...we always called it the flea-pit and I can't remember going there as an adult so whether it wasn't a cinema anymore I don't think. Then to see special films when they just came out we went into the centre of Newcastle. So you know, the launch of big films...there was a huge cinema in the middle called The Queens, and that had cinema-scope and all these, surround sound, that we'd never had before, so you used to have to queue to go and see that or the Haymarket...

Interviewer: Was that quite exciting?

Respondent: Very exciting. And of course you queued for everything. The Haymarket was a particular favourite as well, I can visualise queuing up the side of the road to go into that. So that was when things first came out, you probably went there, but I wouldn't know that at the time that was just when we went into town...

Interviewer: And those cinemas were quite big, were they?

Respondent: Huge. Oh and the other one we went to was called the Starve which is now the Tyneside ??, that was another flea-pit and also it specialised, funnily enough it ends up, in X-rated, mainly horror films. My boyfriend,

who is now my husband, don't know why he's my husband , loved horror films so I used to go with him there to watch that sort of thing.

Interviewer: What were they, like Hammer films and things like that?

Respondent: Yeah, yes, Edgar Allen Poe, cats walled up and people walled up and things. Yes, I didn't really like it....

Interviewer: You just went along...

Respondent: Just went along...

Interviewer: So, you mentioned in the questionnaire about the buildings being beautiful? I'm wondering what aspect of the furnishings or the architecture that you're thinking of?

Respondent: The Black's Regal is probably a good example, it's now a very rough area of Newcastle, but the frontage was...you know, the facade was really beautiful. It's been knocked down since which is terrible, but inside was glorious as well because you always had beautiful staircases. I can picture staircases with carpets and things, and the Black's Regal actually still had an organ, they didn't play it but it still had an organ in the front, and the curtains seemed very luxurious. So yes, I mean we didn't know it at the time and your seats of course nobody trashed them as far as...I never remember anybody doing it and you know they were sort of velvet plush seats.

Interviewer: A bit of luxury

Respondent: A bit of luxury, yes my son said to me on the phone last night "did somebody come round with ice creams" and I said, "yes of course they did". I don't remember buying them very often but yes everything came to you. It was very much an experience.

Interviewer: Yeah it was a night out. There weren't...was there...other people told me that there weren't many other places to go if you were dating or you wanted to go out...

Respondent: No, and also you know, we were only supposed to drink when you were eighteen and I never did drink before I was eighteen. I never went in a pub. Even when I did the pubs weren't that nice and they didn't sell food like they do now. There'd be some, there'd be Bernie Inns I think, you know the chains where people like me would go, but not really so... certainly up until...I can't remember, other than a crowd of us going on a Sunday night, I'd go in a crowd to a pub, but I can't...and I can remember going to some with my boyfriends but it wasn't...

Interviewer: It wasn't the thing, yeah.

Respondent: No, you drink cherry beer.

Interviewer: So the local, the Black's Regal, the local cinema, was that...did you still buy a ticket for a seat at that time?

Respondent: No I don't know that you did, you bought it for either the stalls or upstairs
but there was no numbered seat...

Interviewer: What I mean is you didn't buy a ticket for a film so...

Respondent: No no, no not at all.

Interviewer: But with the Queens cinema in town, the big one, did you actually go
to...can you remember?

Respondent: I think you... I remember the "Sound of Music" at the Queens and The
Role Model, but that was probably before the 60s. So I think you maybe
did have to book which would be most unusual... I imagine my parents or
whoever would have to and book for me. So yes, that would have
been...because if it was in the Queens, it would be for a season, whereas
the other films were one week. The big films were the same, The Sound of
Music was probably on for a year or something.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's the same in the West End in London as well. You mentioned
cartoon theatres was there...?

Respondent: A specific one, yeah. In Newcastle, opposite the Odeon which was
probably the biggest theatre in Newcastle, I'd forgot about that one,
opposite there, it's still a cinema now, was a cartoon. So I'm not sure I
went there quite as much in the 60s more when I was a bit younger.

Interviewer: And it just played...yeah

Respondent: Always cartoons, one after the other. There was a news cinema as well, I didn't like that very much but I'm not sure I was ever forced to go. I went but it wasn't my cup of tea because they had news on at the cinema.

Interviewer: Did you have a television at home?

Respondent: I had a television at home, yes I did. But television was very different from what it is now. I mean you couldn't say...you couldn't watch films on it. So television was live, there was only two channels, so it was very different from what it...it wasn't at all targeted to a teenager other than the 6-5 Special and that sort of thing, but other than that it wasn't.

Interviewer: You mentioned "Sound of Music", also in your questionnaire you mentioned James Bond films.

Respondent: Yes, I loved James Bond, I went to all of them and I still do actually.

Interviewer: Can you remember the first Bond film you saw?

Respondent: Well it was the first one. As soon as they came out I had to go, I adored James Bond and quite often I would read the books as well because I used to like to read. So no I adored them and I loved Sean Connery with a passion.

Interviewer: Had you read the book before the film or did you start reading the books because you liked the film...?

Respondent: I think so, but I don't know actually I think I'd have seen the film first but I don't know because I was such an avid reader at the time I don't remember, but I would imagine I saw the film and then occasionally read...but I've seen..

Interviewer: So you loved Sean Connery? Did you find it, you know, kind of glamorous, exciting....

Respondent: Very much so. I went with my next door neighbour Roy, I had a lot of male friends when I was young, I'm a man's woman I think really, but I went with Roy to see "From Russia With Love" with...her name's gone out of my head now was that ... or was it somebody else, but Roy told me the heroine looked like me, so she was just a walking stick with long hair you know. Because that's what you wanted, you want to be like the heroine..

Interviewer: So it's kind of a...so it's fantasy kind of, escapism in some ways.

Respondent: James Bond certainly was yeah

Interviewer: We showed "From Russia With Love" when we went up to do a screening in Edinburgh and it triggered off quite a lively debate about who the best James Bond was. Did Sean Connery remain your favourite or...?

Respondent: No I quite liked Roger Moore, but having watched some of those like "Octopussy" since I can see his dyed red hair but also his stunt double. When you watch it now you think "how was I ever taken" of course he didn't do any of his stunts. But no, I liked Roger Moore as well and I remember David Niven I just thought was funny you know, I didn't fancy him he wasn't my cup of tea but I liked him.

Interviewer: Did you collect anything? Did you collect like programmes, posters or...

Respondent: Not programmes but I used to get a film magazine, and I would cut things out and pin them on...I had a dressing table with a big mirror so you would be able to clip pictures of who I was going to marry.

Interviewer: Your future husbands.

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: That's great. So James Bond's one kind of film, what did you think about the films...so were there any you particularly wanted to talk about?

Respondent: It was only when I looked on the website that I thought the ones that really appealed to me as my private self, were the angry young men films and all of that, because this was the 60s. I didn't know anybody on the pill at the beginning of the 60s but I knew people who...sex was very much at the forefront, probably still is now, but of course nobody did it. In "A Taste

of Honey” I could remember not knowing whether to cry or what for the horrors that happened.

Interviewer: Did you, because you’d have been quite young when “A Taste of Honey” came out, did you go and see it when it came out? Did you watch it afterwards?

Respondent: I don’t remember, I wouldn’t know. I mean I saw them all once I got a fright when I thought “golly look at this” “Around the Mulberry Bush” “Georgy Girl”, “Alfie” ...

Interviewer: So you obviously really liked...

Respondent: My husband didn’t. I think he was my boyfriend at the time because we split up but it wasn’t his cup of tea, far too deep for him. But I did, and they were my thinking ones, my culture ones. But actually I also...because that was the side of me, I supposed because I went to work, I might have developed at university, I don’t know. I had a boyfriend who took me to see an Ingmar Bergman film, and I like the French films and they also were quite... Belle de Jour?

Interviewer: Belle de Jour, Bout de Souffle. So you wanted...it sounds like you enjoyed films that stimulated you intellectually as well as being entertaining.

Respondent: The romance of it as well because in some respects, rather than the fantasy of James Bond, I had more chance of marrying somebody in this ilk.

Interviewer: Can you remember what you thought as a young woman with some of the themes...because obviously those films, like you say, they explored things around sex, relationships, abortion, unwanted pregnancy all of those kind of social issues. Can you remember...I mean you said when you were watching "Taste of Honey" you almost didn't know how to feel towards Rita Tushingham's character, was that because you were sort of empathising but also it was not a position you could ever have expected to find yourself in and you just saw...

Respondent: I don't know you see, because I had friends who got pregnant at school, so it was happening around me but I...so I knew it could happen to me.

Interviewer: Did you and your friends talk about the contraceptive pill when it became legalised?

Respondent: I assume we did because of course it was a bit like everything else, you talked with your friends about who did it and who didn't, and so I imagine we talked about whether you were going on the pill. I don't know that we talked about any other form of contraception other than making fun of Durex and Durex adverts and things like that, but I would imagine we did yes. Also homosexuality was illegal but it wasn't unheard of and we talked about it, there was a pub in Newcastle that was run by a gay man and we all made fun of it and laughed about it. So we talked about it and there was a programme on the television about homosexuality and I remember my friend saying she'd watched it with her grandma and her grandma said she had no idea there was such a thing as a lesbian, she hadn't even heard the

word. We were fairly savvy about this. My best friend at the time, David, who everyone said never married because I married, he's gay now, because he couldn't be. I often reflect on that time, because he came out when he was thirty and told me and my reaction wasn't that positive but having said that I suddenly felt really quite guilty because he had more girlfriends than he had hot breakfasts because...I don't know what he was trying to do but he succeeded in doing something, because all his girlfriends he slept with. So it was something we did talk about, we knew it was around but it was under the surface. He went to see "The Picture of Dorian Gray" with another male friend of ours which was...we were really like a gang, and they were both different when they came back from watching that, so I now on reflection think that that's when David understood that he was gay. I often wonder if the other guy...

Interviewer: They kind of repressed their feelings until there was...

Respondent: They had no choice but to do that, it was the expectation, David's mother until the day she died didn't know he was gay.

Interviewer: Did those...did you think those films were important in kind of...so you've kind of outlined some of the generational differences between your generation and your parents' and grandparents' generations and their attitudes towards sexuality...do you think those, the fact that those films were on at the cinema and they were exploring those themes actually might have enabled a discussion?

Respondent: It brought it all out. It definitely did, it brought it all out. My mother bought me a book when I was 11 about menstruation and things but she never talked about sex except to say to me that sex was a beautiful thing, of course when I first had sex I thought well she was wrong. We felt very acutely in the 60s that we were different from our parents' generations, maybe successive teenagers have felt the same thing, but I doubt it to that extent because of that great divide with what you talk about and what you don't.

Interviewer: And the war-time generation, the stiff upper lip holding everything back.

Respondent: Yes, don't express any emotion.

Interviewer: Did you feel...cultures around the cinema shifted during that time, so for example at the beginning of the 60s people still stood up for the national anthem at the end. Well I don't know if they did in Newcastle but they did in some places.

Respondent: They did, you could try and run out before hand, but if you were caught you still stood there so you would stand in the aisle or whatever, so you would usually try and run out but it always was there..

Interviewer: That culture by the end of the 60s, I think that culture had faded away...

Respondent: I don't remember it ending but I was quite a trendy young thing in those days but I also, I mean I went to church for example so I always had those values and things so I would always do that so it wouldn't bother me and I

was a royalist at the time probably at the time when they said they wouldn't do it anymore I'd have been cross you see even though I ran out before they did it. Well if you had a bus to catch...

Interviewer: The reason that I raised it is thinking about those generational differences and you feeling your generation was significantly different in its outlook to your parents' generation and that's sort of one of the things that sometimes, for some people, demarcated it. Some people have told me about not standing for the national anthem so it was a sort of slightly rebellious thing. Whereas you obviously not because you were a royalist. I was wondering if there was anything else you could remember because there was a lot of wartime films that came out then.

Respondent: I went to see...I remember seeing "Bismarck". I like the war films actually, because I went with boys you see so I just did what they did so no I like the wartime films. I'm not sure that they shaped my view of...well because they were all heroes so it certainly didn't make me feel anti-war, not at all and it didn't bother me that..

Interviewer: Did it help you understand a bit?

Respondent: I don't know, my father wasn't in the war you see so no-one at home talking to me about war. So to me, I mean, I might have been watching James Bond to be honest for the significance it had to me. I certainly didn't want to weep for all the horrors that were there because the goodies always won.

Interviewer: Patriotic films

Respondent: Yes, yes, so you knew that the goodies were going to win... I think those kitchen sink themes, I think they did. And also for me it was quite different because I lost my father six weeks before my sixteenth birthday, so I felt lonely and again, as you say, the school didn't talk to me about it, no-one else was and I wasn't going to university

Interviewer: Did you have any siblings?

Respondent: Brother, an older brother. But I felt very much alone so when I went to see those sorts of films I could lose myself into that so if you like on Rita Tushingham I mean she was me, but under different circumstances...

Interviewer: Exploring that...narratives around people's lives and...

Respondent: Yes and people had had drama like I'd had. One boyfriend took me to the cinema because of course at the back of the cinema, as people have told you this, there were double seats so you went to the cinema sometimes you'd just snog all the time. This boyfriend, who was a creep actually, took me to the cinema on the way there on the bus I remember him saying "what does your father do" and I said he's dead and he said "oh I've never met anyone like that" and I felt so awful. But then we sat in about the third row at the Haymarket and he snogged me and I thought, "not down here". So yes I think you did go there because there was nothing on the television, Dixon of Dock Green...

Interviewer: I think it started, it was on the 60s yeah.

Respondent: I would have watched it, but it wasn't kitchen sink drama. It was very...

Interviewer: It wasn't modern

Respondent: It was very soppy and it didn't...

Interviewer: There were things like "Cathy Come Home" there were dramas...

Respondent: Oh I used to like the Wednesday night plays very much so, it was a bit like going to the cinema you know Saturday we'll go to the pictures that's what you did.

Interviewer: The culture was more that everybody tended to do the same sorts of things in a way that now it's much more diversified.

Respondent: Well there just wasn't the choice I suppose. Although there was a greater choice of cinema and pictures to see...

Interviewer: In the cities

Respondent: In the cities

Interviewer: So the kitchen sink films certainly had quite an impact on you then?

Respondent: Yes, but also I enjoyed, I loved Cliff Richard and Elvis Presley, I like those.

The other thing that I think when I did start writing these down is of course

everything was linked to music so the theme tunes are all the way through, some of them that you were singing anyway. You know, "Goldfinger" and "From Russia With Love" would be at the top of the Top 10. You know not like it is now because I mean they're there for five minutes and that's only a few of them, Skyfall was probably the exception to that but the others are not...but we knew them all. I did go to all the musicals, I don't remember if I liked all the musicals but I would have gone because I would have gone with my girlfriends. So my girlfriends and I would have gone to every Cliff Richard film because if things had been different I'd marry him as...my boyfriend did look like him so people stopped in the street and said "he looks like Cliff Richard".

Interviewer: What about, you mentioned Ingmar Bergman's films, that had quite an impact on you as well, can you remember anything in particular?

Respondent: Well yes. I can remember one thing, I can't remember the name of the film, I should find out, it was one where people were sitting around talking she had a vodka martini glass I think he took out his eyeball at one point. I couldn't get over that.

Interviewer: It's quite shocking.

Respondent: I just sort of thought "oh". Now if I'd gone with my husband he would have laughed himself silly about that but I didn't I was sort of...

Interviewer: Quite provocative. Some of those...

Respondent: Very much so, the person I went with was Swedish of course so that didn't help.

Interviewer: Did you watch...so you watched Ingmar Bergman films, did you watch any other European films?

Respondent: It was mainly the French ones, I didn't watch that much of Ingmar Bergman because I wasn't sure that I liked them. It was one of those films that you went and see and thought well I don't really like that. I didn't enjoy it although you don't think like that at the time. I wouldn't say I enjoyed them. But "Belle de Jour" and the French films I did like because we used to read a lot of French literature at the same time and I liked those. I must admit, it sounds stupid now but I think the fact that there's a sexual element to all of these things did matter because there was no way anyone was going to tell you any of this stuff.

Interviewer: European cinema tended to have more sex or more nudity in it at that time. Although obviously the kitchen sink films were breaking new ground, but that's why they were quite often in different cinemas, continental cinemas, because they were slightly edgy.

Respondent: And we knew that in a way, and my parents used to go to the cinema every Monday night but I don't think they'd have gone to see the sort of...see you don't know your parents in those days did you. I wonder if my daughter knows me now. I can't imagine..or if they did I'd imagine they'd have come back and been quite shocked about it I would think.

Interviewer: I certainly can remember my grandmother's generation being shocked by any on-screen nudity, and I was aware that my mother wasn't so much and would sort of...

Respondent: My mother wasn't either, but my mother-in-law I can remember living where we do now in Norfolk where my children were very small, I went out to the pub for a drink and left my in-laws in charge of the children and when I got back my mother-in-law laid into me for leaving a sexy film on. I mean you can always switch it off I mean, but it really shocked her. And she was a terrible prude, absolutely terrible.

Interviewer: Yeah, there was a generational shift, not for everyone but for a lot of people attitudes towards sex and sexuality shifted so that even if people's lifestyles didn't necessarily change it seemed that their attitudes towards other people who might have had different lifestyles seemed to be a bit more open... Can you remember, moving more towards the end of the decade when there were films about swinging London, how you felt about those? Did you ever think... was it similar at all to your experience of being a young person in Newcastle or did it seem quite different?

Respondent: It might have been different but it might have been what you wanted...I really like those sort of films so I think... is it the "Blow-Up" type film?

Interviewer: "Blow-up", "Alfie"

Respondent: I loved them as well. I liked them, I can't think that I thought it was any...I didn't think London was an alien place...

Interviewer: It wasn't that different then?

Respondent: I'd been to London on visits but no I never felt that I lived in the provinces and in London they had a better life. A lot of... well not a lot but some of my friends went to live in London in a bedsit and all the rest of it and I actually eventually was going to do that and then in the end I didn't because that's just what you did. I never felt that London in terms of culture and things...because I had friends and boyfriends from the university who lived in bedsits and you know lived that sort of life. As I say the nightclub scene in Newcastle was quite exciting.

Interviewer: I've heard this from a few people...a student at Oxford said "no everyone was partying it wasn't just in London that that happened"

Respondent: No it wasn't at all. It was something about that people thought of the provinces it was all very...no, not for one nanosecond. Well because the advent of the Beatles and things and the Animals, I knew the drummer of the Animals I don't suppose he's been... But there you go. Because the Beatles were in Liverpool and I would have thought that most people felt that Liverpool and Manchester and Newcastle were the place to live rather than London. I think London as far as I could see...music-wise nothing. It was a desert really and also I don't recall hearing about any nightclubs in London. They weren't for the likes of us, whereas Newcastle was quite a

scene in lots of things American and English nightclubs in Newcastle. So I never felt...

Interviewer: That's interesting, I think perhaps that idea that the provinces are different is really more rural places. I think in the cities and certainly the university cities that the culture had shifted in the same way that it had in London.

Respondent: Well in terms of theatres and cinemas and eventually restaurants, I couldn't see...I mean I knew that they ... but I couldn't see what there was there that we didn't have.

Interviewer: Was there anything else in particular that you want to mention about films. You've talked about quite a few.

Respondent: There was "Lolita" Some of the sexy ones did make me feel uncomfortable because they were new to you.

Interviewer: Did you read Nabokov, were you aware of the story?

Respondent: I was aware of the story but I didn't read it. It was too close to ?? Nothing that...Oh yes, the ones that you haven't come across are always the ones. I liked the American heroes "Bonnie and Clyde" "Butch Cassidy" I loved all that. And again music as well. Raindrops keep falling, it shocks me how I can remember everything. The other things I enjoyed were possibly because of literature, because I've always loved literature were things... well "Lawrence of Arabia" and "Doctor Zhivago" though probably very different, but again beautiful films, my friends called Doctor Lara from

“Doctor Zhivago” I mean it’s just beautiful and “Cleopatra”. “Far from the Madding Crowd”, “Women in Love” I adored those, I think they’re probably my favourite films of all time. I do like films that seem to be about love and sex.

Interviewer: Did you like Julie Christie?

Respondent: Well she was beautiful, absolutely beautiful

Interviewer: Because a few people I’ve interviewed have talked about how they sort of aspired to be a bit like Julie Christie in what they wore or... because she was a British actress she had that sort of attainability.

Respondent: Probably my hair was like hers. I’ve always had curly hair but I used to try really hard with straighteners so I had hair like that. And then eventually I would have looked liked that, so it could have influenced what I..

Interviewer: The style that she had

Respondent: And probably her clothes, you know the little shift dresses and things like that. So yes I guess you were influenced by what you saw it’s the fashions, it’s what you saw on beautiful people. You know if I saw. If life had been different it could have been me.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much is there anything else that you want to add?

Respondent: Oh we never mentioned the Westerns and the cowboys they were good as well.

Interviewer: Feel free to talk about them, I like Westerns, but I suppose because we're thinking about Britain in the 60s it's interesting to talk about films that were British to see how people link it to their actual memory.

Respondent: Well the Alfred Hitchcock films were, were they?

Interviewer: Yes. A lot of the actors and actresses were so

Respondent: I remember "The Birds" really well and Psycho of course. I didn't like "Psycho" very much but I like the mystery of it but I wouldn't have said that I was ...

Interviewer: That's great thank you very much. That's really interesting

End of Interview