

Interview with Respondent 0741

Date: 15/12/2014

Location: Interviewee's House, Eastbourne

Interviewer: Emma Pett

Interviewer: If you could start with saying a little bit about where you lived so we can set the scene, so to speak

Respondent: Right. Well, we lived in Muswell Hill. We lived in a very big house which was divided into four flats and we lived there until I was 14 and we had, basically, three rooms. It was a beautiful house or would have been ... in those days anyway ... I wouldn't have been able to afford the tiny that we had now. Property has changed so much. So it was very nice and just the three of us. No brothers or sisters. So we had these three rooms. We used to share the bathroom with another family. Luckily that family happened to be friends, but it's not something that many people now have to suffer. The thought that you don't have your own bathroom would be, you know, real poverty. It wasn't at all abnormal to us. It was a nice house. Rooms were big actually and in the other parts of the house there was a little old lady and at the very bottom there was a doctor's family and that was probably my first – talking about what we were talking about before – intimation that there were people of a different colour because it was a doctor and a nurse and the most gorgeous little baby whose name I remember, Andrew. So we had, I say, a relatively poor background. It certainly would be considered now, but I didn't think I was poor particularly. We had no car. We had no television. We had no telephone, but you know I was always well looked after, fed properly, all of the usual stuff. So it was quite typical in many ways. I went to a couple of local schools and then went on to grammar school in Crouch End.

Interviewer: Did both your parents work?

Respondent: My father worked. He was a civil servant and my mother went back to work when I was eleven and she just took a part-time job in an office. Nothing special. I suppose a very traditional background really.

Interviewer: And you lived there until you were fourteen?

Respondent: Fourteen, yes.

Interviewer: So that was, sort of, towards the end of the Sixties?

Respondent: No. I'm a bit older than that. I was born in 1951. So for most of my life, my early life, I lived in Muswell Hill. My formative years I would say, yes and in fact from 14-18 I lived in Friar Barnet..

Interviewer: So quite nearby then?

Respondent: Yeah. I did go to the cinema an awful lot as aa child. I mean, I say, we didn't have a television until I was 7 or 8. I mean my grandparents did so it was a once a week treat.

Interviewer: So you had a TV during the Sixties then?

Respondent: It would have been about 1958 or so. It was when ITV came in and my parents finally decided it was worth the outlay. Frankly, there wasn't much on until then. It was Andy Pandy and all those things. Finally they obviously got a bit more money and decided they could afford one. I mean they were massively expensive ... and massive as well. So cinema was really important. I think it was to all of us. Just a regular part of my life. I don't know exactly when I first went. Probably 3 or 4 ... I took my daughter when she was three and she loved it.

Interviewer: Do you remember seeing things like the news at the cinema.

Respondent: Oh gosh, yes. I mean the first film I believe I saw was Lady and the Tramp and I cried my eyes out. But certainly we had the Pathe news, the Look at Life, and then there was always a sec[ond] ... the B Movie and there might have been something else as well. Oh, sometimes cartoons and then of course the main film and I expect you already know you could just go in at any point. The ticket for the day. You just stayed and there's an expression that those of us that are still old enough still say 'this is where I came in' and of course you did just walk in sit down and watch it all through until the point where you came in.

Interviewer: I was surprised when someone told me that. The idea of seeing the end of a film before the beginning. It seems odd ...

Respondent: I don't think people did it deliberately, but you certainly might turn up during the Pathe news or something. It certainly didn't seem to be as important in that you knew that you could stay. People often stayed for a long time – particularly if they were a bit cold or didn't have anywhere to go.

Interviewer: Do you remember any big news stories ... the coronation, but that was ... Churchill dying ... do you remember seeing some big news and hearing about it for the first time when you were at the cinema?

Respondent: I think the big one was Robert Kennedy's death. I mean I am old enough to remember President Kennedy's death so it wasn't that the death ... that was what I saw in the newsreel ... because obviously, I remember Kennedy's death. Very much, obviously. You know, assassination of a president and I would have been 14 ... was I 14 then ...? Yeah. It was the fact that it was another one was actually more shocking almost and it was on the newsreel at the cinema and to see it on the big screen was just so shocking. As I say, I can't remember how old I would have been ... 16 or 17. That's probably the only major news story that I remember seeing actually. Strangely enough the newsreels did just drift over me, you know, but that one stands out absolutely ... and it was also obviously in colour and, I say, the screens are starting to get a bit bigger at that point as well ... but I used to enjoy the Pathe news ... yeah, it was all great, actually. The whole sort of experience was just great. The news was good because ... well I suppose we had television, and there was news on the television, perhaps I was too young to stay up late. I don't really remember, see.

Interviewer: Television wasn't on all day either so ...

Respondent: No. it wasn't. it was on from sort of 6 or 7 o'clock until 11. And I wouldn't have, at that point, probably have stayed up to the end. I even used to enjoy the Look at Life. In fact, I really enjoyed the Look at Life

Interviewer: What did you enjoy about the Look at Life then? Can you remember anything specific?

Respondent: Do you know, there is one flash of remembrance about a factory that made, sort of, liquorice all sorts ... and seeing the factory like where they are cutting up all these, you know extruding it, cutting it up, and I remember seeing this – because obviously, I didn't have any idea what a factory was like – to see this line. Yeah, I remember that. It told you, yeah, Look at Life, and it really did show you about life around you.

Interviewer: Was it one of the only sources you had for that sort of thing?

Respondent: Probably. Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: That was part of the fascination?

Respondent: Apart from books, yeah. I suppose at that age, although I was a serious reader, I wasn't into heavy reading. I don't think I would have got a book out about something like that. I had an encyclopaedia, but yes, it probably was a major source. Television was largely entertainment. Even though I would say there was good quality and often quite serious, there wasn't as much of it. There was only two channels. So, yeah, I think it was a major source of information.

Interviewer: I think you actually used the word education in your questionnaire response which I thought was interesting because people often talk about cinema being escapism and, you know, forgetting about the outside world. That sort of thing. Whereas actually, when you start talking to people, they connected with the outside world through cinema. Some of the experiences are very different to cinema now. Which is more, particularly mainstream, its entertainment. There isn't news, there isn't ...

Respondent: No. There's nothing. I mean, there's just huge amounts of adverts – most of which drive you insane – and they just go on too long anyway. Now that's the other thing – I used to enjoy the adverts. Again, I suppose they were a novelty. They were usually the local Indian restaurant. I know. They are so funny.

Interviewer: Were they the same for a long time.

Respondent: Oh, yes. They were mainly local too, actually. As I say, the local Indian restaurant. They probably advertised things like cigarettes as well.

Interviewer: Yeah, I remember those in the Seventies. There would just be a still thing with perhaps a picture and then just the information.

Respondent: I'm fairly certain that cigarettes were advertised for quite a long time after they had stopped being advertised on the television. Of course, I remember them on the television too.

Interviewer: That's really interesting that you even enjoyed the adverts then.

Respondent: Yes.

- Interviewer: I suppose you didn't see them in different places?
- Respondent: No.
- Interviewer: ... and so there was a kind of novelty, or something that made it ...
- Respondent: absolutely, there was a novelty value, yeah.
- Interviewer: So you mentioned quite a bit about the actual cinema, so specific places and I particularly like your description of the Finsbury Park Astoria. Can you elaborate a little bit more on that? Can you describe what it was like because it sounds amazing.
- Respondent: Yeah, so , well the Astoria bit was because it had stars on the ceiling and it was magical. I absolutely loved it. So it was dark blue and then all these stars. You came in, you know, in the foyer, I think you went upstairs. So there were certainly steps going up. You know, big steps and then going round. I'm not certain whether it was Egypt or ... it was something classical. It could have been Egyptian, but I'm not sure now because it was, you know.
- Interviewer: It was a while ago
- Respondent: I might be muddling something else up now, but I think the thing that hit me was the stars on the ceiling and also round the screen it was quite elaborately decorated as well. Gold. It was just really fancy and ... I don't know... I mean, I presume it's still there?
- Interviewer: I don't know actually. I need to look it up, yeah.
- Respondent: I'd say that was my real 'magic moment' of going to the cinema. Compared with my local.
- Interviewer: That was the other end of the scale. A little bit ...
- Respondent: Yes, I think ... I'm not sure why we went there. Unless it was because we wanted to see a film that was not on at the others. Because there was several circuits. The things you got at the Ritz, you didn't get at the Odeon.
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Respondent: So it wasn't quite the same as it is now where virtually every cinema has all of the films.
- Interviewer: You'd go to certain places to catch certain ...
- Respondent: Rank was in one and so they really did seem to do the different circuits, so you know ... you would actually have to go to both cinemas to catch everything that was going. So we may have gone there for one that we had missed somewhere else or that it was specially shown there. I think it was a bit of a treat as well because we had to get on a bus of course to get there because Finsbury Park was, well, a fair way away from where we lived. Although it was on the way to my grandparents who lived in Stoke Newington. It might be, I don't know, sometimes we went there and then went to my grandparents ... I can't remember always the circumstances. I just remember going there ... and the last time I went there was with a boyfriend to see *The Sound of Music* which was not what I wanted to see. It was just, as one often

does, [when you] went to the cinema with a boyfriend - the film was irrelevant. So I didn't really like *The Sound of Music*. I was, I would have been 18 by then.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: So that was the last time I went there ... and still, in the end, it's the stars on the ceiling that I still remember.

Interviewer: So when you went earlier, in the Sixties, you went with both of your parents? Was it, sort of, the family went together or ...?

Respondent: Well, when I was young we certainly did, yes. We went as a family. When I got into my teens, in the Sixties, I started to go with friends as well. I went with my parents, particularly my father. My father was keener than my mother.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: So when I was young it was definitely a family outing ... and the three of us, we always went upstairs. No expense spared. And you asked about what did we eat. We always had Callard and Bowers Butterscotch which is – I don't know if you know it – it was a bar.

Interviewer: I know Callard and Bowser, yeah.

Respondent: A bar of this stuff. It was tooth-breakingly hard and I used to have to suck it and I always had one of those and then in the interval a Kia-Ora, of course, and a choc ice. That was the general thing ... and we did have popcorn as well. Butterkist popcorn. So we were pretty bad in that respect – in terms of junk food – at least it wasn't McDonalds, because that's one thing that I really find offensive is when people eat hot smelly food. I do think ... and, you know, crunchy food as well ...

Interviewer: Do people ... somebody that I interviewed this morning said that her mum used to give her tea. Bread and dripping in the cinema.

Respondent: Err! That's something I never liked.

Interviewer: You didn't ever take food with you? You always bought the refreshments?

Respondent: I think we usually took the butterscotch, yes, but we definitely did buy. I think it was part of the treat because although we weren't very well off we obviously had enough for treats and so we saved them all up – unlike children today – we really did have treats ... and you looked forward to those treats.

Interviewer: Yeah. As you were growing up, as you were going with your friends as well, did you watch different kinds of films with your friends than you saw with your dad or you just went to see whatever you were interested in?

Respondent: Possibly. Yes, probably. Yes, I can remember going with a friend to see *Sex and the Single Girl* which was considered to be terribly risqué and we were underage when we went. This had better be anonymous. Unfortunately, people do still do it, I am sure, but we were definitely underage. We had to doll ourselves up. And I don't, I'm not sure that I ever told my parents that I went to see this.

Interviewer: You probably didn't get asked for ID then like you do now?

Respondent: No. We didn't have any.

Interviewer: No. No.

Respondent: They just looked at you and if you looked alright, they let you in.

Interviewer: I was going to come onto this later, but maybe we'll come on to this now really. So you've talked a bit about politics and the Sixties being a great time of change but obviously it was also a great time of change in terms of gender politics and the role of women, the introduction of the pill, and the legalisation of abortion. Things had changed quite dramatically for women. But a lot of women I have spoken to... the experiences of a young girl or young woman in the Sixties weren't really that different to the Fifties.

Respondent: I would agree with that.

Interviewer: I was wondering if you were aware of – even if your experiences hadn't changed – were you aware that things had changed through those sorts of films and through people like, the sorts of roles that Julie Christie had? Did you ever talk about it with your female friends? I mean you said it was considered risqué, there must have been an awareness that that kind of lifestyle was not ...

Respondent: ... the norm. No, absolutely, yes. The book itself caused a sensation. Helen Gurley Brown, wasn't it? I didn't read it, but the book itself caused a sensation because of women doing things that generally women didn't do. The film obviously was nowhere near of course as ...

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: ... shocking as I think we thought it was going to be.

Interviewer: It's interesting though because it is almost as though the idea of it is risqué.

Respondent: Yes. Well the fact that it even had 'sex' in the title. You know, that was enough to get you in ... and it was funny really, when I think about it, but used to see all sorts of things really. As I say, my mother was less keen and I do remember particularly with my father going to see *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* which my mother wouldn't have touched with a bargepole and probably wouldn't have enjoyed ... and yeah, I thought that was a marvellous film, of course, but I thought that was a little bit ... not risqué, of course ... challenging ... and I don't recall the cinema being full. The sort of film that wouldn't even fill the cinemas now. It had Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton and it was still a minority interest film because of what it was in terms of its subject matter. I probably watched a full range of things – apart from what I would call adventure films and, you know, pure entertainment films. I liked a good comedy and I probably would admit that I like things that were quite romantic. I can remember *One For the Road* which had ... was it Albert Finney and Audrey Hepburn? I saw that two or three times.

Interviewer: Did you?

Respondent: But, of course, it's actually desperately sad in fact. It may be a romance, but it's actually touching on very very serious matters.

Interviewer: Yeah.

- Respondent: It's a very very sad film. It's what I [call] a serious romance, if you know ...
- Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Not a romantic comedy at all.
- Respondent: No. No, it isn't. I mean, rom-com hadn't even been invented really.
- Interviewer: You talked about going to the cinemas in your local area, did you ever go and watch something in the West End cinemas as a special treat?
- Respondent: Not as a child. Only in my teens and not a lot.
- Interviewer: No. Can you remember anything in particular?
- Respondent: I remember seeing *Dr Zhivago* in Leicester Square. I can't remember the name of the cinema. Anyway, the big beautiful one in there ... and I remember – apart from the film being amazing – was the chairs. I don't think I had ever sat in such comfortable chairs. It was pure luxury. What is it called, the one that's at Leicester Square? Anyway, I remember seeing that. I would have been quite old at that stage because I went with a boyfriend. I would have been 17 or 18 by then. No I definitely don't think I did, that's why that stands out, absolutely.
- Interviewer: That was a one-off
- Respondent: It was really, yeah.
- Interviewer: So, you mention being politically aware and you had very left-wing political leanings and you were very interested in films that represented, that had, that were realistic.
- Respondent: Yes.
- Interviewer: Yeah, the kitchen sink films. I find this really interesting because, for my generation, we grew up with a tradition of realism in British cinema. It was quite well established by the Eighties. When I talk to people about the Sixties, that was something quite different it seems. When those films came out in the early-Sixties, particularly in Britain, people hadn't been used to seeing their world on the screen and hearing the regional accents and seeing characters with real problems. Can you remember anything about that? I think ... was it *Saturday Night*...?
- Respondent: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Yes ...
- Interviewer: What was it about ... can you remember anything about it that was particularly vivid or that you like about the fact it was representing working-class life?
- Respondent: I suppose it wasn't something I was used to. I mean, I considered myself to be of working-class origins, but my father was, as I say, moved up a notch and became a civil servant and although, as I say, we weren't rich, we had moved on. I certainly didn't really know anything about people who worked in factories. I mean, in London, in a sense, a lot of people wouldn't have worked in factories. My friends, on the whole, I don't think they did. My grandfather was a bus conductor, my other grandfather worked for Express Dairy. They did that sort of job, but we didn't have any massive factories where I lived. It wasn't industrial ... light industry. So, yeah, industry was something I knew virtually nothing about apart from history lessons ... and to see this, yeah ... it was pretty well contemporary, was quite shocking and also his attitude towards women which was really shocking and yet, of course, was really

quite common. Although, I guess I didn't know that and I guess I had been a bit lucky in the boyfriends I'd had.

Interviewer: It was shocking in that you weren't familiar with it?

Respondent: Probably. Yes, I think that's what it was ... and, of course, Albert Finney was gorgeous looking. Yes, so he was a love-hate thing because here's this fabulous-looking man who is actually really rather horrible. That's really not very nice so that sort of juxtaposition was relatively new ... and the Fifties was dominated by things like *Look Back in Anger* which, of course, I was too young to have seen when it first came out. But I suppose, yeah, we'd been getting used to it a little bit by then. Yeah, *Loneliness of a Long Distance Runner* was another one. I suppose it's looking in on worlds that I didn't understand. No ... and the hardship as well. As I say, it's not as though my family didn't have hardship, but perhaps I didn't know what hardship was. I just knew that this was how things were and I took it as normal. I never thought of things in that way because we all lived like that. All my friends lived in similar circumstances. None of us was rich. That's not completely true, I did have some rich friends, but certainly most of the people around me lived very ordinary lives. I don't think anybody thought they were particularly bad. It's just, whatever you are brought up with, you tend to accept until you get to a certain point and think 'hang on a minute, not everyone's like this'. Yes, I think the sort of hardship ... I guess I felt very lucky. I mean, (a) I'd been born after the war ... and, of course, we were never far away from it ... and of course, having survived the war, we then survived the nuclear threat. I was reading something a little while ago about people of my generation who were brought up with this and we were literally in fear of our lives and yet we just got on with it and you thought 'well, bomb's going to drop, we die'. I think we grew up in that very accepting way where you thought there wasn't a lot you could do about these things, but that we were lucky, you know, that we were the post-war generation and I think we thought we were jolly well off. You know, so even though things were not great, they were so much better than what my grandparents had had ... and my parents would talk about their lives. My mother would say to me 'we didn't get bread and butter and jam. You got bread and butter or bread and jam'. That was how she was brought up so as far as I was concerned I was doing really well. Seeing these sort of films, I think, brought it home that there was a whole world out there.

Interviewer: So your interest in them was that they reflected an experience different to yours?

Respondent: Probably. Yes.

Interviewer: Because other people I have talked to spoke about how they saw their world on the screen. But it didn't ... growing up in that environment, in North London, it wasn't of course reflecting your world so you didn't see that. That's interesting.

Respondent: No. no. Not really, no. I say, it was a very ordinary sort of life. Not too poor, not too rich. Jogging along really.

Interviewer: You said somewhere about your political views. Were your parents slightly left-wing? Is that, was that a kind of family attitude?

Respondent: My father was. You're getting an idea now that my father was a ... yeah, he directed me in many ways. Yeah, my mother was not at all that way actually, but my father was definitely left-leaning. Believed very much in education – although he hadn't had any – which is why he believed so much in it. He was thwarted from going to grammar school and of course got involved in the war and that ended everyone's school career. My mother was pleased that the war broke out and stopped her going to school. My father, of course, was very unhappy about it. So he was a self-educated man who believed in, you know, hard work and ... so I was brought up basically – I wouldn't say to do what he hadn't done, because I know a lot of parents do invest their own thwarted ambitions in their children – just so I could do as well as I could. So I was encouraged to learn everything, read like crazy and I was probably the only child in my class that had read *Animal Farm* before I went to grammar school so I didn't realise that this was peculiar. I was probably quite a serious reader as well. I don't know why. I think I am just a very serious person. In one sense ... and I feel terribly about injustice. I had a huge, sort of, fairness thing and equality. As a child, when I was asked to cut up a cake I would do it almost with a ruler. You know, I just had a huge fairness thing that seemed to be part of me and also an equality thing in that my father treated me as a child, not as a girl particularly. I learned to paint, carpentry at the same time as learning to sew. So I grew up in a largely liberal household, I think.

Interviewer: ... and do you think that influenced you in terms of the things you were interested in at the cinema?

Respondent: Oh, I think so, yes. It must have done.

Interviewer: So presumably, your interest in seeing other people's lives, becoming more aware of the hardship that other people in other parts of the country experienced ... different kinds of deprivation ... was there anything that in particular that stands out like that? Were you ... did you become aware of things like, I don't know, unemployment or alcoholism or ... is it just a general ...?

Respondent: I wouldn't say that I was even aware that I was doing it.

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: I couldn't have told you why I went to see this film or that film it was just something that interested me. I was just very keen to learn almost anything really. But, yes, I was attracted to things that had meaning. I read a lot of books, and in fact a lot of films, about war. Not because I enjoy them in anyway in that sense, but I felt they were important. It just seemed that this was telling me, again, about something I knew nothing about. The horrors of war. My father didn't talk about it. I mean luckily, obviously, he survived and he was fine. We didn't have any major problems from the war in our family I'm glad to say, but they didn't talk about it. If he talked about it, it was the funny things and that's what everyone will tell you so in a sense I probably grew up knowing less about the war than some people do even now. But I was, again, pushed by my father to read: 'Oh, you'll like this, try that'. Yes, I was both horrified, fascinated, but yes ... So I watched all sorts of things.

- Interviewer: What about European films, did you watch ... you were saying about how the different cinemas would have different programmes so was there a cinema ... did you have to go to London to see European films?
- Respondent: Yes. I don't think ... if I did it was very rarely. It's not something doing specifically.
- Interviewer: So you mainly saw British films and American films. Do you ever watch ... did your dad ever take you to watch older films? Because I know there was a chain in London called Classic Cinema that showed films from the Thirties and Forties ...?
- Respondent: No. I know of the Classics, but we didn't go to them. Mind you, we used to get them regularly on television. Because there was ... was there a twenty-year embargo? So you could only see old films on television in fact so I was quite familiar with old films. Yes, we went, as I say, to the Ritz for some things, the Odeon for other things. You might even go twice a week. Then the Rex was – to some extent – the fallout. If you didn't catch them there, it was either because it wasn't on at the other two or that I had missed it and they were a catch up. So it was ... I don't recall, really, seeing any foreign films.
- Interviewer: No. What are your memories of the Rex? You described it as a fleapit ...
- Respondent: Well, exactly. That's what we called it, a fleapit. I mean I actually went and had a look on the internet of some pictures. I remember now what it looked like. It was quite ... sort of Art Deco-y, I think.
- Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent: But it wouldn't have necessarily been my first choice of cinema to be honest.
- Interviewer: Was it quite small inside?
- Respondent: It's small, yes. It was small and I am trying to remember. It did, it must have had two layers, because all cinemas did ... and it was very rarely full when I went. I don't know why. Perhaps it was because it was one that tended to be ...
- Interviewer: ... the second run.
- Respondent: Or it could just have been because it was in a different area, it was just the next in line of the circuit.
- Interviewer: Oh, I see.
- Respondent: But I don't remember ever thinking it was that full. And I do remember thinking it was a fleapit and I often went alone. They probably were films that other people didn't want to see ... and I was slightly afraid of men in gabardine raincoats. There was a definite man-in-raincoats worry there and you would sit as far away as possible.
- Interviewer: I've heard some quite hair-raising stories about those ...
- Respondent: I mean nothing happened, but I was always worried that because it was so empty ...
- Interviewer: So, when you say you called it a fleapit, was it because it was a bit dirty ...?

Respondent: Yeah. I suppose it was. It was a bit grubby. It was certainly not glamorous at all. Whatever glamour it had had faded completely. I mean the other cinemas where I went were still quite nice. The Ritz was again very Art Deco. The Ritz and the Odeon. I can see them now. Much more clearly, actually, than the Rex really ... and they had still quite a glamour about them, but it definitely was faded glory and inside I remember being dark. I don't remember really at all what it looked like. In some ways, I'm not really going to help you much at all.

Interviewer: No, no. It's fine. OK, moving on, what about things like film stars and reading the culture around them, because, obviously, that's changed a lot. So there were magazines and things where you could read about film stars. Were you interested in those or was your interest more in the actual films. I mean, did you have favourite film stars?

Respondent: Oh, yes. I had favourite film stars, but I definitely didn't buy any magazines. I've never really been interested in people's private lives.

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: I know certain things. Some things are obviously brought to your attention, but I don't seek them out and it doesn't bother me particularly how many wives they've had or whatever. So I didn't seek out information particularly. We just, yeah, you just got to know by going to the cinema in a sense who your film stars ...

Interviewer: So who were your favourite film stars?

Respondent: Well Albert Finney was definitely one of them ... and yes, I really like Richard Burton. He had such a wonderful voice – whatever he looked like. Peter O'Toole, who only recently died, of course, and Omar Sharif. Yes, I mean Dr Zhivago was a marvellous film that it was also an exceedingly romantic occasion. Gosh. I think we all fell in love with Omar Sharif at that point. I have to admit, I actually even sat next to him – but that's an aside. A completely different world. Another world. My ex-husband played bridge and Sharif played bridge and ... so I've been in, not only the same room but I've sat that near and he is as gorgeous (or was) as he is onscreen. Yes, so people like that. I didn't go just for that ...

Interviewer: No. No.

Respondent: ... but it helped, of course.

Interviewer: So was the main attraction what you had heard about the film? If that was, was that through watching trailers or reviews and if so, where would you read the reviews ... or see ... would you hear things on the radio or in the newspapers?

Respondent: I can't think really. I mean, my parents always had a newspaper. So I probably did read it, yeah. This is coming up ... yeah, I'm sure we must have read the reviews in the paper ... and, of course, when you go one week you get a trailer for the next so if you're a regular cinema-goer, you'll know what's coming up anyway.

Interviewer: Can you remember any trailers in particular? Because trailer cultures have changed a little bit.

- Respondent: Not really. There's nothing outstanding. I think my view of today's trailers is that they are possibly less helpful. They tend to cut it up into little segments and slap them all together in a way that can actually confuse and put you off. Whereas I don't think they did before.
- Interviewer: They were a bit more straightforward.
- Respondent: They just took a segment and showed it to you. Whereas now everything's got to be flash, bang, wallop, and hit you. Everything has to be ... it's as if people have a ten second attention span. Perhaps they do. I don't know. People in my generation certainly don't. We are able to concentrate for a lot longer. But yes, I think they were more informative perhaps and more helpful.
- Interviewer: Can you remember any of the other rituals around cinema going? So, for example, I mean you've talked about going and sitting in the upstairs part. Things like the national anthem being played ...
- Respondent: Oh, gosh yes. Of course.
- Interviewer: When you ...
- Respondent: There used to be a terrible rush for the exit at that point. We only stood up to get out.
- Interviewer: When you got your ticket, if it was towards the end of the film did you always go in or did you ... ?
- Respondent: I'd probably just wait. I wouldn't go in bang at the end of a film.
- Interviewer: No.
- Respondent: No.
- Interviewer: So there was a certain, kind of, culture around that?
- Respondent: Yes. I don't think anyone would have wanted to see the end before the beginning, really.
- Interviewer: ... and was that ... how was that conveyed? Did the door people tell you that ... where it was in the programme or ...?
- Respondent: I suppose ... yes, you would know that the sequence ... yes, it would all be up on the board what was on.
- Interviewer: OK. Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent: ... and there were always, of course, quite long queues as well at the cinema because on the whole they were generally well-attended. Unlike, as I say, the Rex which was slightly less so. Or at least that's what I recall. So it must be right really, because I do have this sort of feeling that it was a slightly out of favour type of cinema.
- Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent: Last ditch resort, sort of thing.

- Interviewer: How long would you queue then.
- Respondent: I suppose only probably 10 or 15 minutes at most ...
- Interviewer: But you would expect to queue ...
- Respondent: Yes, you would expect to queue. Yeah, you would. Yes ... and there was no pre-booking, of course, so you didn't actually have a choice but to queue.
- Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. So, of course. Was there anything else, you mention the fact that Britain was rapidly changing in the Sixties a couple of times, were there any specific things that you were referring to there? Were you thinking about changes in class or generally in culture, can you remember things sort of more consumer-orientated? Was there anything that stands out to you as something that changed in your memory of the Sixties?
- Respondent: I think it probably was the ... almost, the invention of the teenager. I really did witness that. That we did want ... because most people, and I think even as teenagers we still wanted to look like our parents. We didn't really have different clothes. I still remember wearing gloves and matching all my outfit. I wasn't much of a hat wearer but basically everyone was much more formal – except on holiday when you wore shorts and T-shirt. But everything was a lot more formal in the way you dressed, the way you acted, and in some ways I regret some of that's passed. I do remember, yeah, it seemed like a lot more freedom from what my parents had experienced. Without a doubt. Yeah. Things like fashion, I was very much aware of. I was never a huge follower – I was always at least two steps behind. I always waited ... waited to see if I liked it first and if I didn't ... you know, I was never an early adopter, but clearly my skirts did rise as the Sixties went on. Like everyone else ... so I think I was aware really of a great deal more freedom. Possibly even having a bit more money than I guess my parents really.
- Interviewer: Did you have, you say you went to the cinema with your friends and on dates, did you have pocket money? When you were in education and you were at home did you work or were you given an allowance?
- Respondent: Yeah, I was given pocket money.
- Interviewer: And that was enough to go to the cinema a couple of times a week.
- Respondent: Yeah.
- Interviewer: I'm just sort of thinking about that idea of freedom and having more than your parents did.
- Respondent: Of course, the cinema was also quite cheap. I did work when I was ... was I 16 or 17? I did work. I did get an allowance, yeah. From which I had to buy things like tights as well. I could manage the cinema on that. I think when I was a teenager I was getting, I'm not sure quite which age, but I know I was getting a pound in my mid-teens. Was it a pound a week? Was it a pound a week or a pound month? I'm trying to think now. But I say, I had several things I had to buy with it, but I think my parents also didn't want me to go to work too early I think. Yeah I think they wanted me to concentrate on my school work so I think we sort of agreed ... I mean, you could only do certain things, like paper rounds and they didn't want me to do that.

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: ... and that was really it, actually. At fourteen I think you were only allowed to do a very small number of hours ... and they didn't want me to do a paper round so they gave me this allowance and then when I was about 16 I went to work, on Saturdays.

Interviewer: And were you aware ... so you were aware of the fashion scene in London. What about music? Did music play any part in your enjoyment of film because obviously, some films were linked to The Beatles or Cliff Richard ... music had a sort of role in Sixties culture. Was it important to you, music, did you ... ?

Respondent: I mean I'm a huge music lover ... probably ... but I was probably a little out of step with the music scene as well. In that I was brought up by someone who loved music and brought up in the jazz era so my taste is very much jazz-orientated, even as a very young child I liked jazz. I also like Elvis Presley and my friend and I used to go and see Elvis Presley films together. So yes, in one sense music meant something to me cinema-wise. I was not a desperate Beatles fan. Again, I think I was a rebel. Everyone else liked them and I couldn't see what the fuss was about. It wasn't that I thought they were bad I just didn't like the early Beatles particularly. I found it a bit ... I can't think of the word ... ordinary. Only just before they broke up did I finally think 'yeah, they're getting alright now'. So I was not in the sense a typical teenager music-wise. I was a jazz fan ... and classical music. My father liked anything and everything. But, yeah, Elvis Presley was the only music star I went to see.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: In terms of music used as background, yes I think I was aware of it ... Dr Zhivago again, totally overwhelming music-wise. It wasn't background music, it was incidental. Not incidental. It was completely part of the film. Things like Lawrence of Arabia began with music. So I think that was a little bit of a Sixties phenomenon. The music began to dominate a little more and it ... done well, I think its fine. Now I think it's sometimes overwhelms. I think there's a balance to be had. But, I wouldn't say I went to see a lot of films that involved music per se.

Interviewer: What about towards the end of the Sixties – you speaking about late-Beatles reminds me of this – the sort of experimental, cultural things. So, like Andy Warhol makes films. They were films that were perhaps outside the normal narrative expectations. Were you aware of those at all at the time or were you a bit to young maybe?

Respondent: Possibly, yes. I mean I was aware of Andy Warhol as an artist, but not as a film maker. Perhaps we just didn't get them around where I lived.

Interviewer: I think they were in those experimental ... shown at film clubs ...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Were you ... you went to the cinemas

Respondent: Yes, the basic cinemas.

Interviewer: You didn't actually join a film club ...?

Respondent: Only at school.

- Interviewer: At school, ok. What did the school film club show then?
- Respondent: I can't remember all of them. I do remember seeing ... oh, what's it called ...? The one with Peter Sellers where he was playing this mad dictator. Oh, what was that called. I can't remember now. I do remember seeing that one because I don't think that ... that wasn't 100% shown everywhere.
- Interviewer: Were the schools ...?
- Respondent: *Dr Strangelove*?
- Interviewer: Yeah, might have been ... yeah. Were the school film club, was that after school?
- Respondent: Yes. I think we did try to get in some unusual things. That was one of them. I know there was another one but the name has ... gone. It was a film that I think was not actually shown on the major circuits again, but I can't quite remember what it was. It will probably come to me when you have gone.
- Interviewer: Don't worry about it.
- Respondent: ... but I didn't belong to an outside film club, no.
- Interviewer: No. No. ... and in relation to your other interests – obviously reading and music were important to you – but would you say that cinema was probably more important than things like television and radio? Or were they ... was it all part of the cultural experience?
- Respondent: Yeah, it was all. I mean, radio was all the time. Really.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Respondent: Obviously, I grew up in the radio era before we had the television so we had radio just about all the time ... and then television for a couple of hours in the evening. So it was all part of the mix.
- Interviewer: Was there any sense at all of film ever being considered unsuitable? So you know sometimes a certain kind of cinema get drawn into kind of high and low culture debates because it's always, sort of, been somewhere in the middle depending on the kind of cinema so, you know ... Some people have talked about American films or James Bond or certain kinds of cinema being slightly frowned upon as promoting a kind of culture that wasn't necessarily something you aspire to. I mean, was there ever any sense of anything like that or was cinema generally something that was encouraged? Obviously, your father encouraged you to watch films ...
- Respondent: I think so. We just all went to the cinema, really, and saw all sorts of things. I don't ... I'm not saying we were indiscriminating, that isn't the case, but I think we just took it as something you did on a regular basis.
- Interviewer: If you were discriminating, there must have been things that you thought 'oh, no I don't [think] there were. I say, adventure films that I might ...
- Interviewer: So it was more ...
- Respondent: But I did go to see James Bond though.

- Interviewer: Did you?
- Respondent: Oh definitely, yes. Oh, yes, that was a phenomenon that we all pretty much bought in to.
- Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent: ... but there would have been some trashy things I think that I wouldn't have gone to see. Of the boy's own type I think ...
- Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. That's interesting. You can't really remember what they were they were
- Respondent: No, because I ...
- Interviewer: You disregarded them ...
- Respondent: I disregarded them, but they would have been of the action-man type film, probably.
- Interviewer: OK. That's interesting. Are there any other particular things that we haven't discussed? Any memories or things that stand out to you about the cinema that we haven't touched on?
- Respondent: Oh dear.
- Interviewer: Special occasions that you went or ...?
- Respondent: I don't on the whole think it was, because it was such a regular thing. I probably did go at least once a week and certainly every fortnight I would have thought too.
- Interviewer: Did you talk about films with your friends at school as well?
- Respondent: Some of them, yeah. Yes. Probably only ... possibly not though ... maybe not everyone went. You know, I don't know. I don't think people talked about things in general as much as they do now. I mean, people didn't talk about their private lives very much.
- Interviewer: No.
- Respondent: So, I don't think we did. I can't remember anyone sort of coming and saying 'did you see that last night on television?' I don't know really. It's funny how I don't recall gossiping much at all, really. I expect we did and if we did we might well have talked about films the same as we talk about anything else ... but I can't really recall. Certainly, conversations would be less personal probably than what people talk about now. Yeah, I don't know. I know when I talked to my father we talked about quite serious topics. My mother used to think we were rowing because we talked about politics and things like that. She used to say 'stop rowing', I'd say 'no we're not, we're just having a discussion'. So, I guess we did talk about that but ...
- Interviewer: But there's not any particular memory?
- Respondent: Not really. As I say, I wouldn't have considered cinema on the whole to be a treat because it was relatively normal for me to go. Although, I admit probably, it was starting to fall off in the Sixties.
- Interviewer: It was, yeah. So, if you look at the figures at the cinema they dramatically dropped.

- Respondent: Which would account for my saying that it was half empty.
- Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent: ... and yeah, it probably was but I wasn't aware of it at the time, of course.
- Interviewer: Your cinema-going didn't drop?
- Respondent: Mine didn't and, obviously, the people I went with, but I suspect yes it probably was. Compared with my parents' experience where it was packed.
- Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent: I would say we could always kind of sit where we wanted. So, it was full but it wasn't packed. They got decent audiences, yes, yes, but it probably wasn't like it had been. So, I probably wasn't ... I'm probably making it sound as though it was totally common for everyone to go to the cinema whereas I don't think it was, actually. But it was in my circle.
- Interviewer: ... and did you watch anything more than once?
- Respondent: Oh, yes, yeah.
- Interviewer: Do you remember which film you saw more than once?
- Respondent: Well I said that *Two for the Road* I saw more than once. I was captivated by it. I am sure I have seen several things more than once. For some reason, that one sticks in my mind. I think it was my first intimation I suppose that people could actually have bad marriages.
- Interviewer: Ah, ok.
- Respondent: I don't know. I hadn't really realised. I mean, my parents were relatively happy so it just was so shocking I suppose.
- Interviewer: It's interesting that those things ... I suppose if you didn't have such personal conversations or more private ... because you were talking earlier about seeing hardship and hearing about hardship through the cinema. Education was of a social kind ... a social and cultural kind. It was about finding out about things on the news reel about other people's lives. How other people's lives could be ... and perhaps because there wasn't as much on television ...
- Respondent: No. No, I think television was both didactic on the one hand and pure entertainment on the other and it wasn't that brilliant, really. Although in the Sixties they started having these really good plays. Play seasons. I mean that was when I started to watch again some very serious stuff. Wednesday play, armchair theatre, all those. They started and the BBC became really good at turning out some amazingly good ... both comedies, plays, all sorts ... but it was the Sixties not the Fifties. The Fifties was, well, a winding-up process. It took them a long time to ... into having the sort of imagination and courage to do these things. I think people suddenly thought 'we've got to say all these things ... we've got to start saying some serious things about life'.
- Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Whereas I think people had regarded films and television as being to get people out of their problems rather than to remind them of them. Whereas, perhaps it was the fact that we were getting richer that suddenly people said 'hang on a minute, we're not all getting richer'. There was still a lot of people living in grinding poverty and terrible places. I mean the film *Poor Cow* that was a shocking revelation to a lot of people.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Even though, I say, a lot of them came from quite humble origins but by that stage a lot of us had moved up and moved on ... and I think, yeah, it was really good to be able to see all those things.

Interviewer: Do you value cinema for that? Do you value ...?

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. But I think I just ... I wouldn't say that I analysed it though.

Interviewer: No. No.

Respondent: It was just those sort of things drew me. I wouldn't have said to you, you know, 'I'm going there to learn something serious about aspects of life'. That wouldn't have been what I thought I was getting out of it. Only with hindsight can I see that that's what I got out of it and that it honed my political views. Gave me a lot of my views on life. I didn't set out that way.

Interviewer: It just happened.

Respondent: It was a bit of chicken and egg, obviously.