

Interview with respondent 0793

Date: 14/07/2015

Location: Respondent's home London

Interviewer: Emma Pett

Interviewer: So, it's pretty informal, I've got a couple of things that I want to talk to you about but I also, you know, it's an opportunity for you to kind of discuss ...

Respondent: Well cinema going has changed considerably ... I think the only common thing between today and the 1960s is the fact that you're actually going to watch a film, everything else has changed. The buildings have changed, I mean nearly all ... at the beginning of the 60s and in fact well into the 70s, all the cinema were single screen auditoria. I mean, for example our local Odeon which was my nearest cinema, the Odeon Temple Fortune, had 2700 seats.

Interviewer: I've seen pictures of it, yeah.

Respondent: I mean, no, it was used for shows. In fact I've got some.

Interviewer: Yeah I was really interested in that. They had a big stage.

Respondent: That's a ticket from the last night Odeon Hippodrome.

Interviewer: What sort of shows did you go and see?

Respondent: They had wrestling on at the local Odeon ...

Interviewer: Really? This is Temple Green Odeon?

Respondent: The Royal Festival Ballet. They had the Gang Show, they had, I must have left it in my drawer, the Ovaltine ... it was called the Ovaltine show and I remember Roy Castle and Charlie Chester were on the bill.

Interviewer: What was the Ovaltine show? Was that ...

Respondent: Well it was sponsored by Ovaltine, yes. So we used to go there for shows, there was the Ionic in Golders' Green. That was built in 1912. Unfortunately and I don't know how, Sainsbury's may have convinced the council to a) knock it down and b) just put another modern cinema in there. Quite honestly it should never have been knocked down, it closed in '97, I actually tried to get it reopened but the problem was that ... whatshisname, Cannon who then owned the ABC chain didn't make life very easy for me. I had enough support to have been able to do it, so Golders Green which once supported at least three cinemas has no cinema, which seems actually quite strange, doesn't it?

Interviewer: Well I think so, it's such a densely populated area.

Respondent: Yeah. There was the ABC Golders Green which was originally called the Lido. In the late 50s like many ABCs it had a makeover and it was quite attractive and eventually it was tripled. The trouble with many of these cinemas was that they were ... well the Odeon Temple Fortune was 2700 seats so it was ... you know what are you going to do with a venue like that. It also, for example, it also hosted our High Holy Day services because the synagogue was too small. I went behind the scenes and they had this huge white curtain which they pulled down which they used ...

Interviewer: Was that in the 60s?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was that because there wasn't a big enough synagogue in the area?

Respondent: Yes. Well I mean the synagogue then was too small you see.

Interviewer: And how long was ... because I'm really fascinated with that.

Respondent: Many of the Odeons, I mean for example the Odeon I think in Ilford had the same thing. Many of the Odeons ... actually we used to do that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I think this was probably, so far as locally was concerned, it was until the synagogue was rebuilt in modern form which would probably have been the late 60s, early 70s. The thing about ... there's so many things I remember about the Odeon. I mean one of the other things that I always remember was because of the certificates at the time, and you've probably heard this already, the age certificate you know, you can't go in unless ... so what did you do, you stood outside the cinema and you said to people "can you take me in"? Anything more against what the censors must have intended you know there couldn't have been. The big thing was always to get into an X film. I had a friend who was able to get into X films when he was 12, cinemas didn't question you know ... if you looked 16 no-one ever asked you to produce evidence. The strange thing was I remember ... it always stuck in my mind ... the fact that you were 16 they didn't allow you to take in someone under 16, you had to be over 21. We had American family over, friends and their son was a friend and we took him to the Odeon ... me and a friend of mine ... took him to the Odeon Temple Fortune to see "Spare the Rod" with Max Bygraves ...

which would you believe was an A certificate and they wouldn't allow us to take him in.

Interviewer: So what did you do?

Respondent: Well there was nothing we could do.

Interviewer: You just didn't go in.

Respondent: It was the only time I've ever had that.

Interviewer: So when you used to ... I hope you don't mind me asking this, you don't have to answer ... but when you used to ask an adult to take you in, because I've heard this from other people as well, you would stand outside the cinema and you'd just approach a stranger?

Respondent: Normally a couple.

Interviewer: A couple yeah

Respondent: Because it was more reassuring. I mean I have to be honest with you here that I did ... at half term for example, my father had an office up town so I would go up town and first thing in the morning visit a news cinema and then there were some pretty shady characters because they were looking for people like me so you had to change seats a few times. Then after lunch I would go to one of the big films, because in those days big films could stay in the West End for years. The distribution pattern was completely different then to the way it is now ...

Interviewer: More sort of like a long running play.

Respondent: Correct, I mean South Pacific was five years at the Dominion.

But it took them an awful long time for big films to sort of come down ... then they played what was called the key cinemas, like the Odeon Swiss Cottage, the ABC Edgware Road, things like that and eventually months or even years later it would finally come local. Also there was a completely different distribution pattern because at least at the beginning of the 60s they had a remnant of wartime restrictions because they had a three release areas in London: North-West, North-East and South. So a film would play first in our area in North-West, then go to North-East and then go to South London.

Interviewer: And how long in each one?

Respondent: One week. That was it.

Interviewer: I've heard this before, films didn't stay long and that's why people tended to only see them once at the cinema.

Respondent: Well, that was a problem. If you wanted to ... well I mean this is the, for example, this is the programme for the main repertory cinema at the time The Classics ...

Interviewer: I've heard of this chain.

Respondent: They were a very good chain.

Interviewer: They played older films didn't they?

Respondent: That's right. You know they really were a really ... you never knew what you were going to be able to find because in those days, you know, film on TV hadn't really taken off to the extent that it has been. For

example, many films had been bought up, the TV rights had been bought up by an industry organisation called FIDO, Film Industry Defence Organisation, so that they couldn't be shown on TV. So, they showed 42nd Street, very famous musical and to fit it into their time-slot they cut out one of the musical numbers. Yeah, but that's the way film was regarded ... ok I know there are television versions of this and edited versions of that on TV but you wouldn't do that ... or shouldn't do that to a film like that.

Interviewer: No, this is amazing, I've not seen one of the Classic ...

Respondent: You know The Classics were a really ... there was one local one, there was one in Hampstead which was a lovely building again it was torn down and turned into a Marks and Spencer by the Royal Free Hospital, where else was there. There weren't too many Classic ...

Interviewer: Hang on, Classic Hampstead, Classic Kilburn, Classic ...

Respondent: Yes that's right, there was one in Kilburn near the bridge. Which I remember seeing "Up in Arms" with Danny Kay ...

Interviewer: Waterloo Station ... I think you mentioned the Waterloo one in your questionnaire.

Respondent: Oh that's right, yes yes. There was the one at Waterloo where up until 3 o'clock, it played cartoons and then after it would play old films. It would often play old British films, "Crazy Gang," Arthur Askey. If you're ever in Waterloo look to the very end by platform 1 and that's where it was. There was one at Baker Street, there was one ... by Baker Street ... it was part of Baker Street Station. It's now a shop unit. Another one at ... near Marble Arch adjacent. There was a marvellous one, Studio 1 and Studio 2, which

was in Oxford Street at the bottom of Great Portland Street which had the most fantastic neon display and at the top of Great Portland Street at the station you could see it from there. You drove down Great Portland Street and there it was. Studio 1 was the Walt Disney [one] where they showed all their releases ...

Interviewer: Did they call them cartoon cinemas?

Respondent: Yes that's right, it was like a shilling you know for an hour a continuous sort of loop. Walt Disney cartoons, the Three Stooges that sort of thing, and a new reel.

Interviewer: And were the Classics that showed ... that did show just the cartoons that showed some real comedies, what were the audiences like? Were there many young people like yourself or did it attract people who remembered them from the 30s, can you remember?

Respondent: I mean, like the Classic Waterloo would probably have been people waiting for a train and things like that. I'm just trying to think now, I mean I didn't really take much notice of the audience, there wasn't probably quite as big an audience for the old films in those days, because of their general unavailability. You know, even films like "Citizen Kane," ok, they might be shown once or twice on TV but that was it you know. I, funnily enough, I always remember, I bet someone at school for some strange reason because I'm not a betting person, this was in the 60s that "Citizen Kane" had not been shown on TV and I actually wrote to the BBC and they confirmed, yes, it was shown two or three years before, but there was no real appreciation for film in those days.

Interviewer: That's what ... this is why I'm curious about the Classic chain really, because now if you show an old film now, if we show 60s films, it will often attract an older audience who feel nostalgic about the era and want to watch it again in the cinema on the big screen and that's why I was curious about who the audience were for these films and whether or not a similar thing ... because presumably the idea even of vintage didn't ... what did you call old films then? Did you call them ...

Respondent: I don't know ... vintage ... there was also, I don't know if you've heard about it, a cinema in the Mayfair hotel called the Starlight Club.

Interviewer: I've heard it mentioned but I don't know much about it.

Respondent: It had the 60mm projectors in it and showed a really marvellous, they charged about 10 shillings.

Interviewer: This? That's an advert for it?

Respondent: That's it the Starlight Club, that's it. It was really, really good. It was extremely good.

Interviewer: And it was in the hotel?

Respondent: Yeah. You went down to the bottom and there was a small cinema.

Interviewer: And you could ... because it says at the bottom request performances, so you could ask for something to be shown?

Respondent: Yes, because again in those days the one thing ... you see this is the other thing I did start to do ... I mean I'd been collecting films on 8mm since about 1959, I had my first 8mm projector and then in about ... then 8mm sound came out in about '67, with magnetic sound and eventually, 2

or 3 years later I bought myself a 16mm projector and that then did open the horizons because every major distributor had a library. Rank had a library, Columbia had a library there was a firm called Ron Harris who had MGM, Paramount, RKO features. You know there were so many films, it was about 5/6 pounds for most of them which ok wasn't cheap but it was films you couldn't see on television.

Interviewer: And you'd what, you'd hire them?

Respondent: Yeah you'd hire them for ... you know I'd hire them for the weekend, they'd be delivered in this great big box, two or three 1600ft reels. If they were any good I'd watch them five times if they were no good I'd watch them three times and then the next week they had to be posted back to the library and eventually ...

Interviewer: What happened to those libraries?

Respondent: Well it was the advent of video wasn't it, they completely destroyed it.

Interviewer: Yeah of course. It was sort of like an early video club then I suppose.

Respondent: Very much so but within a few years of VHS establishing itself virtually every 16mm library closed down.

Interviewer: How did the libraries work in terms of their catalogues, how did you know what was in them?

Respondent: Well I'm not sure if I've got any of the catalogues here, I think I took them to storage, but you had these catalogues, large catalogues of films.

Interviewer: So what you could order the catalogue and then you'd have your own copy of it?

Respondent: Everything was paper in those days

Interviewer: Of course. I was just ... I can remember pre-internet just. I was just wondering how it worked because obviously I grew up with video stores where you would go and browse.

Respondent: Oh yes it was different, certainly the 16mm because as I say you had ... each time you actually had to enter a license agreement. Tell you what I have got ... I have got my folder ... Each time you hired a film you see you had to enter into a license agreement so for example that's an agreement with Contemporary Films for "San Demitrio London". Here we are ... I helped to form a film society at school so here for example this is license with the Rank Organisation ... "Bespoke Overcoat" that was.

Interviewer: This is fascinating I've never seen these before. So you ...

Respondent: I meant to say that there were all the sponsored film ... the central office, the government one, huge catalogue. The kind of ... the National Coal Board. This is a license form for Ron Harris which covered ... can't even read ... that's from Ron Harris.

Interviewer: So when you entered in to these license agreements was that, what is the agreement? That you wouldn't show it publically, is that was the agreement was?

Respondent: Well precisely. Yes. I actually, that's it. Psycho, that's what that film was so I don't know if any under 16s were watching that.

Interviewer: Yeah, I can see Psycho. So you rented this 7th February 1964, so you were a teenager at school and you could just rent ...?

Respondent: Oh yes, not only that but for example, to rent out the films ... well not rent out they came for free from Ford or National Concord, you had to be an organisation and I was involved with the Liberals so my organisation was the Young Liberals, so I registered with that and so fine they gave me the films.

Interviewer: So that was the only thing you needed was to be part of an organisation?

Respondent: That's right

Interviewer: It didn't matter what age you were or anything else really.

Respondent: You can see in those days you actually had to have a stamp on a receipt.

Interviewer: And you would ... how would you do the ... arrange the license for you? Would they send it to you and you sign it and send it back?

Respondent: Well you see I had to complete a form and send it in to them, I can't remember I'm sure it must have been pre-pay but I had to say ... you know ...

Interviewer: Where you were showing it or ...?

Respondent: Yeah, you had to say for example ... yeah that's from the British Film Institute, I had forgotten about all this, that's a film that I bought from them you see, "London Can Take It" the 1940 documentary.

Interviewer: Was it ... how many people would have the facilities to do what you were doing?

Respondent: Well 16mm was actually in those days still used by cinemas so in fact ... I mean the thing about 16mm it was all ... originally had been a sort of something a bit more than 8mm for the home, but it was adopted by the cinema I think because of the Second World War because a it was easy to transport 16mm prints as opposed to 35 and of course 16mm film was printed on non-flammable stock whereas 35 was on nitrates. So it was a lot easier. There for example, there's one booking that I made in the name of the Young Liberals. The Liberals never saw it, I saw it ...

Interviewer: So how old were you when you got the facilities to watch a 16mm?

Respondent: I think I was about 17/18. Because it was frustrating ...

Interviewer: Was it quite expensive? Did you have to petition your parents to buy it as a birthday present or ...?

Respondent: I did pester my father but he would never buy it so I had to do it myself. There you go, that's the National Coal Board. I mean they were good documentaries as well.

Interviewer: Yeah I've heard other people talk about these documentaries. So you saved up the money and you bought the projector ...

Respondent: Yeah, that's right. I mean, the thing was that ... I'm just trying to ... as I say initially it was 8mm. In those days there were a large number of army surplus machines called L516 but they weren't that brilliant, not what I wanted which was a much better projector. The only problem with the

projector, the first one I had was that the brushes in the motor wore off quite often and once they'd worn what you got was a distracting noise on the soundtrack so then you had to cart ... this was a huge, you know it was like this, it was like this, it had its own box which muffled the sound of the machine but then you had to take it up to wherever you could find a projector repairer. It was a huge effort to do it and the bulbs were quite expensive as well, I think they were about £6/7 and at that time £6/7 was a lot of money.

Interviewer: So did you know many other people that had ...?

Respondent: No. Only one or two, my uncle did, someone else who I knew at school and that was about it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: It was ... in terms ... you know it was an amateur gauge for film and it was much more expensive than 8mm. I mean I took all my home cine-films on 8mm not on 16 but the advantage about 16 was these huge film libraries that existed at that time.

Interviewer: Once you'd got all the equipment you ... say for example with the Rank Organisation, did you write to them and ask for a catalogue was that how it worked?

Respondent: Yeah well, I mean you just wrote to the companies and they sent you a catalogue and I got the catalogue and then went through it and saw what I wanted to ...

Interviewer: Exciting

Respondent: Well it was you know.

Interviewer: Did you have a lot of friends who wanted to see them because they didn't ...

Respondent: Not really, no.

Interviewer: No, they weren't as interested as you were?

Respondent: Well not really. As I say, some of the films ... there for example that's the Petroleum Film Bureau.

Interviewer: Where did you ... when you watched them at home rather than ... was it mainly at school that you watched them?

Respondent: No they were all at home. Apart from those ... I don't think that in those days there was quite the interest because ... I suppose it was a question of what came first the chicken or the egg ... but there was the NFT, it was just a very small building that nearly went out of existence in the 60s ...

Interviewer: And then it moved didn't it

Respondent: Yes to the Shell Centre. They had a very nice cinema there and it nearly foundered and it was just the main cinema there. See there, that was an acknowledgement in receipt of my booking ... that was a Howard Roach film. There were no film guides no nothing. I think Halliwell was the first one that came out, that was the first real big guide, there just wasn't ... there was so little literature on film there just was nothing. I mean there, for example, "Flying Down to Rio".

Interviewer: How long did you carry on hiring...

Respondent: Into the 80s. I mean then I had some problems with the projector that I had, the bulbs seemed to be going quite quickly and I took the projector to the engineer but they couldn't seem to work out what the problem was and I had a bulb go after 10 or 12 hours and they cost a good few pound and it seemed to be a little bit pointless, and then some of the films started to become available on video and to be honest there didn't seem to be any point in continuing with hiring films given all the effort that was involved. Would you like a cup of tea or anything?

Interviewer: If you don't mind that would be really nice, it's really fascinating. I could listen to you talking about this all day. You've got an incredible collection of things here that you've just kept all these years haven't you?

Respondent: Well I'm a magpie, I've got for example lots of programmes from when ... when you used to go and see a big film you'd get ...

Interviewer: You'd get a bigger A4 sort of size colour ... yeah I've seen these.

Respondent: You know "The Ten Commandments" or "the Battle of the Bulge" or films like that. They were about 16 pages ... So it was just one of those things I collected them. Is that the ABC film review? They used to cost ... well this was 9pence by 1968, they originally cost about sixpence, Rank also started up one in opposition and they were effectively sort of fan magazines and ... the thing about one of the things I meant to say going back to when I was talking about the way things have changed, of course, the one big change was the double feature. For example when I went to the ABC in Golders Green which I did ... every Sunday with my best friend

because he was religious and wouldn't go on a Saturday and the thing was about those days was that films actually started on a Sunday.

Interviewer: The first day of the week.

Respondent: That's right and the ... there was a clock there that said "You go in at" ... there were two clocks rather one said "you go in at" whatever time you were there, "you come out at" the length of the programme was then added on so we normally got there for the 4:30 programme and that meant we would come out at I think 7:30 but of course the point was in those days you got in there, say half way through the B feature, you would stay until you got to that point again in the B feature and at that moment you would leave.

Interviewer: So you didn't always go in at the beginning of the film did you?

Respondent: Sometimes you missed the beginning of the film and as I say you would then stay and watch what you'd missed. I mean that ended about ... the 70s, the early 70s.

Interviewer: I can't remember that, no

Respondent: The thing was that it paid ... I mean most of the ... I mean this is for example the programme for the ABC Golders Green, one of my cinemas, you can see that it has you know second feature probably into the late 60s or early 70s.

Interviewer: They were sometimes quite odd combinations weren't they?

Respondent: Oh yes very odd, I mean at ABC they tended to have things like the Scotland Yard series or the Edgar Wallace series, which were actually quite

good films. Or because they were aligned with Warner Brothers they would often have their westerns ... there were still a lot of westerns being made. If you went to the Odeon, well, if you went on a Sunday you would start with a thought for the day. Often they would have, I think probably as ... I think a bit of a cheat, they would have a cut down version of "Awake" or something like that, not always. And the other thing was that some cinemas, not the local but some, they would have a different film on a Sunday which was I think to do with Sunday opening and was ... I think they had to give some money to charity and they obviously regarded Sunday as a lesser day for some reason and for example you might have an Abbott and Costello film on with a western, something like that, something that wasn't new. Sunday was in those days a good day to go and then of course they kept on changing it. They subsequently changed it to a Thursday and then ...

Interviewer: That's how I remember it in the 80s is that films came out on a Thursday.

Respondent: I will always remember, there was one time ABC had a different pricing structure, they decided that the ... some films would be more expensive than others. Then they realised, I think quite quickly that what that might mean to the public was that the films at a lesser price were regarded as not so good so people would go to them.

Interviewer: Yeah it's a funny idea.

Respondent: But the second feature sort of fell out of ... the double feature fell out by the early 70s. Then they just ... they had these 20 -25 minute

documentaries often made by a company called Global
Queensway, although they showed some of them on one of the channels ...
I don't know if it was BBC 4.

Interviewer: Yes somebody else has mentioned that ...

Respondent: The only reason those films were made ... that's right they were made
by a chap called Harold Baim, I always used to think it was the bane of my
life because those films were quite awful and they were only being shown
for [quota reasons]. In fact sometimes these shorts would actually earn
more than the features they were playing with because they would actually
qualify for [financial help] and as soon as Thatcher did away with the Eady
Levy [in 1985] that was the end of those and that was the only good thing I
could say because they were awful. I always remember since I was a
solicitor that the manager of the Everyman in Hampstead had to come in
every year and swear a declaration because he hadn't reached his quota to
be sent to the board.

Interviewer: Really? I didn't know that, I didn't know they used to do that.

Respondent: Oh yeah, he had to explain why he hadn't reached his quota.

Interviewer: He'd be in trouble for that?

Respondent: No I don't think ... I think in the 30s particularly after they passed the
[Cinematograph Films] Act [introducing a quota system for British films] in
what was it '27,'28, they did ... it was rigidly enforced but they were so
[more relaxed] by this time and the 70s that ...

- Interviewer: So with the actual cinemas themselves, the buildings, and ...
I'm just thinking about this in relation to the different chains because you obviously remember very clearly the differences between them, you know the ABC and Rank and Classic and ...
- Respondent: For one thing they each had their own individual product from studios I mean, ABC had MGM, they had Paramount, they had Warners and Warners actually owned ... had a substantial shareholding in ABC cinemas. Rank ... had Columbia and RKO and Universal and 20th Century Fox, which Rank owned a share of, and United Artists.
- Interviewer: So they would show those films and were the actual cinemas ... substantially different? Someone I was talking to in another interview was saying ... discussing the difference between the cinema chains and the independents in terms of being attracted to going to the cinema chains because the quality was better.
- Respondent: No, that was not something, I looked for the film ...
- Interviewer: You didn't actually look at the ...
- Respondent: I mean, it was not until ... the funny thing is that about the same time ... which was about '67, I started going to lots of different cinemas because, I mean for example I actually made a trip down to Tooting to see the Granada because I realised that many of these cinemas were not going to be cinemas for much longer. I think it was '72 when Rank sort of swung the axe and closed a whole load of cinemas, the Odeon Temple Fortune being one. I don't know. I don't think the fact that ... in terms of the building, I

mean the only one where that applied was the Odeon Temple Fortune because it was the first cinema I'd ever been to at Christmas 1950.

Interviewer: So you had an emotional attachment to it ...

Respondent: Very much so because my father took me the first time ever, and the thing was I saw this beam of light coming from the projection box ... and of course in those days everyone smoked so the beam of light sort of you could see it making its way through all the smoke ... I mean it's unbelievable now and that was my first ambition to be a projectionist.

Interviewer: It was still a little bit like that when I remember going in the late 70s and 80s because people still smoked in the cinema but the actual building ...

Respondent: I remember the adverts from Rank saying for the convenience of patrons of ... for the convenience of non-smoking patrons you smoked on either the left or right side like that was going to make any difference. Actually ... all the cinemas had ash trays and it was a bit like you know you had someone in front of you smoking ... oh god it was terrible, it really was awful. A bit like being in a restaurant that was also bad. I don't think I ever thought I must go to the ABC or I must go to the Odeon, it was what's showing here or what's showing there or I missed that film it's on at the Classic. I actually started, I suppose you would call it a diary but for some reason at the beginning of 1961 I actually started writing down what I'd seen, what I thought of it, what price I'd paid and I've continued that to this day.

Interviewer: Like a cinema diary or a cinema record. That's incredible.

Respondent: Yeah. Obviously not quite as eloquent as I am nowadays
although I still keep a diary but I also go on to IMDB because whenever I
see a British film, particularly one which has no reviews or only one or two
reviews I put a review up.

Interviewer: Do you? Oh yes you've kind of rated them excellent, terrible.

Respondent: To the point shall we say?

Interviewer: It's a record of how you responded to them. You said, talking about
the cinemas in your questionnaire, that after the Odeon was closed that
you couldn't even go there for 5 years because you were so sad.

Respondent: No, no I couldn't.

Interviewer: Do you think that was ... it was obviously linked to your childhood, but
you were saying it was the first place you saw a film but do you think as
well it was because the cinema had a wider role in the community?

Respondent: It's possible. It's funny you say that because there were times ... when
I did go to services there I was terribly frustrated and bored because that
sort of thing did bore me and I always said ... come home and say to my
mum I wouldn't mind seeing the film there this afternoon, because it was
the morning they were hired for, oh no, no she wouldn't let me go. Despite
the fact I wasn't going to do anything I couldn't go to the cinema.

Interviewer: Because it was a holy day?

Respondent: I don't know.

Interviewer: So you ...

Respondent: Yeah it just formed so much a part of my early life and there were so many memories attached to it I found it hard to come to terms with that, I mean the same with the ABC Golders Green, but that as you know was quite a the problem was then that Canon bought up the ABC chain and of course there were a number of them close together ... another one I remember now was the Classic in Hendon which you know became a Canon but they eventually closed that, it's a health centre now, mind you at least it does survive as a building unlike the Odeon and the ABC both of which turned into retirement homes. Ironically I actually acted for one person when it was opened purchasing a flat in there and I hated every minute of that. I mean I also, I did look because I had a reader's ticket to the National Archives and I found a file I think Rank wanted to lift the restricted covenants on that building so that it could be used as a dance hall, because they did use some of their cinemas for a short time as a dance hall, the Regal Edmonton was one. I remember actually seeing, although when it was still a cinema, Lionel Bart's Blitz there.

Interviewer: No, I mean I felt quite sad when the cinema I used to go to as a child closed and I saw last time I was visiting my parents that it's now a Holiday Inn. It still exists as a building and it's still got the front as an ABC but the front is like a cinema but it's a hotel. I kind of have those similar ...

Respondent: It's what in the CTA they call facadism which is something that we're sort of ... for example the Odeon Kensington which they wanted to turn into a block of flats, they want to keep the facade and knock down the rest. It's a very nice ... it really is a beautiful cinema inside even still, even though they cut it up into six or seven cinemas it's still there's, there's still some

very nice detail in there. You know, we were actually protected in that sense by the recession, but now it's over we just don't know.

Interviewer: No, there was actually something on television last night, a couple who bought an old cinema and made it into a house, it was that Grand Designs programme, and they'd done exactly that, they'd kept the facade and then created their ideal home behind it, yeah. So there's definitely a trend for doing that because there's supposed to be an element of preservation.

Respondent: The thing is I can see ... I mean one of the things also with Rank particularly was they hadn't got a clue what they were doing, because again I've read many files in the National Archives. The managing director was an infamous man called John Davis, ... and you can read the ... not transcripts but reports of the annual dinner which they always used to have in the Dorchester, and they're going on about what they have to do to correct the slide in cinema attendances, but you can tell that they hadn't got a clue. I mean it was about 1000 million in 1946 by 1960 it was about 345000. That's when ITV really started ... by 1985 or so it was about 85million so you know it just completely vanished

Interviewer: Did you have a television in the 60s?

Respondent: Oh yeah, my parents had a television since I was born they had one of the gramophone televisions, you had the ... it was a very small screen it was about 9 inches but we had a television here well before the coronation. That didn't affect me in terms of my cinema-going but it affected many people. A) it was a lot easier and b) you only had to look at

some of the films being shown and they were rubbish. They really are. I love the British B films but you look at them and you think is that enough to actually entice people away from their TV screens? I don't think it would be. I mean I like them yes, but it came back to what I was saying about the Classic repertory chain, I can't actually remember them being particularly full. Certainly I don't think there were many young people like myself but then as I say, that goes back to the fact that it wasn't a great appreciation of film. It was an industry, it wasn't an art form.

Interviewer: No, and I noticed in some of these ... I think it was in here, I was looking at how they'd organised the programme at the Classic, that they tend to be around stars rather than the directors, I think Hitchcock might be a main exception ...

Respondent: Hitchcock was probably the only one and John Ford as well.

Interviewer: Yeah, but generally you got like a Marlon Brando series and an Audrey Hepburn season and I think this is one of the ways in which an appreciation of film culture has changed in a very kind of mainstream way, I'm not just talking about academic ... people are very aware of directors now ...

Respondent: But I'm not so much aware of modern directors quite frankly. I could ... I think I have to say, if you showed me a John Ford film or a Howard Hawkes or some other director's film from that era I would probably be able to tell you who it was without seeing their name but I wouldn't have a clue you know ... I can't even remember honestly ... I mean you know it's this pretention of "a film by" and you know it's a collaborative art, you

know there's dozens of people who you know collaborated who were involved, not just one person. It's become a bit of an ego trip quite frankly.

Interviewer: It's become a branding.

Respondent: Yeah, you know, by the director of ... I mean ok it's something that's been going on for years, but I think that's there to satisfy the ego of the person concerned not the cinema-goer. I mean, I always remember, that's right, there's a quote in a book about Ernst Lubitsch at his funeral and I think Billy Wilder said "no more Lubitsch pictures" and that's the way I felt about Billy Wilder when Billy Wilder died; because with Billy Wilder, whatever the film was, even if it was pretty awful ... he made one with Walter Lemon and Jack Lemon and ... I think it was... "Hitman" and I didn't think it was very good but you know it was a Billy Wilder film. Wasn't there a film he made ... I think his last film was with Marlene Dietrich. That's right she was in it for about 10 minutes, but it was Billy Wilder because he was a notch above anyone else. You didn't look for anyone else, that's for certain. You didn't look for George Cooke or Sam Wood or Richard Thorpe or Norman Turok or whoever. There were certain directors you did go and see, John Ford I would go and see his films although strangely enough I didn't go and see his last film "Seven Women", maybe because it wasn't a western. I have to be honest I'm still as fond of westerns today as I was back in that time, maybe that was television's influence I don't know but whenever there was a Western on I would go see it. The thing is for a time in the late 50s Westerns were the big films and then, when TV took over then they sort of ... it was sort of like an up and down thing and then they

bought out the Italian westerns and they became popular for a time and nowadays it's the exception rather than the rule, it's not the same. I used to like all the characters in westerns. George Gabby Hayes was my favourite you see, he played Windy Halliday in "Hopalong Cassidy" but was prevented from using that name again when he appeared with Roy Rogers and others so he had to call himself Gabby.

Interviewer: You liked war films as well ...

Respondent: The funny thing is for example last night I watched for the first time ever a film called "How I Won The War" which was made by Richard Lester in 1967, now I remember that I did read the critics and everyone panned it, it was a satire of World War 2, point being ... well it was a bad film I saw last night and I stopped after an hour I just couldn't watch any more it was so awful in my opinion anyway. The thing was there were so many people still around from that period you couldn't really satirise it and from our perspective it's not something you can satirise I'm afraid, it's still too touchy, still too resonant even at this remove. I cannot find a lot to find funny about that war. I mean, you had starting from the 50s, in fact the late 40s you had the start of war films and then you got the blockbusters of the 50s and 60s "Guns of Navarone" and they always had an intermission, the big film. If they were about two and a half, three hours, they always had an intermission but if you've ever seen these films you can actually see where the intermission is because ... I mean like "Guns of Navarone" the ... David Niven and all the others in the party are actually captured by Germans in a Greek village and the curtains are closed and you've got ten minutes to go to the loo or buy an orange drink ... Kia-ora. You know it's

like then a small amount of music and the lights go down and the film starts again.

Interviewer: You can still see ... when I saw "2001: A Space Odyssey" recently in what was the NFT, you could see the break and they made an announcement saying we won't have a break, but still a lot of people just automatically stood up to go and get a drink.

Respondent: "The Great Escape", anything which was quite long.

Interviewer: I watched all those war films on TV in the 70s with my dad, that's how I remember them, they were still very popular at that point. People watched them ...

Respondent: Very much so because you know you had the actors who could play those roles like Kenneth Moore and Richard Todd and, in the case of Richard Todd, had actually been there on D-Day.

Interviewer: Yeah, so they brought some of that ... they were that generation I think and there was a stronger element of patriotism in the 60s perhaps ...

Respondent: Yes I suppose so, but it was ... the people who remembered the war were still there. I go whenever there is a Second World War film, not that often, I go. I went to see Tarantino's "Inglourious Basterds" and it was awful ... the fact being you know, the idea that Hitler was assassinated in a cinema in Paris I mean what the hell's it's all about.

Interviewer: I did even bring myself to watch it but I read the reviews and decided I was not very interested.

Respondent: Films about Enigma where they'll bring in an adventure story to make it more palatable to younger people and ... there are now films about the Holocaust which there weren't before. I saw the film with Helen Mirren a short time ago which I really thought was extremely good.

Interviewer: I haven't seen it yet but I ...

Respondent: It's really very good. Again, one of the things that I'm sad about is the fact that the cinema to a certain extent has left me, and I understand that, the films aren't made for my generation. I don't want to go and see a film with lots of CGI and the stars I don't know who they are and most of the films are action films ... those sort of action films which I'm not terribly interested in and of course you don't even have ... I was going to say the enjoyment of once in a while having something go wrong, ironically once or twice when I've been to the Phoenix watching a film digitally it's stopped and they couldn't start it and it pixelated, but you see in the old days it could be quite fun. Once I don't remember if I mentioned this, at the Odeon at Temple Fortune they were showing a film called "The Lion" with William Holden and then all of a sudden the lights came up and a man came up on the stage and said "look we've discovered that we've shown the reels in the wrong order so if anyone wants their money back" ... we thought what the hell I wouldn't go to see it. Of course, occasionally you'd get the academy leader running through because the projectionist had not got the change over right and of course the other thing was that if they hadn't adjusted the arc light properly then all of a sudden the screen would suddenly go brown and almost disappear to the accompaniment of catcalls and boos until they started twiddling the knobs to get the brightness back

up. So ... the thing about it is, when I went to the CTA one of my great enjoyments was going into the projection box, but not so much anymore and every cinema is digital so it's all the same.

Interviewer: I did a talk at the Phoenix recently and I went into the projectionist box and had a look around the cinema and I do enjoy looking behind the scenes ...

Respondent: But there you see ... they have a small projectionist box but they used to have the tower. Most cinemas had what was called the cake stand. I was often put myself in a circle at the ABC so I could see the projection box so I could see when they were making the change-overs you see.

Interviewer: So you were interested in that?

Respondent: I was, I was. As I say I would love to ... once upon a time I did apply, there was an advert for a junior at the Classic Baker Street and I did apply, but I didn't even get the interview, so ...

Interviewer: Did you, you don't have to answer this if you don't want to, but did you go into the legal profession because it was felt like that was a better profession? Was there always a little bit of you that would have liked to have been a projectionist?

Respondent: No, well I suppose, let's put it this way, my main subject at school was history. My father had qualified but didn't practice as a barrister and it just seemed a natural progression. I have to say I'm glad I didn't follow my particular ambition through because otherwise by the early 70s I would have had a trade with nowhere to practice it, or very few ... a lot less ... if you read the CTA bulletin articles by people who worked in the trade, many

did leave in the 60s and the 70s because of the way it was contracted at that time. So in a sense I'm sad but you know overall ... it wouldn't have been a practical ...

Interviewer: I interviewed someone who was a projectionist at the NFT, mainly in the 70s but started at the end of the 60s and then he became a projectionist for film festivals so his career continued you know for quite a long time but he saw the holes unfold ... he learnt how to do it as a 16 year- old in the flea pits in South London and then gradually went from there, so he didn't have any qualification but that was his trade and that was what he always did. It really was ... he describes it and all the things they had to do to keep the film going particularly in some of the less technologically-enabled projectionist boxes, they had all kinds of tricks so they could keep things going and it was an art form in itself I think.

Respondent: One of the things I have done in recent years is because ... there are a lot of films which until Network got started, hadn't seen the light of day since their original release. I went to the BFI viewing services and I would hire their viewing prints, so I'd go to Stephen's Street and I'd go to the basement and the cans of film would be left for me there and I'd put them under the Strindberg and I'd watch one or two films. Ironically since I started doing that, Network have started releasing many of the 30s and 40s films so many of the films that I'd actually watched are now being listed on DVD so I can save myself some money.

Interviewer: But it was fun.

Respondent: Yeah I still ... last time I was there was 3 months ago but the way Network have been releasing these films, it's sort of ... I don't want to start paying out £15, £20 to hire out a film to find that next month it's available on DVD. Again, the availability of British films on DVD had changed considerably in the last few years. No-one seemed to want to know really then all of a sudden it was like a flood of films so clearly there's a fair amount of interest there.

Interviewer: There is, yeah.

Respondent: There was all these films and I found it very frustrating ... I mean a lot of films were shown on Channel 4 in the 1980s and then they disappeared around the turn of the millennium. They all just seemed to disappear even from Channel 4, even from Film 4, it was almost like all these years of British films didn't exist. Some of the ... not all the films but some of the films are very good, I found that very frustrating. People didn't seem to know what had happened in the past, I mean I don't know about kids they don't know anything very much about film history unless they'd studied it but then I suppose in our day no-one had an interest in film history because ... I actually would have liked to have gone to film school but there wasn't anything. I'm talking about in the 70s. I wanted to but there wasn't, there were no courses at all, nothing. To get into the industry you had to know someone and that was the only way. It was frustrating in that way so at the end of the day I just said well ... I actually I even went to Los Angeles and my father had to send contacts when I went to see someone at Columbia studios and I went to Walt Disney studios and I had a good time but it was like a brick wall. By that time I'd qualified as a solicitor so I

thought, well, I did work here for two or three years in the music publishing solicitors but that was another thing. I would always have liked to had some sort of professional connection, but in those days again the film business was strictly controlled by five or six firms and you had to have experience before you could get into these firms and how could you get experience ...

Interviewer: You had to know someone.

Respondent: So I always would have liked to but ...

Interviewer: So it remained a hobby really?

Respondent: Yes it remained a hobby and an interest and it still does. As I said, there's nothing that I've ever thrown away.

Interviewer: It's incredible you've got such an amazing collection of things, it's completely fascinating to see ...

Respondent: These are for example the film stories ... they used to have these on the outside of the cinemas, I don't know why, they were supposed to have attracted you, given you some idea of maybe what the film's about. It's like today with trailers, I mean you can sit through a trailer and wonder what the hell is this about, what's it about and you don't know what it's about whereas in the old days it was like 3 years in the making, 15,000 cars, X million pounds spent and it was all. Every adjective you could imagine and you knew what it was all about and you knew whether you were going to go see the film or not.

Interviewer: And you mentioned about ... with the war films that as well, because in the early 60s particularly London was still ravaged by ... and that it helped you to understand more what had happened?

Respondent: Yes, well I suppose it was quite difficult when you're born just after the war ...

Interviewer: Because you wouldn't have been taught in school.

Respondent: Not just taught in schools. I mean down the bottom in the park there was an air raid shelter, there were air raid shelters in some of the backs of the gardens, wherever you went ... particularly if you went in the City anywhere around near St. Pauls there were loads of bombed-out places, in fact there's still one or two now, near one of the places I worked it was like that. So London was still far from having been rebuilt in that time and it was a strange era to grow up in because all the evidence of this is there but everything's sort of gone.

Interviewer: Did it, I mean obviously it would have been too early for it to have been taught at school, but apart from seeing the films and seeing the evidence around you did you talk much about the war? Not really?

Respondent: I talked ... I don't know. I mean not with school friends no. With ... I'm just trying to think now, my father served in the war so not him. Although he did subsequently get involved with various things, but they were more to do with Israel. He knew, he did know some people who kind of served in the intelligence services, he knew about Enigma and that was long before it was public. I think ... this was later on, from 1989 I went on battlefield tours with a company called Holts, and they often had veterans on that. So

we went on the tour to the dams, unfortunately on my trip there were no veteran of the dams but someone who was firing at them on the flak towers came and spoke to us. When we went to Dunkirk there were veterans and obviously at Normandy there were lots of veterans so it was always interesting to speak to veterans and get their experiences.

Interviewer: No, I just wondered how much it was talked about.

Respondent: Not a lot, no

Interviewer: No that's what I ...

Respondent: Only for example a film like "The Dambusters" would open and then as a publicity thing and what have you, yes you were told a lot about the Dambusters but that would be from the papers and on the television. It was the same for "The Great Escape," I've been to the site of Tom, Dick and Harry and ... but literature did start to be published after the war so my father read that and then passed that interest on to me so by the time I was in my teens I would be reading about it all the time. For example, there was a chap who delivered stationery to my father and he didn't talk anything about the war. Apparently it had affected him quite badly, my dad told me that. In fact, a book has just been published about him. I remember because he also got involved in my father's political activities and I went out with ... I spent a lot of time with him putting up posters and that sort of thing, but not once do I ever remember him discussing the war and he'd been a Jewish prisoner of war with the Germans since Calais in 1940 so nearly 5 years and his son's recently written a book about him. So I learnt everything about his late father from the book but not one word

from him. I don't remember, some of my relatives certainly ... my uncle was still around in '92, and I found out more from him in the last year or so than I was told the rest of my life. I knew nothing about his war service, I knew nothing about my father [who] never talked about the war. My mother did [talk] about how she used to hide under the stairs in her parents' house in Stamford Hill when they were bombing and how she once went down a tube but never again because it was so filthy. She was ... she went to Merton and worked in the factory there but, no, they just didn't talk about it so you had to find out everything second hand.

Interviewer: And that's why films ... war films had a particular interest for you then possibly?

Respondent: Well again, we went ... I always remember, we went to Belgium in the late 50s, a town ... a coastal town ... [and] there on the beach was the German Atlantic wall, not so pristine but pretty much as it had been in 1944, so there you are walking amongst history. You can't ... and I've got photos of myself standing in front of these gun placements. Go to Jersey where they've all been preserved and Guernsey and also, for example, I remember, because of my dad, he did have a great interest, in the late 60s we went over to ... we went from ... in those days they used to, an air company called Silver City, it bought some of the transport planes from the RAF and what you could do was you could fly your car over from somewhere like Christchurch to Cherbourg and what we used to do ... and this of course also bear in mind this was just before "The Longest Day" which was a very big film. We travelled right down the Cherbourg peninsula right through all these places where D-Day had happened. We

went to Omaha beach to Juno to Gold to the one or two, there was a museum ... which was one of the first museums, there was still ... remained still there were actually landing craft on the beach and of course the Mulberry harbours so there was living history right in front of you. His interest in the Second World War sort of also infected me, so I became extremely interested which led me to ...

Interviewer: Hello.

Respondent: So I mean I've been to battlefields all over the world. I've been to Butan ... in the Philippines, I've been to Pearl Harbour, been to Singapore all over ... I've been to, this year I've been to Belgrade and Ljubljana. There are lots of wars in relation to the Second World War that we're not even aware of. You know like, Yugoslavia as it was, came in in 1941 it was invaded by the Germans, something that most people here aren't aware of. So it sort of became very much a part of my interest and part of my life to see all these places. Whereas in my father's day there were a few museums now there are hundreds of museums so ... I think back to the 50s and 60s, it was because the people who actually carried out the war were still with us and my parents' generation were with us so there was a general interest ... we had austerity and I mean I still remember austerity, sugar rationing, petrol rationing these sort of things and the ironic thing of course is that Britain had a worse time than any of the defeated nations because they were put on their feet with the Marshall Aid. So, it was sort of like ... it was something good to remember, if people wondered what did we do this for why did we go through this then there on the screen was ... it wasn't ... I have to say I always think that the British versions of things

tended to be more accurate than say the German ... I mean the American because you know if you watch things like "The Ship that Died of Shame" ... or "Cockleshell Heroes" the films didn't seem to be over-glamourised. For example, [in] the "Cockleshell Heroes" some were shot and the film doesn't fudge that at all. ... I don't know if you know also the new satellite channel Talking Pictures?

Interviewer: No

Respondent: Because it's been showing a lot of old British films, occasionally it still shows too many American films, but it showed "Gung-ho" which was an American war film made in 1943 about the Makin Island raid. Now you know, I looked it up on Wikipedia and apparently the raid was a failure but you wouldn't guess it if you looked at the film. Not only that but the colonel who was in charge of the commando raid actually walked out of the film because it didn't resemble anything similar to what he'd actually been through. Remember also ... even though he was a technical advisor I don't think they would have dared to have done that sort of thing with a British film. I mean maybe ... like "The Great Escape" with Steve McQueen, yes there were Americans there but they weren't you know they've been glamourised. I'm currently reading "Five Came Home." I don't know if you know the book but it's about 5 American directors who went to make films for the army and the navy in the Second World War ... George Stevens, Frank Capra, William Wilder and John Huston and there's a film called "Tunisian Victory" and the thing was there was originally ... because there are a number of documentaries about the campaigns of the Second World War and the film had actually been finished by the British film unit, headed

by Roy Bolton and then the Americans came over and the Americans had hardly had any involvement in the African campaign, but to satisfy them politically they were allowed to pretty much take it o- making commentary with ... an American soldier and ... a British soldier and there's a lot of re-enactment which the American army didn't like. There's actually a title at the end admitting that some of it had been re-enacted. But then on the other hand if you ever look at any ... British news for example, I remember reading in one book by one person connected ... often it would say faked from the library, so if you look at British news particularly related to the Second World War, much of what you'll see is not actual combat footage it's just faked from the library. I think war films were very popular and I don't know ... I think probably by the 70s other than some dreadful films one or two made by Lew Grade ... more or less as a genre, a bit like the western, they tended to die out. The western, I know there are only a basic number of stories, there are lots of war stories but obviously people are more interested in CGI and you know and space and monsters and what have you ... and 3D. I remember, it was different again 3D in my day, first of all you had the glasses ... I mean I'll never forget we went to the Savoy ... to watch "the Charge of the Feather River" which still gets shown occasionally on TV, I don't know if you've ever seen an old 3D ...

Interviewer: Yeah, I have, yeah. With the old glasses, yeah.

Respondent: Well here you had, anything that was going to be picked up and thrown at the screen you know like a tomahawk or an arrow or if it was a bar room brawl and someone was going to chuck a chair it came through the screen. What they did, they had to have first of all two projectors were

interlocked and then each projector would have to take about 4000 feet of film and then ended up there's be a short interval, they'd change to the second reel and that's how they did it. Unlike today which of course is all done digitally.

Interviewer: Yeah it's very different, they had just a few key moments didn't they in the old films?

Respondent: Yes. I mean you knew, they always tended to be fights for example ... and there was that really good film ... was it "Murder in the Wax Museum" or "Mystery in the Wax Museum" -- in fact I remember the first thing ... there was this man on stilts with a bat and ball outside the museum and he was batting the ball and he bats it into the screen, it was really good that was I've never forgot that. I mean but that died out ...

Interviewer: It did, there was a couple of revivals in the 80s, that's how I remember it.

Respondent: There was a sex film revival I remember that in the ... "Three Dimensions of Greta" ... it came back now and again but it never ... in fact they tried it on TV I remember.

Interviewer: They did.

Respondent: Actually ,I recorded the film and I've still got the glasses so in theory I could still watch it in 3D.

Interviewer: I remember the Radio Times having them on the front.

Respondent: But it wasn't until they sort of perfected ... but again, I'm not going to pay extra to go to the cinema to see a 3D film. I really am not and it gets ...

that gets quite expensive, I mean that's again another thing, cinema ticket prices. OK if I go I go ... I'm frustrated, I'd much rather go to the Odeon Muswell Hill which is a really good cinema or the Phoenix for example, I could get the bus to the Phoenix or I could get the bus to the Odeon but you know it's just so easy to go to the Vue multiplex in North Finchley, I mean it's £6.99 which is not too bad but going to the Everyman Hampstead is £12 and I'm sure it's more at the Odeon Leicester Square, the only time I go to the Odeon is when they have an organ concert there every now and again.

Interviewer: Yeah, Central London cinema tickets are very expensive.

Respondent: You know I can watch it on TV or I can get it on LoveFilm quite frankly, get the DVD posted to me. So you know, today it's got to be a film that I really want to see and every Wednesday I look on London-net to see what's going to be showing this week and hoping to find something and most weeks I don't find anything which I find a bit depressing. The ironic thing is, I think back and probably within a two or three mile radius of this house there were about 12 cinemas, you know there was the Phoenix then there was the New Bohemia, the Finchley Gaumont, the Odeon North Finchley and then going back that way there was the Odeon in Temple Fortune, the Ionic, the ABC Golders Green, the Regal in Finchley Road, the Gala in Hendon. That showed continental films ... because I remember, that's right, one of the first films I ever saw, continental, was "The Hole" it was set in a prison in about 1961 so that was ... and they did show off-beat films ... for example I remember that they showed a film about Hitler and I don't remember what it was called and it was an X certificate, I don't know

if because they showed some of the Holocaust but [it had] an illogical certificate so I couldn't go and see it. It's ridiculous, isn't it? But that's right, there was the Gala continental cinemas that did cater for that but they were few and far between, and there was the Odeon Hendon and the Gaumont. Now the ironic thing about that, when you think about it that was about 12 cinemas, but there was ... in terms of films, the number of films played, we've got far more ... I think near to us now there's the Phoenix, the Odeon Muswell Hill, what's its name ... the one at Staples Corner ... Cineworld and the Vue, so just 4 cinemas now, but those 4 cinemas probably have about 20 screens and they have far more films than you would get in those days, and of course the thing is ... well again it was different because in those days they had that ... first of all they had this thing about only playing for one week, then they also had barring clauses so that if one of the main chains played it then the independents couldn't play it for such a period afterwards which was a really counter-productive thing. So you know ... this was more in the 70s and 80s so it then stopped any of the independents getting anything out of a big film. Also for example in those days, I remember that the distributors did not want a film just to be shown for example in the morning and afternoon, they wanted it shown all day so there was no flexible ... it didn't help cinemas for example that they had to show a Disney film the whole day did it? If they weren't going to get the kids come to see it in the evening with the parents they were probably going to play to an empty cinema. Mind you, I remember going to see Richard III at the Odeon Temple Fortune in '56 and there must have been about half a dozen people in the 2700-seater cinema.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: Yeah, but it wasn't ... it took the cinema industry a long time to change. They also had release patterns, there was the ABC release there was the Odeon release and there was the national release, the national release being the weakest of the lot. This applied more ... sort of like if you had a provincial town, so it didn't have an ABC then the independent cinemas like the Granadas could actually take up the ABC release, they could take the national release but the national release tended to be the weakest of the three and it was sort of like often catch a film or ... this is why we went every Sunday. One thing I have to say, although I do remember on occasion not being able to get in on a Saturday night, I don't remember ever being turned away on a Sunday, but then in those days of course the cinemas were a lot bigger, you were not going to fill a 2700-seat cinema in those days. I don't think I ever saw any of those big cinemas full. Oh, that's right, I remember the Phoenix I went to try and see a revival of "Snow White" and that was full because Disney used to revive his films every 7 years but that was one of the few times I couldn't get in. I mean Saturday night was always very popular and [at] the ABC there was always a long queue and I never understood the reason why Cannon closed that cinema because it must have been reasonably popular and profitable but it was more profitable for them to sell it and cover their debt that they incurred buying the ABC chain. In fact, at that time we all joked that ABC was an acronym for Another Bloody Closure, because it just ... they changed all the ... they were originally called MGM cinemas because MGM had gone bust and then it was changed to Cannon and then eventually to ABC and then one by one this ABC closed and that ABC closed which was very frustrating. I mean I was at ... I was at the last night of literally every

cinema, the only one I wouldn't go to quite frankly was the Ionic because it had "Eyes Wide Shut" because I'd already seen it once and I found it a dreadful bore and I just was not prepared to sit through three hours of [it again] ... but every other one I remember the Odeon Temple Fortune it was something about a fox, I can't remember the name. It was a classic, I think it was a Mel Brooks film, and every other local cinema I always ... and the ABC Golders Green was a film ... I think it was "Apocalypse Now" or something like that which was appropriate as the last film. In a short time the cinema would be demolished and be either residential home or the arts depot where the Gaumont was, I went to it to have a look round before it opened but I haven't actually been to it, it doesn't even advertise what's on there in the paper ... that's the thing all the local cinemas used to advertise ... but you know in many respects the release pattern is much more flexible now you know cinemas will play the film until they've got to that point where there's no more mileage in it. It's like it'll be on at two cinemas or three cinemas and then it'll be on in the last week for two performances a day ... which is I think in that respect a much better way of doing things than in the old days. If people wanted to see a film but couldn't make it or were on holiday they couldn't because the film was often somewhere else so you'd have to wait until maybe the Classic but there wasn't any option of probably seeing it on TV. I think they had a huge window in those days between the time when the film could actually be shown on television, I'm not sure maybe about 5 years or something like that, now it's down to about 3 months, 3 months before it's released on DVD.

Interviewer: It's pretty quick.

Respondent: It's very quick, and of course many films don't even make it to the cinemas they just get released straight to DVD. In many ways I think people are better off the way things are ... I even kept the cinema tickets, that's the ABC, these were actually quite important so far as the cinema chains were concerned because they could they would tally at the end of the evening those ... to make sure that the number of torn tickets tallied with the number of tickets sold because if they weren't the old trick was for if there was an unsold ticket it would be resold, so that was how the staff would ... if you ever read Dennis Norden's autobiography, because he was actually the assistant manager at the Trocadero Elephant and Castle which was one of the biggest cinemas ... There's still some big cinemas around, I used to go to organ concerts at the State in Kilburn, the Gaumont State, it's now a church. Marvellous building it's sort of ... I think it's renaissance style, the best one of course is the Granada in Tooting absolutely marvellous. The thing ... you go to the Odeon Leicester Square and they've destroyed that cinema ... it's a bit like going into a fridge when you go in there, it's ridiculous.

Interviewer: I haven't been for a while.

Respondent: Everything inside is a reconstruction. Now on my tours in America what I've been impressed by is the fact that, in America, communities have decided not to lose these sort of things, because they've got far bigger cinemas than we have, the Radio City Music Hall which I've been to a couple of times, 6000 people. I've been to the Christmas show there a few times, marvellous building with the rainbow effect around the auditorium which is copied at the Odeon Wood Green which is also very good ... but

they use them as community centres, no-one seems to think very much of that. Sometimes we're lucky and Weatherspoon's takes over the building ... there's the Coronet in the Holloway Road which used to be the ABC which I've been to ... still kept almost intact from the days when it was an ABC, but so many of the cinemas in ... really fine buildings [have gone]. The Odeon in Temple Fortune ... had a lifespan of just 44 years, 1930 it was open, I've seen the opening programme and 1974 it was pulled down. It's incredible, isn't it? The Fox in Detroit, marvellous building, the Oriental Palace, the Chicago cinema in Chicago, great cinemas, great building and of course the Grand Egyptian but ... here with a few exceptions people don't seem to be that interested. I mean there's a marvellous Granada in Harrow that was turned into a gym and has been ruined, the State in Kilburn has been rotting away I think it's now going to become a Weatherspoon's ... people don't seem to be ... I mean ...

Interviewer: I think in Britain people are quite slow to learn to value that architecture.

Respondent: Yeah, I mean in Leicester Square losing a building there, the Leicester Square cinema, I mean that internally had been much changed although I doubt that there was much in there worth saving. If you took away the cladding the exterior was still there and it was built by Jack Buchanan at the beginning of the 1930s and what's going to be there, just another hotel. Unfortunately it's the same thing if you go to any city, Berlin I went with the CTA, I'm sure many of the cinemas that we visited are probably no longer there or they're clothing stores ... I mean there was one in Regent's Street, the New Gallery, it's still got the organ there because that's listed

and they did have organ classes there, but the staff complained or something so they had to stop them. No, I went to an organ concert there in the New Gallery. We don't really appreciate them ... maybe a bit more now when, occasionally when these buildings come under threat now, maybe because there are a lot less of them people make much more of a song and dance about them. I just get so frustrated at some of the buildings that we have lost. The Odeon which could have been put to other uses, the Ionic, that to me was a tragedy but I tried even to stop Sainsbury's using it for their purposes after it was closed, but the council didn't want to know, they looked on it as Sainsbury's are important and what would happen if Sainsbury's pulled out of Golders Green. So you know, there you go and what they told the planning hearing never came to be, one minute it was going to be a gym, then it was going to be a youth club and none of this was ever going to happen and, I don't want to say they lied, but they certainly pulled the wool over their eyes quite frankly.

Interviewer: Yeah it's very sad that we've lost so many of these old cinemas and they've just been replaced by kind of generic ...

Respondent: Well I mean I went to Sheffield last November and I was looking for the Odeon there, because I wanted to see a film and there was this sort of strange structure above the ground and it was the Odeon, it was like one of these new developments that they're making in London where everything is below the ground and everything was below ground. The cinemas were below ground, there must have been two or three levels and I don't understand, why have you done this, why wasn't it you know like an ordinary cinema. I suppose people don't really take account of their

surroundings and I understand that, yes I fully understand that, but, you go to a cinema like the Odeon in Muswell Hill, you go to the main auditorium there and it's something completely different to anything else you're ever going to see anywhere else. It's a lovely art deco building.

Interviewer: It is yeah, a lovely art deco building. Well thank you very much, because so much that you've said has been really fascinating and valuable for the project and just seeing all of this has been incredible as well. Particularly the stuff about ...

Respondent: Well reading it I have to honest I'd forgotten all about it. You see look for example, there, I had to pay a 25% Christmas hire charge on top of the usual charge.

Interviewer: It's incredible, I mean you must hold on to all of these because

Respondent: I've never thrown anything away, this represents just a fraction of what I've got. I've got 15 years worth of because I literally hired a film each week so you can imagine how many films I hired. I hired from all the sponsored film libraries while they existed which I'm glad I did, you know the Coal Board, Ford, the Central Office of Information, they had loads of stuff and it was all for free.

Interviewer: Incredible. It is incredible how that's a cultural thing that's gone.

Respondent: Completely gone, I mean it doesn't exist anymore.

Interviewer: And I'm sure over time as well more people will be documenting this, all these things will be really valuable. Film history is evolving and people are gradually beginning to value it more but it's taking time.

Respondent: You see the other thing that I ... said about some cinemas did have 16mm so they would go to these libraries to hire the 16mm prints so they obviously enter into a different licensing agreement with them than the usual procedure but, yeah, to them these films were a source of income. I have to say that there was a bootleg trade in them ...

Interviewer: I'm sure there was.

Respondent: If you went down Portobello Road, yes. You know I've got about 10 or 12 features but they're all vintage from the 1930s and I have to say, also, in among some of these hire films are films which have more or less disappeared. One that I tried to track down for years ... I haven't been able to get hold of "Underneath the Arches." I hired it on 16mm and it hasn't been released by the people who I think have the rights, the BFI do have a copy but it's not a viewing copy but it's like many of these are just locked in the archive which is frustrating.

Interviewer: It is yeah. I wonder why the BFI haven't released it.

Respondent: I always felt, you see, the thing that always annoyed me about this was it was like you know, an old book isn't locked away because it's old but this is what happens sometimes, there are some films which ... come up from time to time which no-one's ever seen or you know it's like they're locked away. I regard them as part of our heritage and I find it hard to understand that something like that can be unavailable to people, you know we just want to see these things we don't want them to be locked away where we can't view them.

Interviewer: Did the BFI say why you can't ...?

Respondent: The first thing would be ... because it costs money. Sooner or later I will donate the money for them to make a ... if it doesn't turn up on Talking Pictures TV or if it doesn't surface on video but it's my one ambition to see that film ["Underneath the Arches"] released because it should be ... it's part of history. Not that it's a particularly brilliant film. It's [just that it represents] ... a particular style of film making, 90% of them are of no estimable value but some of them are and big talents worked on them, Michael Powell for one.

Interviewer: Okay, I'm going to just stop it there.