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LEADERS OF NATIONAL LIFE

Kitty Godfree

Interviewed by Carol Freeland

C408/011

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Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

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Title: Dame

Interviewee's forename: Kathleen (Kitty)

Sex: female

Occupation: Tennis and Badminton player

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Part 1 [Tape 1 Side A]

Do you remember your grandparents?

Yes, oh yes, I do. My grandmother, I remember well. My grandfather not so well. I can't really remember very much about him, but my grandmother I remember, yes, very well.

Was this your father's mother, or your mother's mother?

This was my mother's mother.

Can you tell me about her.

Yes. Tell you about my grandmother?

Yes.

Yes, well, I think that they lived abroad, I'm not sure they weren't to do with tea planting, in those days, Assam, was that a famous place? I don't really know much about it. And then they came over, I suppose when they got to the time in life to come away, and they lived part of the time in a flat by Hammersmith Broadway, a block of flats, before you go over the river, on the right as you're going into London. Quite a lot of flats all down there.

On the South side?

Well, on our side, actually, away from the, away from the London side, but quite near. And she lived there for some time. I suppose I remember them best when her eldest daughter, who was not married, and they lived together, and I remember occasionally going to see them in this flat.

How old would you have been then?

Well, I suppose I'd have been about 10, or 11, or some age of that sort.

And how old do you think she was, and her daughter?

She, well, you know, it's all so, she must have been 70 possibly, still quite active, I mean, I don't remember her as being a very old and very ill person, she seemed to me to be quite active.

She was retired though?

He was retired, yes, and she lived round, there's a place over there, which I can remember, quite distinctly, but I can't remember the name for the moment, where they used to live as a family, when some of the other sisters, I suppose, weren't married. But these are the only two I really remember. The one daughter who was the youngest, and then there were one or two other children, all older, and probably all married, and didn't come.

Were there any boys as well as girls?

Oh yes, there were one or two.

How many all together? How many children?

Let's say, because at the time when people had big families, let's say about six.

And which one was your mother?

Now my mother wasn't, yes she'd have been in that family, shouldn't she. Well, now, I can't really remember. My mother was the eldest of her family, and she was one of ten, so this must be another family I'm talking about. Obviously another grandmother, yes. She was one of ten, who all survived except one little girl, so they were a family of, when I knew them, of nine, in that case it was about four or five

girls, and two or three boys, and some of them are still alive, but most of them have died. Cos, you see, I'm getting on in years as you know, so they, if they were still alive, they'd have to be very much older, and you won't live much older than I am!

So your mother came from a very large family.

A very large family, the eldest, yes, she was the eldest. She was marvellous. A lovely person.

Did she have a lot of responsibility for the other children? Did she help a lot?

Well, her life really started like that, she was the eldest, and then there was a brother, my uncle, and then another little girl who died from measles. [Telephone interruption]

Sorry, you were telling me about your mother's brothers and sisters.

Oh that's right, yes. The one I remember very well was the eldest brother, my uncle, and then there were two or three girls, all of whom I, my sister and I knew very well, and they were, they were very nice, they were aunts, and not all that much older than we were, and then came two boys at the end, and I think, from what my mother said to me, oh, was that she was, of course, called upon, to help with the family, because the eldest child always has to help with the babies, well, they rather like it, but it gets a bit boring after a time, and she decided that if she'd got to do that sort of work at home, she might just as well go and do it out, and earn a little pocket money for herself. So she left them and went, not very far away, somewhere just a little bit away, and there she helped with two small girls, and her family, with whom she lived then, moved into a large house, a hotel, also not very far from here, by the river, a little further on, and there, staying in the same hotel, was apparently a very nice gentleman, and they met, and they married, quite fairly soon. So, from that point of view, she did the right thing!

How old was she when she left home to work?

I should think about 19, 18 or 19, and I mean, she was quite happy there, but she felt that she was working pretty hard with all these small children to help look after, and so then that was my father, and he was, he was a very hard worker. He was clever in business, and he had, he was older than she was, quite a lot older, I should think about 20 years older, or nearly 20 years older, and he'd done very well and he was very good to her, and to her young family. He used to take us all away on a holiday, otherwise they might not have had a nice holiday, but he was very kind like that, and he also, although he didn't play games very much, he played tennis, fairly regularly once a week, with a friend, I don't think my mother ever played tennis, I never saw her playing. Anyway, he decided that girls should have as good an opportunity of playing games as boys, providing you played the games that girls could play, and so we were given the opportunity of playing anything that was going, you see, that he felt we would enjoy, and not overstrain ourselves or anything, so, from the age of about six, seven and eight, I was used to, you know, pretending to play lawn tennis, I mean, it wasn't, it was a children's game then, and then we went away to a big school in Scotland, a girls' public school, I suppose I was 12, and my sister was 13, and there we played all the games, and we had professional coaches, the School had professional coaches to coach the girls, and we, we had cricket in the summer. I was just thinking now, cricket in the summer, and lacrosse and hockey and golf, of course, we were at St. Andrews, so we had golf on the, not the best course, but on the course, and we went abroad for skating and skiing and it was lovely really. We played badminton. Now, badminton was my second most enthusiastic game, in a way, when I was young, because you couldn't play, even young, you couldn't play tennis in this country in the winter, because there were practically no covered courts at all, so if you wanted to play, you had to play out of doors, on a hard court, and I remember playing once or twice when it was snowing, because we wanted to play games, and there you are, you don't mind when you're just 20, or a little younger. So we had a lot of, and then badminton got going, people began to play a lot, it became popular, and they had tournaments and matches against other Clubs, and that was a very good winter game, for the sake of your exercise, and your health and everything, when, when really, tennis wasn't all sorts of fun, even for the young in the summer here. Now, of course,

they've got covered courts everywhere, and all the facilities that they can possibly need.

Do you think you got your sporting abilities from your father?

I don't know. He certainly played tennis, that I do know, but whether he had the opportunity of playing, I don't think he played golf, I never saw him on a golf course. No, I think possibly tennis was the only thing he decided to play. He was, looking back on it, he was keen on music, not as a musician, but as a person to go and listen, and he liked, which I appreciate now, he liked what I call, "beautiful, attractive music". I don't think he would have cared for some of the, well, the music that we get now, which isn't really music! But he did like beautiful music, and ...

Did he encourage you children to play?

Oh, we had to play at school, you see. Practiced an hour every day. Had a schoolmistress to teach us, and that was extra, and we, neither of us, were any good, I mean ...

What did you play?

Well, we played the piano.

How old were you then, when you started to have lessons?

Well, like that, I was about 12 or 13. It was one of the things that girls ought to do, they also ought to learn how to sew, which we didn't really do at school, we were too busy doing everything else. They also, this is his opinion, they also ought to learn how to cook, and that he was very particular about because he liked good cooking, he liked good home cooking, and we could do good home cooking at 14.

So you fulfilled all those ambitions for him?

Yes! Yes! We were always introduced to different things, in a cheerful, sort of nice way, my mother was there, and it was all great fun. I suppose, looking back, I've had the most marvellous life of pleasure in sport, and all the other things that had to go with it, and I've enjoyed it all immensely, even when I was old, I still enjoyed sport. Now I watch it and enjoy it.

Coming back to your father, can you tell me anything about your father's work?

Were you aware of it when you were a child? His job, what he was doing?

Oh I knew what he was doing, yes. He, he came from the, right up in the North of England, I think really from Scotland, but I'm never quite sure where he was born, but right up in that part of the world. Hexham is the town that he, his family lived in, and I think he didn't feel he was getting on, at the age of about 16, and he decided he was going to leave Hexham and come down to London, where so many people, you see, he was, he's now well over 100, I mean, would be if he was alive, and so in his early days, coming to London to find your fortune was quite a thing that boys did, and he did it.

How old was he when he came to London?

Well, I think he was about 16.

So what year might this have been?

Well, if you like, I'll think it out.

Well, what year, perhaps, was he born?

Well, he was, well he was 16 when he left home, and he was about, we'll say he was about 40 odd when I was born, so that's, I don't know that I can work it out!

No, never mind, we'll come back to it.

It must've been, I know, I can work it out with the Hungry Forties, which occurred in Ireland, and that was about 1840, and he remembers, he told us, the last few days of the Hungry Forties when everybody, I mean, in this country, everybody was hungry, because a lot of the things they got from Ireland didn't come, because they hadn't got them. We'll say 1840 near enough. Well, anyhow, when he got here, he got a job, I don't know what, that bit I don't know about, and then it was very lucky for him that he was coming out of his office, up in Berners Street, in London, and there was a slight row going on between two men on the side there, and he listened, and apparently, one man had just delivered two pianos, because the other man had bought them, and then the other man hadn't paid enough, there was a discussion you see, and they were both furious, and my father, for some unknown reason, he was, he was over 20 then, I mean, he'd been there for some little time, he knew his way about, and he realised that, you know, that they were furious, and this was the moment, and he said, "Well, if you'll excuse me, if neither of you want those pianos, how much can I have them for?" And they were a bit startled, but anyhow, they thought, "Well, we've just had a row about it, so it's no good us going on", so they, one of them, who still hadn't paid for it, but owed them, said, "Oh well, if you can take them away, you can have them for, well, so much", so he thought, "I've just about got that, I'll do that." So he bought them, and he had a friend who lived not far away, and he got the two pianos into their basement. A lot of the houses in London had a downstairs basement, into the basement, and there he had two beautiful pianos, and he christened his Company, the "Waldemar Piano Company", and I'm so interested, because it's not so very long ago that I heard, among other Companies names, when they were discussing pianos, there was the so and so, and the so and so, and the Waldemar Piano Company, and the so and so, and that was his Company, and he did very well indeed, out of it, he was a very hard worker.

Did he make pianos, or did he just sell them?

They were made in Berlin, by the Germans who, of course, still are the most beautiful piano manufacturers, and he went over there and got to a Company in Berlin, and joined up with them, and they made two pianos like the ones he'd just bought, more than one Piano Company.

So he must have spoken German well?

He wasn't a good speaker of German, neither were we, we none of us were, but, on the other hand, he was the sort of person who got on and he got on awfully well with, now the owner of the Company where they were made, was Gorst, Mr. Gorst, and they joined up, and that's where a lot of the incomes from both the men came from, and, of course, we had a wonderful time because of that.

Did he sell his pianos in many countries?

He sold them mostly abroad, not very many here, because they were, I imagine, buying the German pianos from just across the sea, but he sold them in places almost the other side of the world, you know. They were always going off to the other side of the world, and he did awfully well the whole time until the War started, you see, it wrecked it, because of Berlin. But there's one part of our lives which is very interesting, which you may have heard of, I don't know, we went on our bicycles to Berlin, from London, and that's why we went, because his factory was in Berlin, and he felt that, there were no motor cars in those days, the days I'm talking of, but there were a few being made, but they weren't really on the market at all, so it was fairly safe to take two children and two grown ups, and yourself, my father.

It's a long way to cycle, how long did it take you?

Well, it was 600 miles, yes, 600 miles. We didn't race, of course. We went in Easter time, because the weather was getting nicer. We went through Holland, where the bulbs and things were absolutely at their best, we treated it, you see, in a way, as an Easter Holiday from school.

How old would you have been then?

Well, I suppose I was about, well, I was, I was 9, and my sister was 10.

Had you ridden much before, on the bicycle?

Yes. Down in the country where we lived for a short time.

Did you go out as a family for cycling trips?

What, in England?

Yes, in England.

Yes, we did one or two trips up to Yorkshire, where the Dales were, of course, the Dales seemed to me, to do that all the time, but that didn't matter, they were the thing to go and see, and it was great fun, we enjoyed it all very much, but of course, we cycled around near where we lived, which was not very far from Hambleton, near Henley Regatta part of the world, and we were very lucky as a family, because we could enjoy it until the War came, and then, of course, unfortunately Berlin was wrecked, you see, before the end of the War.

Yes, so you cycled all the way to Berlin?

Yes, on push bikes. And we hardly saw, I can't remember seeing a single motor car, so it wasn't dangerous at all, it was a question of, somehow or other he must have booked rooms on where he thought we might get to, and he didn't hurry it, because he realised that our small legs wouldn't be able to hurry as much as his would! So I can't remember anything going wrong at all, it was just, well, we enjoyed it, you see, we weren't overtired, the weather was good, and altogether it was fun.

And he did some business when he got to Berlin, did he?

He did business when he got to Berlin, yes. We were supposed to be able to stay for three months, but my mother got rather tired, because she couldn't speak German, she didn't know any German, I mean, none of us knew anybody in Germany, as far as I can remember, and after about six weeks, or two months, she decided that she'd had

enough, but my father hadn't finished his business, so he stayed on another month, and we all came home, and brought our bikes with us, and he came home a bit later. But having done the journey once, you see, we, my mother knew how to get back, I mean, when you've been in a place three months, you fairly well know what's got to happen.

You didn't cycle back?

No, we didn't, no, we'd done our, well, without my father, we wouldn't have thought of attempting it, and he wasn't coming, and my mother said, "Well, I think we'll go by train."

So you've told me how your mother and father met. Tell me about how they came to get married, and what happened after that.

Well, it's only hearsay naturally! I gather that he fell in love fairly rapidly, and she was awfully nice to look, and very young, and she enjoyed life, she'd got away from the chores, and I suppose he, he suddenly thought, after 40, well, well over 40 years, that he, here was the person he wanted to marry. So he asked her, and she answered! And her answer was Yes. And I would think, he was, you know, I think when he went to see the home, her home, later on, when she went back to where she was, well, I don't know quite how he, well, he obviously saw her family, and said, "Well, we want to get married, is it okay?"

They met on holiday, when her family was on holiday, I think you said?

Her family was not with her. The family she was working with were with her, but her own parents were not with her, so she had to break it to them when she came back from that holiday, you see. Well, they both went to her old home, probably, and said, "Look, here we are, we want to get married." But I don't really know much about that. I mean, hearsay doesn't tell you an awful lot. Anyhow, it happened, and it was very happy.

Where was her family from?

Her, they were living, most of the time that I remember them, Chiswick, Chiswick's over there, isn't it? They had a house in Chiswick while my grandfather was alive, but he died, he died fairly soon, from what I can remember, cos I'm thinking back about 70, or 80 years, and then they moved to one or two flats, my grandmother and her youngest daughter, and there were two or three others, but most of them were married, the others ones, and then they lived near the river.

So when your parents got married, where did they go and live first of all?

I should think in a flat in Berners Street, it's still there, it was a building, and it had four flats, ground floor, first floor, second floor, top floor, and a basement, and I think he rather fancied that because of the basement, because if he got some pianos over, he'd got a basement to put about four in down there, before they went on their journey to wherever they were going. I think that's where they first lived. When we were born, when I was born, they'd moved into a house in Bayswater, very near Kensington Gardens, and that's where I was born, and my sister was born there as well. They lived there for about, oh, three or four years, and then moved into the country, near Henley-on-Thames.

When was your sister born?

When? She was a year ahead of me. Yes, there's just over a year between us. And we played all our games, more or less, together, against each other, and with each other. We played together at Wimbledon. She and I were very pleased one year, 1920, I don't know, 1, 2 or 3, we got into the final of the Ladies Doubles, and you know, we put on a good game against the champions, who were there then, so that was very satisfactory. She was rather good at golf. She married a very good golfer, well, he was an athlete in every way, but he was particularly good at golf, and her golf improved very much after that, she got a low handicap, down to about four or five, and I played tennis and hockey and lacrosse and all the games we played at school. My sister, before she left, she left at the age of 18, and she was Captain of the School,

of all the games, before she left, and I was Vice-Captain before I left, so we had a good and very nice time up there.

How old were you when you went to school?

Went up there to school?

Yes.

Away to boarding school, I suppose I was, I think I was just 12 when I went up there, and I had to go to the Preparatory School, because the Public School wouldn't take girls until they were within, you know, a week of their 13th birthday, or they had had to have their 13th birthday, they wouldn't have them in the school before that, so I had one term on my own in the Junior School, as a senior in the Junior School.

Was your sister in the Senior School by then?

My sister went into the Senior School straight away, because she was 13, she was just coming up to 14, yes, 13½, 14.

So you were both educated together, from a young age?

Yes, except that she was always one whole, one ahead of me, you know, if I was in V, she was in IV, and so on. It's usually the other way round, she was in the top class, when I wasn't there.

What about earlier on, when you first started having lessons? Were you at home then, or did you go to another school first?

At home, no, at home. There was a school for the young, called The Froebel Institute, now, I was there, I know, for a year or two, when I was, what? 8? 9? 10?

In London?

Yes. And I, I think I stayed there until we went up to St. Andrews. The Froebel Institute, yes, that's right. Oh no, when I got to the age of about 11 or 12, we were put down to go to St. Paul's Girls School, near Hammersmith, and we were there for a year, and then my sister developed some trouble in her throat there, and I rather think, although they didn't give it a name that I ever knew of, but I rather think it was glandular fever, which people do have, don't they, nasty, and she was never really awfully fit for a few years then, and then the doctor said, "Well, she really ought to go away to a bracing, dry climate. London and all round here's too sloppy and wet, and ..." you know, so we went up, that's when we first went right away from London.

How did you feel leaving London, and leaving your parents?

I don't think I minded awfully. We came back for all the holidays.

You were 11 then and your sister was 12?

Yes, I suppose, I don't remember an awful lot about that, but 12, I know, that at the age of 12, I was up at St. Andrews, in the Prep School, and I had to have one term there, because then I had a birthday, and so I was 13, and so they would accept me for the big school.

So if you went to the Froebel School a bit earlier on, did you have lessons at home when you were ...

We had a governess, yes, we had a, an absolutely delightful governess. She was very good at teaching, because I mean to say, we weren't clever, but she got things into our head in some way. She was very musical and played the piano beautifully to us, which we both enjoyed very much, and she would play things that we ought to hear, and then she'd play things that we liked to hear, you know! She was that sort of person, she gave you a bit, and took a bit away, and so on. She was a dear. We were so lucky, she was with us for five years.

What was her name?

Her name was Ethel Willett.

[End of Part 1]

Part 2 [Tape 1 Side B]

That really upset me really, more than anything else at that age, I just didn't want her to go. Anyway, we came into London, to live in the family, the London family, he, he was, I think I'm right in saying, Sir Josiah Wedgwood, but perhaps you can look that up, can you?

Yes, I think you're right.

I'm not positive, because this is all so long ago, and they had two daughters, and they, how they heard about Ethel Willet, I don't know the details, but anyhow, we all seemed to be very pleased they were going to this nice family, and she was going to have two daughters, to look after, who were a little younger than we were, and so that was all very well. Well, after she'd been there for a couple of years, Sir Josiah Wedgwood fell in love with her.

How romantic!

Very! And it was all very, we didn't know, I mean, as a family we knew nothing about it, until she wrote to my father, and said could she come and see him, you see. We'd seen her, we'd been to tea with her, or she'd been to tea with us, or something, and she told him what had happened, and asked his advice, she said, "I don't know what to do. There's no doubt about it, we, we're very fond of each other, but what can I do? Give me some advice." You see, because, although there was a huge difference in their age, she and my father could discuss things, and always had, and that's why I think we all got on so well as a family, that she, you know, she could put her point of view, and they put their point of view, and my mother contributed to it, and it was all very satisfactory. Anyway, he said, "Well, of course", he called her Miss Willett, "Of course, Miss Willett, you'll have to go away, you can't do anything else." I mean, there were two girls, and I believe they have a son now. She said, "Yes, I thought you'd say that," she said, "As a matter of fact, I knew it, but I just wanted to talk to somebody who I could really rely on for good judgement." So he

said, "And when I say 'go away', I mean, really right away. I can help you if you like, because I have connections in different parts of the world through my piano business, and I do happen to know of two people out there, who have children, and they asked me a few months ago, in a letter, did I know of a nice English Governess? That's what they really wanted. So, I do know of a nice English Governess, shall I write and tell them?" So she said, "Oh yes, please do." So she went out to, it was somewhere like New Zealand or somewhere like that. And do you know, she was there for 20 years, and then she had a letter from Jos as he was always called, and in it, it said, "My wife died last year, will you come home now?"

How remarkable!

And she did, she said, "Yes please", so she gave in the normal length of time for her notice, came home, they were married, and they had 20 glorious years before he died.

That's a wonderful story, yes.

I think it's lovely, and I often think of it, and think of, I'm so glad it ended so well.

Did you keep in touch with Miss Willett?

Yes. She was very unlucky in that she got deaf, and so deaf after a bit, that she couldn't hear her front doorbell ring if she was sitting in her drawing room, and this was in a flat in London, so when I went to see her, I'd write and say, "Can I come?" you know, giving her a bit of notice, and she would write back and say, "Yes, the doorbell will be set so that you can ring the doorbell, and no you don't ring the doorbell, it's set so that a light comes on in my sitting room, and I'll be there." So when I went there, you see, I pressed the bell, or a button, and the light lit up in her room, and she came and let me in, and then we chatted, and she understood everything I said, she was awfully clever. So that, in a way, was one of the happiest times of my young life, and I think she was very very happy at the end of hers, but she got more and more deaf, which was very sad. She was a wonderful person.

I haven't asked you very much about your life at home, at that time, can you tell me a little bit about your family life?

While my governess was with us, or after she left?

While she was there.

Well, we lived in a nice country house, with a nice garden, about three or four miles from Henley-on-Thames, right in the country.

In Hambledon, I think you said?

Hambledon, yes, was the nearest little village, and we had quite a lot of visitors there, because my, my mother enjoyed entertaining people, of course, it was a lovely place to have people, because they could arrange things like croquet on the lawn, and anything else you could play on the lawn. Most of the friends were very keen on games, I don't know why we were all keen on games, I'm sure, but they were, and I think we had a sort of badminton outfit. We couldn't have tennis because there wasn't room, tennis takes an awful lot of room, if you leave enough room for the run-backs, when you want to go back and take a whack, so it was a lovely place, and it was good for cycling, which we were all very keen on. It was marvellous to go on the river, and I think that's probably the part of England that my father and mother enjoyed most of all, of all the places they'd been to, I think the River Thames was the place that they loved, and would think of as the one place they'd like to be at, and this was just a mile from the

Were they on the river at all? Did they have a boat of any kind?

Yes, but they had two, and they were kept at Hambledon Lock, the lock-keeper kept them for us, in the winter, I suppose. One was an ordinary sculling boat, skiff, I think they're called now, aren't they? We called them skiffs, and the other, well, one with everybody sitting down paddling, you don't call it a paddle boat.

A rowing boat?

No, not rowing, no, it was just, you sat at the side and did it with a paddle.

I don't know what that's called either!

You don't race in this at all, it's merely a boat to get into and have tea on, and lay about on and,

Mess about in!

Yes! It's so stupid, I know perfectly well ... anyhow, we had two and it depended whether you wanted to be energetic or not, and go places, get to another lock and go through that, and go on, or whether you just wanted to go round. It was very near where the Regatta, Henley Regatta is played now. Hambledon Lock is five minutes from the beginning of the Regatta Course, so it was all great fun.

Did you go to Henley?

Well, we used to go to Henley to do the shopping, and we had dancing classes there. Henley had dance for young children, dancing lessons, once a week. I think we went on a Friday afternoon, or something of that sort of thing. We went to have our hair shampooed, and brushed and so on, and also, of course, that's where we caught the train to come up to Paddington, when we came up to London.

What did you do in London, then?

Well, not much. I don't know that I, didn't come very often, my father came up every day, because that's where his office was, no, I don't believe we really came up very much.

Did you do shopping and look around?

Well, in Henley.

In Henley.

Yes. Otherwise we didn't do much shopping really.

Did you have holidays on the river when you were young?

Well, later on, I mean, for years we were always going down to Hambleton, and one summer, I remember my mother and father thought it would be a very good idea to see if the lock-keeper and his wife, could rent us two rooms in their lock-keeper's cottage. They had rather a big one, I don't know why, and they were all for it. I think we started the idea for them. So in the best of the season, they would move themselves out into an upstairs bit of the house, and we had two bedrooms, and the front lounge downstairs, and we could have that door open, and we could see all the boats come in, to get into the lock, and when we had friends there, the greatest joy for them, so often, was to rush out, when the lock had to be opened, you could hear the voice of the people on the river calling out, "Lock ahoy! Lock ahoy!" And then everybody would rush out and start pulling on the door. Do you know, it was fun, I don't know why, it was fun! And then you shut it, and then you had to go one end and turn the door round, it was great fun.

Yes. Was your father a strict father at home, do you remember?

When he was there, I don't know that he was so strict, as you didn't really want to do anything because you weren't quite sure. Because he wasn't there as much, he left every morning to go to his business, and so on, and he knew what he wanted, and, of course, as he was the breadwinner, as you might say, one naturally, I mean, I didn't because it wasn't up to me to do it, but I mean, naturally, the maids who were in the house and so on, they, they, I mean, everybody looked after him, and he had his families who came down, and my mother had her brothers and sisters, I mean, we were always full up with people.

They were a very sociable family then?

Yes, yes, in those days, and were able to be, because they had this nice large house, and lovely garden, and the River Thames so near, everybody, it was always such a lot to do, and then they'd play games out on the lawn and so on, it was all very exciting, yes, it was a lovely life, I enjoyed it enormously.

How many rooms would you have had, about, in that house?

I should have thought six bedrooms probably, and then there was one room which was the, where we did our work, not the nursery, the

School room?

Yes. And then we had bedrooms, and then there were, oh, it seemed to stretch back a bit, there were rooms that I really hardly went into, I suppose that would be the kitchen quarters and all that sort of thing. And then further away, we had two fields, that were still attached to the back of the garden, and in those fields, we had two cows, and the cows provided us with gorgeous milk, the sort of milk when, now, we'd be told people shouldn't have it, it's not, it's extraordinary! But I was brought up to have cow's milk and eggs whenever I wanted them, and butter, all those things, and now you're being frightened away from everything! It's extraordinary isn't it. And then a few months later you find, oh, that was all a mistake! It was nothing to do with the milk, it's awfully good for you. So I don't know what to make of the world at the moment, it's very very different from how I remember it!

What about mealtimes when you were a child, were they very formal, mealtimes?

Well, I think if there were a lot of people, "grown ups" as they were always called, I don't know what they're called now, or "grown ups", we used to call them. We had a nursery where we would have our meals, I suppose with the governess or something like that, I don't think we sat up to dinner, not that meal, we had all the others, I

expect. But, strangely, in those days, the domestic staff were always very nice, and very helpful, but when you realise what they were paid, it's extraordinary!

How many staff were there?

Well there were three. There was the cook, and the housemaid, and I suppose a chambermaid, I don't know. And then there was a gardener, and the gardener's wife, and they lived in a cottage, it was all great fun.

So the housekeeper, and the maid, and the chamber maid, all lived in, did they?

Yes. Yes, they all had their own bedrooms.

Do you remember them at all?

Vaguely. I can remember all that house, and strangely enough, I went, with a friend, on purpose, to look at it about two or three months ago. We went from, she lives just the other side of London, and she drove me there and I said, "Well, now, look, just get round that corner, and then stop, and we'll be able to see through a bit of fence, that wasn't awfully thick, and if we can see through it still, we can see the house, and see the garden, and so on." And we looked, and it's quite true, it was just as I remembered it, it was quite fascinating. And then I said, "Do you know, all those people sitting out there, they don't look like ordinary people to me." Then we decided that they were, that it was a play being done or something, or, yes, I'm sure it was, and so we went a bit closer, we got round somewhere else and had a look, and there were some large sort of, well, I don't know what you'd call them, things could be kept in them, as if they'd arrived with a lot of stuff, and they were going to spread it out, and then I thought, "Well, of course, that would make quite a good country place, in a film, you might see on television", and I decided that that's what happened to my house! Great fun.

You've told me about the house. Did you have a favourite room in that house?

Favourite room?

Yes.

Funnily, about, it wasn't exactly a room, but down the side of the house and garden and fencing, there was the road that went to the next village, and built on that bit by the road, obviously it was where the baker could have left his bread, or the milkman could've left, they could put it up there, and then the kitchen, the kitchen could come and collect the goods. So my sister and I, we were about 6 and 7, decided we'd have a shop, so we collected anything that we could get, that people didn't mind us having. We used to arrange it quite often, you know, shops are great fun, my little granddaughter now comes in here, "Grandma, let's play shops", she says, and goes round and collects everything she can find, plonks it down there, and then we have to, either she is the shopper, and you know, great game. So we had shops in those days, and we used to try and stop people when they were passing, and say, "Look, do you want some so and so for today", and so on, and they got to know us, and they used to say, "No, I don't think today, but I'll be calling in tomorrow." And that was one of our favourites, so I remember that very well.

What other games did you play with your sister, at home?

Well, I don't know that we played, do you mean outdoor, or indoor?

Indoor games.

Indoor games. There was a thing called ludo, wasn't there, they were sort of childrens' games, we did play those, yes. I don't know about any card games, I do remember ludo, but mostly we were outdoor people, we were mostly out of doors, we played out in the garden, we rode our bicycles, very safe, you see, because we were right in the country, and there weren't any motor cars about.

What about cousins that came to stay?

Well, now we were older than they, weren't we, because my mother was the eldest of a big family, and we were getting into the 10 year olds and 11 year olds before the other lot were being born, if you can remember, we were rather far ahead, because she was so young when she married, and we were born immediately afterwards, and her young brothers and sisters were still at school, so I don't remember cousins. We must have had some, but I think we were too old for them, that's my impression.

So you left home when you were 11, to go up to Scotland to go to school in St. Andrews?

11, yes, or 12. No, I must've been 12, because I was only away from the big school for one term, and then I had to be 13, so I must've been 12½ to go up to the junior school, and then moved into the big school after that for 5½ years.

Tell me about your schooldays up there.

Looking back, of course, I wished I'd been better at lessons, I don't know how many, probably lots of girls wish that, I don't know, but anyhow, I knew I wasn't much good. I was never quite bottom of the class, but I was getting pretty near to it most times.

What did you like most at school?

Oh, the games. Yes. Well, I was best at games, and my sister and I were the best there.

When did you discover your ability at games?

Well, I suppose during summer holidays, well, I didn't have any competitive play, except my sister was a competitor, I mean, we played against each other often until I went to school, so it didn't really, I didn't think about being the best, I just played them and enjoyed them, but when I was at school, I suppose I realised fairly quickly, because, you see, I was put into the House team, my next year there, with girls of 17 and 18, so obviously, by the time I was 14, I was in all the First teams.

So you started very young.

So I started very young in being, well, like everything else, most people find different things in life easy, and other things in life frightfully difficult, and I found all sport easy compared with how I found the other things, and to me, the other things, it wasn't that I couldn't have done them, but they didn't interest me, so I always had to be chivvied along, you know, I thought, "Well, I must do that, because if I don't, I'll get into trouble." But it doesn't really interest me awfully. And Latin, you see, I had to cope with Latin, now, a girl of about 14, who's keen on games, having to sit down and learn Latin and so on, well, it didn't go well with me at all. I don't think I got into special trouble, I just was made to understand that I could do better if I tried harder! With which I had to agree! So ... no, it was fun at school. I enjoyed it, simply because we had a lot of games, and I was good at them, my sister was good at them, and so were quite a number of other girls, and we had matches against each other, and matches against other schools, and those sort of things, and that was fun.

What kind of a school was it? Was it a Girls School?

It was like, it was a Girls School, it was run like a boys Public School, we had, you know, prefects and monitors, and marks and all those sort of things.

It was very strictly run?

Oh yes. We had to, yes, you had to toe the line, oh, very strict. Bed at a certain time. No excuses ever, just get on with it, do what you had to do.

Do you think that regime was beneficial?

Very. Oh very, cos you appreciate that for the rest of your life, that rules are there, and you just stick to them and you'll be all right. If you don't stick to them, well, you're a bit of an idiot, you're going to get into trouble. Two of the most amusing things, one particularly, we had to, our House, we had eight different Houses, like

boys have, there were about 37 or 38 girls in our House, and once a year, perhaps once every two years, our House did a play, an entertainment play, for the rest of the school, and also to the parents of the, of St. Andrews, and you know, the Head, what you call the man, the Head of St. Andrews, whoever it was, all the people who were anybody were invited to the School Play. Now, our House Mistress, I'm sure, had been connected with acting when she was much younger, she seemed to know such a lot about it. And she put on something called, oh, you'll know it as well, "Cyrano de Bergerac", famous play. Well, we did that, and it so happened, we had two sisters, who seemed to be awfully good, they must have known something about it, although I didn't know it at the time. One was very tall, and unluckily she had a retroussé nose, and of course, it had to be built up, like that, so she had a stuffed up nose, and the other one took another part, she was rather pretty and she took another part and so on. My sister and I, and four or five others of us, of the younger lot, were the soldiers in the battle that was fought in France, wasn't it, and Cyrano was in the battle as well, and also, the young man who was in love with the girl, you know that story, there were two of them, and a beautiful girl, who, who loved a young one, although it was Cyrano who loved her, and the battle scene was simply marvellous. In our big hall, on the stage, and they thought of two of our gardeners who were old enough, I suppose they'd been through a war possibly, I don't know how they knew how to fire a gun, and they stood at the side, out of sight of the spectators, and they, when the war was on, the battle was raging, these things went off, bang, bang, you see, and the smoke from them went forward all over the people, and you know, one or two people got up and began to go, they thought the place was on fire! My sister and I, and three or four other of us, were taught, by our Housemistress, how to die differently. I had a marvellous thing to do when I died, and my sister Peggy had another thing to do, and three or four others, she taught us all to have a slightly different death, and we thought it was absolutely super. And we enjoyed that enormously, and so did everybody else, they thought it was terrific.

Did you like dressing up?

Yes. Oh yes, it was great fun, and you know, there was somebody there who did all this bit well, and it was all, that's one of the things that I've never forgotten, I think our *Cyrano de Bergerac* Play was absolutely terrific. Yes.

And you were involved in music too, weren't you, in the school? You were playing?

I played, I was supposed to play in what was known as the "Duffers Concert". Now the Duffers Concert was every term, no, every years, for girls at 16, a little less if you were good enough, but if you were 17, and 18 you played in the proper concerts, but the Duffers Concert was for, in the middle of the year, and for those who weren't more than 16, and I reached the awful age of 16, and my music mistress said, "Now then, Kathleen, we must choose what you're going to play at the Duffers Concert." I said, "Play at the Duffers Concert, Miss So and So?" I was horrified. She said, "Of course, now you're quite good at that, now, or that, which would you rather play? That one or that one?" And I said, "Well, I can't play either, I mean, we might just as well forget all about it, you know I can't." She said, "I know you can, and you're going to have to. You're the age to do it and" you know, so I practiced, and I told her every time I had a lesson, I said, "Do you know, I can't do it." And when we got to about three or four days off from when the Concert was due, and there again, the whole school was going to be listening, and so were all the people from the town, and, of course, I mean, I didn't put it on, I was just terrified, and I said to her, "You know, I shall let you down, you know I will, I can't do it." She said, "You know it perfectly." And I said, "Yes, but I can't do it in front of people." And then I heard, two days later, there was a very nice junior girl who'd been taken to the Sanatorium, and I said, "Oh, what's the matter with her? Bad luck." Oh, she'd got something or other, they weren't sure yet. Well, it so happened that she'd got scarlet fever, and it was two days before the House, before school broke up, so I suppose the powers that be, had a chat about this, and they said, "What's the good of keeping 500 girls all here, with a chance of catching this disease, why don't we send them all home tomorrow, and then they won't ever risk getting it." So the School broke up. And I left about three hours before I was due to play my awful piece! But the sad part is, that the little girl of 15, no, she was only 12, probably, or 13, she got it so badly that she died. It was very sad, wasn't it, and we heard it when we got back next term. We sort of asked where

was she? And they said, "Oh, she, she didn't get any better." So it was just as well that we were all packed off, and I don't think anybody else caught it. I thought that was rather bright of the Headmistress and so on, because the rush, you see, they expected to have us for two more days, and in fact, they got rid of us almost immediately. So that, I also remember, just certain things in one's memory that stuck in.

What about friends at school?

Well, they were mostly girls of one's own age, and/or the ones who were in the matches, and they could've been a couple of years older, or a year younger, or something like that, but normally, if you're below a certain age, then the people above you, you know, look upon you as a kid, as you do to the people below you, I mean, that's the sort of, you're mostly friendly with people whom you are in the classroom with, or in the House. But there again, you see, the House varied, the girls in the house, some were right at the top and others are much at the bottom, so I just knew the girls roundabout my own age, and the girls with whom I played the games and the matches with.

How was your relationship with your sister changing while you were at school?

Well, she was always a year ahead, but I mean, that didn't make much difference when you've lived with a person all your life, did it? I mean, well, we got on all right, she had her friends in her class, and I had mine in my class, and we came together in games, and we had fun in games, because we always knew, there was a word we were very fond of using to each other, and we decided that we were really good at telepathy, and we had it very strongly.

You and your sister?

Yes. And I would know, really, almost before it happened, that she was going to pass the lacrosse ball in a certain place where I wasn't, but I knew that if I began to go in

that direction, the ball would come as well, and then I'd get there first, and that was all telepathy, I mean, it was very interesting.

Did it work with other things

I think it must've done, because I often knew when she was going to do something, I think she did the same with me, we, although I wouldn't ...

[End of Part 2]

Part 3 [Tape 2 Side A]

No, not a bit, she was slower. I was a very quick person on the move, and I didn't think enough first, that was my problem, I would act before I thought, whether it was wise or not. She was much slower, and that was her problem, because she was too slow for some things and she missed the boat. On the other hand, of course, we did all the things that we did, together. I mean, we went to winter sports, you see, with my mother, we went about four or five times, or six times when I was a child, starting when I was six, we went for the winter sports.

Where did you go?

We went to Grindelwald, and St. Moritz.

I know St. Moritz, is Grindelwald near there?

It's, it's the same part of the world, I think.

[Telephone interruption]

You were telling me about your sister, the differences between your sister and yourself, and your holidays in Switzerland.

Yes, we had those, we went there, and we skated as always, and we tobogganed and skied, and it was a lovely hotel, we had great fun there, and they had childrens' parties there, we went during the Christmas time usually, when there were a lot of other, well, quite a lot of other children there, it was very good. And then when we were a little older, I suppose about 12 or 13, we went to St. Moritz, and then I've been three times since then, after I've been married, with my husband and family.

You went to the same hotel?

No, no, we went to Lenzerheide, I think one was called, I don't remember them all. I'm sure one was Lenzerheide, and I don't know quite where it is, it just wasn't near a river or anything. Grindelwald was the place I remember, I suppose, best, no, and St. Moritz.

[Gap in tape]

... yes, it's good fun.

So, you weren't tempted into winter sports?

Not in the way that this young man, whatshisname, who really wasn't any good at all, but he went in for the very high,

Eddie the Eagle!

Not like Eddie! No, he's done, he's got such a character that he's well known, not for his skiing necessarily, but for his whole attitude to life. Yes, no, we just went, cos I'm talking of 50, 60 and 70 years ago, you see, we just went for the fun of the sport, which was, and a lot of other people. We used to meet the same people year after year when we went to Grindelwald, cos that's the place we went to mostly, and the same families came there for their Christmas Holidays and so on.

So your sister left school before you.

Yes, a year before.

And did she come and live at home again?

Yes, she had one year at home before the War broke out. I left school about three weeks before the War broke out, so that I had the first 4-5 years of my life in the First World War, and that was absolutely ghastly, only the people who were there knew what was happening, I appreciate that, but it was awful, but it was over in the end.

The sad part about that was, apart from the thousands of young men who were killed, and that's the tragedy, because the young girls who weren't killed, hadn't got any husbands, I mean, they just didn't come home, you see. So that was simply awful. Awfully nice girls I knew at that time who just never got a husband, and never have had a husband, because their husbands just died in Germany, it was horrible.

Yes, a whole generation.

Awful, terrible.

So you came back, and were your parents living in London again?

Yes, we were in London then.

Whereabouts?

Earls Court, yes, quite near, quite near the station there, and near, which I think it's still going, it was a very good, in those days, badminton club.

It is still going.

It is still going, yes, well, that's where we played, when we played our international badminton matches there.

Yes, it's the Logan, isn't it. The Logan?

Logan Club, yes, it was called the B Club in Logan Place. That's what it's called, yes, Logan Place. I think it's still there, is it?

I think it is, yes, yes.

Well, I thought badminton, I played it a lot, and I thought it was a very good game, and I must say, I played it originally because tennis was so awful in the winter here in

those days, and I thought it was wonderful exercise and I enjoyed it, and there were a lot of matches to play, I mean, it was competitive, but in the nicest possible way, just like the tennis was in those days.

So what did you do when you left school?

Well I, the first thing I did, I got a job, luckily we had a friend, or my mother had a friend, who worked for the, in Baker Street, oh, for the Army, but before the War happened, for pensions. The Pensions Office, well, of course, the Pensions Offices became very busy, they had to move into bigger places and everything, because so many soldiers came home wounded and so on, and so all their pensions had to be organised and I worked there for about two years, and then, I had joined a very nice tennis club at Kew, near part of Kew Gardens, but not in the gardens, but in that district, and we used to play, my sister and I joined as well, and there were quite a number of middle-aged and young people who were members there, and had been before the War, I mean, it was quite a nice Club before the War ever started, and we joined and we played there a lot, and we played on Sundays there, in the winter and so on, and there was quite a number of members who played also during the winter, so it was a going-ahead Club.

What sort of people were they?

Well, the one I remember, because he offered me a job, was Head of the Motor Car Department, Ford Motor Cars, at Hammersmith Broadway, which was a little way from the Broadway, there was a huge Depot there, and Ford Motor Cars had its cars deposited in this Depot, and there they were tested and made to be quite all right, because they'd come by road from wherever they were made, and then they were taken down to be tested by the War Office.

What sort of cars would these be?

Well, they were known as "Tin Lizzies", it, some of them weren't Lizzies because they weren't, some of them were trucks, and Tin Lizzies were, anything the Government wanted to help with the War Effort.

They were being used, they were taken abroad were they, then, these cars?

They were being bought by our Government to go abroad, and they sent down two experts to, the hill that goes up to Wimbledon Common, do you know, there's a hill up to there, and they wanted to take them up there, and any car that could get up there, the Tin Lizzie, of course, has no, no gears, it's got a first and a second and that's it. I mean, I learnt to drive it in five minutes, because when it was offered to me, I said, "Well, I'd love to. Much more fun." As he said, "More fun than sticking in an office, wouldn't it be? Come and join the Group that check the cars." And I said, "Well, yes, except that I've never driven." "Oh, that doesn't matter", he said, "We'll teach you in five minutes." And all you did was to press that button and went brrrr, and let that come up, and then it was top gear and it went, extraordinary, I don't know why it went. They had problems, some of them, in getting up that hill, and if they broke down on the way up, you see, then they were told that those aren't any good, you had to send them back and re-do them. Those that get up, we accept. Well, all the ones that got up that were accepted, people like myself, who was there as a deliver/driver, drove them through to Hampton Court, just beyond Hampton Court where there was a race course, out of action then, because of the War, and the Government had taken over it as a depot for them, and all these passed cars were put in there, and they did what they liked with them. We had a spare Tin Lizzie, took six of us, I think, got back in, and came home, signed on, you know, in the evening, that we'd been there, and went home.

So how long were you working in the office before you ...

Two years in the Pensions Office, and 2 and a half years in the Ford Motor Company.

So it would be about 1916 that you, you started working with the Ford people?

Yes.

What about the other people at the Tennis Club?

Oh, they were all practising. Some of them were working, some of them were, let's say, 40, 45 sort of age, I would think, and, of course, they weren't in the Army or anything like that, I mean, well, a lot of them were there at weekends, I don't know about the week, because I wasn't there, but there were quite a nice lot of people there, and we had two hard courts, not covered, just hard courts, and therefore in the winters, on Sundays, quite a number of us, we'll say eight, or that sort of number, used to go down there and take something to eat at lunchtime, and have a picnic out there, and then get home before it got dark.

How did you work on your game in those days? What about training?

Training? No, we didn't train, no. It was absolutely amateur. I don't know whether people of your age can understand really, the feeling of the amateur status in games, it was a game, it was played for fun, and there was no money in it, and there mustn't be any money in it if you're amateur, I mean, in the tennis world, you couldn't play in any of the tournaments, or any of the match tournaments or anything like that if the powers that be, thought, or discovered that you'd been paid for playing, you see, you just didn't get played. What you got was a Prize Voucher, which the Club that put on the tournament would present you with, if you won, or if you got second, and third, I think, the top three people would get a Prize Voucher, and my biggest Prize Voucher was a Prize Voucher on Mappin and Webb, for five guineas, well, that's sort of, well, that's what everybody got in those days. And other tournaments it might be only four or three guineas, you know, there were literally, as we think of it now, there was no money in this at all, but you can, you could spend it on, at Mappin and Webb, or you could save it up there, I mean, you didn't have to go immediately and spend three guineas, because there might be nothing there that you wanted.

What would three guineas buy you in those days?

Well, I don't know, because I saved mine up, because I knew what I wanted, and I wanted to keep it quiet, because I, you know, I was jolly careful about my amateur status, that was the most important thing to me, than anything. Also, I wanted a little car, and I could see no means of getting a car, on the other hand, talking, I mean, to you now, if I said to you, "Well, if I'd bought a little car, you wouldn't think that I'd done anything against my amateur status", would you? Because I hadn't bought any food, I hadn't paid any bills, I'd done nothing really, to help my life along, so to me, it is a harmless thing, it's just saving up some small things, and this is what I did, I went up to Mappin and Webb, and said, "Would you let me know how my account stands now?" And they said, this is a bit vague, I'm not quite sure of the amounts, but I think it was roughly about £70, £80.

That's a lot of winnings isn't it.

Yes, yes, it seemed quite a lot, I don't know it got there, but it did. Well, I'd been playing for a few years you see, and winning most of the time, so they said, yes, and I said, "Well, I'd like to see a ring, please. What sort of ring have you got for about that amount?" with a smile, and they showed me several, and I tried one on that seemed to me to fit all right, it wouldn't fall off, or anything, so I said, "Well, I think I like that, thank you very much." So I bought that, and my money was taken. Then I had arranged, beforehand, to go to Ireland, to play in the Irish Championships. I was invited to go to Ireland you see, by then, would I come over and play in their Championships.

When would this be?

Well, it must be about two or three years after the War finished, can't remember exactly, but it had to give me time to win that amount of money, let's say 2-3 years after the War was finished, and all the tournaments were going strong, and when I got over there, I had one or two friends there, and one of them said, "Well, have you bought the ring?" And I said, "Oh yes", and showed it, and he said, "Well, come on then, I've got a jeweller, a friend of mine", he was an Irishman, and so we produced it, and said, "What's that worth?" And I think he knew what it was worth, he knew all

about it, and he said, "Oh well that's", you know, looked at it, and said, "Oh well, that's about £80." So I said, "Well, that's all right, thank you very much." So he took the ring, and I took the £80. And we then went to a second hand car shop, where they sold all sorts of makes of cars, and this, a friend again, of the friend I was with, who was doing the deal for me, and he said, "I have a friend here who'd rather like a sports car, just a small sports car, her very first car, she doesn't want anything elaborate", and produced a lovely little green two-seater, and I thought that was absolute heaven. and I said, "Oh, about how much is that?" "Oh, about £80." So I said, "Oh well, do you know I think I'll have that", and I produced my £80 that I'd just got from the, ... and that was that! And I brought it home by boat, of course, across to the North of England, and drove it home, and I had it for about, oh, two or three years.

There weren't many women drivers at all in those days.

No, mind you, the War taught a lot of girls, oh yes, a lot of girls had done a lot of things during the War, it was before the War when they hadn't done much, but after the War, during it they learnt everything you can think of, just to help with the War, and so they had all learned to drive, I would think, they might not all have had their own cars when it came to after the War, but they'd all learnt during the War, I bet. So I was totally lucky, and I went to play in tournaments all over the place, and, of course, there was very little traffic in London, I mean, you can't imagine London now, in those days, if it had been like this, I mean, it's all unbelievable is it not. Absolutely unbelievable. I mean, I drove many places in London and never thought about it, and got there in about 20 minutes, whereas now it might take about two hours. It's such a different life.

How did you get about before you had your car?

Well, well, I suppose I didn't get about like that, I had a lift from somebody else, or had to go by bus or train, but with this little car, I could go, and take other people you see, it was all very nice.

Because by this time, you were travelling around weren't you?

Yes, I did a lot of travelling, yes, both with badminton and with tennis, and up to a point, golf, but I was no good at golf ever, and that's where my sister benefitted, she was a slower mover, as I think I said, and she had plenty of time at golf, you see, nobody hurrying you, you go and you take your stance, and you get yourself just as you're comfortable and then you play your shot, and I suppose I was too quick, but she was very much better than I was, and then she married a golfer, who was very good, and he helped her along, and trained her, and so she got down to about a 4 LGU or something like that, you know, quite good, quite a good player.

At what point was it that you knew that you'd be spending your time on tennis?

Well, directly after the War, tennis began to get going, as far as I was concerned, I didn't know anything about it before the War, because I was still at school, right up to the beginning, and I felt, when I played at this little club in Kew that I was getting better at it, and people there who had been quite good, no champions or anything like that, but had been quite good, and people are awfully keen on being in with somebody, and trying to get them on, and be able to say, "Well, of course, we helped her a lot. We played with her", and so on, and they were awfully kind, and I played with some of the better lady players, and men players, some of them had played at Wimbledon four years previously, you see, and so when it came to playing after the War, I knew about tournaments, my mother knew about tournaments, not that she played in them, but her friends had played, and so we sort of knew about them, and so I entered for one or two, and very quickly, I realised that the game that the people pre-War had been winning, was not going to be any good now, because serving overarm and smashing right up to the net, was coming in so quickly, and it came in with me, because that's obviously what I liked doing best of all, I mean, I was a runner, went after everything, and so I began to get good in these minor tournaments very quickly, because I cottoned on to the game that was coming, and of course, it's come with a vengeance hasn't it, and that's when it started, because the players before the First World War were very good players, Mrs. Lambert-Chambers, for instance, was a very good player, but she had to teach herself, after the War, to serve overarm, and she came up to the net and volleyed, but when you're middle-aged that's difficult to do, if

you haven't done it when you're young, you stick to being back and playing on the ground and that sort of thing, and you don't charge up to the net and volley.

So a lot of the players that you were starting to beat were people who'd been playing for some considerably longer time, and had to adapt?

Yes, a lot of them were brainy players, but they were a little too slow, their game was a little too slow for the younger players who came into it after the War, and who, of course, were probably much younger than them, you see, if they were playing before the War, the War lasted nearly five years, that nearly five years to them, and, of course it added 4 to 5 years to me, I didn't play at the age of 18, 19, because there wasn't any. And now you see them winning at the age of 16, 17, 18, it's extraordinary, isn't it. And this new young girl who's come from Czechoslovakia is it? Or begins with a Y, Yugoslavia, at the age of 15, to fairly nearly but not really nearly, but pretty nearly beat the champion, who's the best player in the world, it is extraordinary, she lost yesterday, but she might have won. Well, Steffi, of course is only 19 now, she's got all that experience behind her, and she knows that she's awfully difficult to beat, she's a very very strong girl, and she's, you know, I mean, she knew that she'd got to play as hard as she could to win, I would have liked to have seen that match, it must've been fun, but that will be the next thing that will happen, I think the girl of 15 will, another two years, or three years, will have just got up that extra bit, and Steffi might just begin to go down a little bit, not that I want her to go down, I think she's a beautiful player, she's awfully nice, she never seems to have a row with people, never seems to fiercely argue with the umpire or anything, she plays it as a game, but, of course, it isn't really a game, it's her very splendid living, I mean, she's a millionairess.

What was the umpiring like?

In the days when I played?

When you were playing, yes.

Well, they were good, they were like they are, I mean, they were good, they you know, I thought they were pretty accurate. They made mistakes like everybody else did, but it didn't matter, somehow. But there's one rule which people nowadays, I'm sure, didn't know ever existed, and that was the foot fault rule, and that was a, a great deterrent to a hard server, because they just couldn't move their feet, they had to keep them firmly behind the line, now, you see, they can jump in the air, there they had to have one foot always firmly down, now they can swing that right over, beforehand, that had to be behind there until after the ball had, oh, so involved, so difficult to govern, and made such a bother that everybody got fed up with it, so in the end, and the Americans particularly, said, "We can't stand this any longer." So now they say, I don't believe they even, the foot fault judges, if there are any, even look to see what their feet are doing, I'm sure the players never think about it, they just stand there, and then they give a terrific hit, that most people, or a lot of people can't even touch, and I think it spoils the game, because the game is, is a rally, it's a rallying game really, you're supposed to win it on a good return, a good shot, a bang, or something like that, you're not supposed to win it by introducing the ball into the game, that nobody can touch, and I mean, that was never meant. I mean, a good serve, a hard serve, vary the serve, anything like that, but don't send it down so that the opponent, and somebody like, well, Becker, and all these people, I mean, sometimes they can't even touch the ball that their opponent has simply whirled at them as hard as he can, and if they can get at it, they can't really do much with it, and the chap who served it, there's no foot fault rule to keep him back, so he's half way down the court before they even touch the ball, it spoils the game. However, I still love watching it!

[End of Part 3]

Part 4 [Tape 3 Side A]

... Kathleen McKane, although I haven't got a second name.

And your sister?

And my sister was a year or so older, and she was Margaret McKane, and she didn't have a second name either, so we were just Margaret and Kathleen.

Were you named after anyone in the family?

I rather thought, looking back on it, that my mother was one of a large family, and she was the eldest, and her little sister, who was only about a year or two younger than she was, was called Kathleen, and she'd died of something like chicken pox or measles, when she was about three or four, and I think my mother missed her very much, because she was the next in age, and I suppose after a good many years, she suddenly thought, "Well now, here's another daughter, I'll call her after the little sister that I lost when she was only three." That's what I believe happened.

And your sister, was she named after anyone?

Oh no, I don't think there was a Kathleen about in the family, as far as I can remember, there was not, well, apart from that little story connected with it, I think probably my mother liked it, the name, Kathleen.

So you were 23 when you first entered for Wimbledon.

Yes, it was the first year after the War that it opened again, and the Championships were re-started, and the War was over, and so I'd left all, any War work I'd been doing, and sort of took a bit of time off, you see, and played in these tournaments, I played in a lot of tournaments that year, all round the country, all of which were starting up again. Most of them had been tournaments before the War, they all had to

close down, and then they started up again, and we went to quite a lot of tournaments all round England.

How successful were you, at that time?

Well, not very, except that in the smaller tournaments, the people weren't all that good, or better than I was, you know, we were all sort of starting up again, as it were. In the bigger tournaments, not all that successful to start with, but rather quickly coming on, you know, the person I hadn't met for two or three or four weeks, in a tournament earlier on, when I met them again, I felt, "Oh well, I know this player, yes, perhaps I can do a bit better this time", and so I gradually improved.

But the following year you were entered for the Olympics, I believe?

1920, the first Olympics after the War, that's right, yes. And there, of course, one had a partner for the doubles, who was another English player, who was probably sent there as indeed I was, to play with some special player, who everybody thought was good, and we made the team, representing us here. And I had a very good partner, in that she was a pre-War player, but she was a great athlete and did more than one game, she was one of those people who you would call "gamey".

Like yourself?

Yes, I suppose so! And she was a bit older than I was, and had played, before the War, in tournaments, so she knew her way around a bit, and I didn't. And we played in the doubles together, and we had a most successful time, we won them, so we won our first Gold Medals, and that really was something.

Do you have any memories of Antwerp at that time?

Well, the only thing is that, the, the Club here that sent us over there, the Lawn Tennis Association, apparently arranged with some people who lived in Antwerp, and who owned a very large house, with a rather nice garden all round, to either lend it to us or

rent it, so that all our team, eight people, girls and boys, could live there, peacefully, and not have to, well, have to go to hotels and that sort of thing. So we did live there privately, and I should think that made it very much nicer for us all, because you see, we knew each other, and there were eight of us to make company, and we had great fun.

How long were you there?

Well, they always last two weeks, I should think we were there a day or two before, and probably left immediately after.

Were you working, did you have a job at this time?

No. As far as I can remember, I stopped working, because my job stopped, you see, I was driving new cars, I think we, yes, and so as soon as the War was over, the Army didn't want any more of the cars, so that source broke down, I mean, it didn't exist any more, so I would say that I had given up work, or it had given me up, and I wasn't working.

So you were able to prepare for the,

Well, yes, you see, I was playing, really playing tennis in the summer, and badminton in the winter. I had time off, I mean, I was not working then, which was very lucky.

It must have been a strange experience for you, winning a gold medal after entering for the first time?

Yes, I didn't really quite appreciate what it meant. It didn't mean as much then, I think I must be fair and say this, it didn't mean quite as much then as it means now, because sport has changed so enormously in all these 80 years or however long it is, and I mean, the gold medal and the silver medals, they were all there to be won, and people won them, and you know, it was awfully nice, but it didn't create such a furore

as it creates now, when you get a gold medal winner, I mean, they're made for life, aren't they, more or less. Well, I mean, I wasn't made for life!

Did it change at all after you came back?

I just went on playing in more tournaments, getting keener and keener.

But it must've inspired you?

Oh yes, definitely. Oh, it, I wouldn't have said it created anything that we won, I won three medals then, a gold, silver and a bronze, well, it wasn't all that terrific, I mean, it was lovely, and to look back on, it was quite terrific, but it didn't, it didn't have the same impression, or impact on the country as anybody winning that now would have. A girl winning three medals at the Olympics, being British, I mean, you can see the difference.

It hasn't happened since, has it!

No, it hasn't quite, no.

Did you at this time, have any preference for playing singles or doubles?

Whether I liked singles or doubles better? Well, I liked them all. I had quite a lot of success with mixed doubles, strangely enough, I got on very well with a partner, I seemed to fit into a mixed double game, but I enjoyed singles when I was playing well, of course, it is a lonely type of games, the singles, I mean, there's no one to talk to, no one to say, "Oh bad luck", or "That was a jolly good shot", I mean all those things help now, because they talk to each other a lot, but if you're playing a single, you see, there isn't anybody really to encourage you, or even point out to you probably what you're doing a bit wrong, whereas your partner in the doubles can do that, and say, "I'd bet it would be better if we did so and so", and then you fall in with it, and get on.

Did you continue playing both singles and doubles through your whole career?

Well, you entered for both, and yes, you do, you play all three events, during the Championships. Of course, in the minor tournaments that we all entered in the old days, there were handicap events, and very often, if you were playing in the three open events, you're playing with a friend in the handicap events, and you both enjoy that immensely, and whether you got through several rounds or not, didn't matter awfully, that was really fun, the handicap event, you tried to win because your not quite so good partner wanted to win, naturally, and so you played better, but they were quite exhausting some of those tournaments, if you entered all the events you could.

How many tournaments were you playing at this time, about?

Well, I would say about two tournaments, probably in three weeks.

So this must have meant a lot of travelling?

Yes, except, of course, there were an enormous number of London tournaments, all dotted around London and its outskirts, and of course, if you travelled up to other countries, counties, higher up in England, and they had some very very good tournaments up there, then you did have to travel, and in that way, we fortunately, there were a few cars about by then, of course, there weren't in the earlier days, but after the War was over, for a year or two, people began to have cars and went about, and they would say, "Look, I'm going up to Manchester, or somewhere, would you like a lift up there, if you're playing in the tournament?" And so there would be a car load of people, all who knew each other, being taken up there, which, of course, saved the train fare, and an awful lot of bother getting to the stations and things, and then, people who lived in these cities that you were going to play at, were probably interested in the tennis, you see, and they would offer hospitality to some of the better players, because they wanted them to come, because that would improve their tournament, and more people would come and watch, and so it was a success.

Were prizes similar to the Tokens that you told me you received?

Well, they were a little less, you see. None of it was ever sort of money, it was all, a voucher on some shop somewhere, and that's what you had to spend it on. So, say the first prize in a Ladies Single in a small tournament, a bit North of here, on the coast say, would probably be £3, on a voucher, either in their town, or somewhere in London, where they knew people could easily get to and use them.

What about your equipment and your clothing, did you have to find all that yourself?

You supplied all your equipment, yes, especially the clothing part of it, but I seem to remember that the, the shop that made the Slazenger lawn tennis racquet and and things like that, they were fairly quick, as far as I know, I don't know it all, to offer you one of their racquets if you played with it, because it would be a slight advertisement for them, the fact that, you know, people would say, "What racquet do you play with", chattily, you see, and you say, "Oh well, I always play with a Slazenger, I like them very much." Well, you see, that's the sort of thing that the Companies need to sort of encourage other people to buy them, so they were very good like that, and if you were going abroad, like to America, or South Africa, which are the places that I've been to, the arrangement always was that you must go with two or three of your own racquets, because you won't be able to buy the same thing in South Africa, say, or somewhere like that, and "We'll arrange that you can have them from us", say three or four to go away with, "and when you return one that you have worn out, we'll then give you another. You give us back the one you've worn out, and we'll give you a new one." So that worked very well, because they got what they wanted from it, and you got a lovely new racquet.

Did your requirements for racquets change very much over the years?

No, I had a regular one I played with for years, the same model, which they kept, and I could get one of those as long as I returned the one that I'd used. It's only within the last, well, I'll say ten years, but I don't honestly know quite how long, that the racquets have changed so enormously, and now you, nobody, I think nobody plays

with the type of racquet that we played with those years ago, and they went on being the best racquets for a lot of years, all through the middle of this bit, and then suddenly somebody invented these new ones, which are so different, and so much easier to play with, that, of course, everybody switched to them.

And the clothing, of course, has changed a great deal over the years.

Oh enormously. Many of us used to make our own dresses, well, I mean, in those days, the ladies made a lot of their own clothes, I mean, it was quite the thing to do, in fact, you were rather pleased if you could do it. It wasn't a question of sort of rather hoping no-one would ask where you got it from, and you'd say, "I made this, what do you think of it?" You know. Now, of course, they have them given to them, once again, oh, it's extraordinary how the lawn tennis world, and I'm quite sure all the other worlds, have changed enormously, but I only can say for certain that the lawn tennis world has changed enormously. It's not, it's not really and truly, quite as much fun for anybody, the players, the spectators, you know, everybody seems to have lost something, although they may have gained a lot, but they have lost something, and I think that's the truly sporting attitude of the sport, it's a game, and you really play it for fun, and I don't think they can say that quite honestly now.

You think the professionalism has done away with the sportsmanship?

Well, it has, you see, because it's awfully important if someone, if you serve what you think is a cracking good serve, and they do serve them now, and it's given a fault, and you, in your mind, are quite certain that that was right, well then, you rather feel that you've lost £1,000 straight off, because you're probably going to lose that set, and they never ought to, and that's what makes it so tense, that, you know, you feel that so much money is dependent on whether you win this match or lose it, that you're not prepared to accept wrong decisions and those sort of things, you can't accept them, you feel, you know, this is all wrong, I won that point, and I can see that, luckily I didn't have to play under those conditions, but I really can see how it can work on people's minds.

Do you think the umpiring has changed at all because of this?

Well it has. The first big change, of course, is the foot fault rule, and that was very, very much against the server really, because they had to be so careful they didn't break it, because there was a judge sitting there watching their feet, and seeing that they didn't break the rule, and if they did it was a fault, and if they broke it a second time, you see, it was a double fault, and there was no argument about it. Now, there's only one thing really that they can't do, they can do all the other things that we never could do, like jumping, or anything like that. It was much stricter, and so I think now that that has altered, the players of today, don't know what it was like trying to serve in the old days. They couldn't serve the serves they do now, these terrific serves would not have been possible, because there was too much restriction to what they can move with their legs, you see. So from that point of view, yes, it has changed. That, I think, in a way, is the biggest change, from the point of view of what a player may or may not do. Otherwise, I suppose, in a way, it's more or less the same, I mean, you, you still can, no, I think it's very much the same, only, of course, it's got much harder and faster, and tense, and not so much fun.

With a much bigger audience, of course, too, both spectators and ..

Well, I can speak definitely for Wimbledon, because I played there, as you know, a good many years, and looking back now, I can remember, and I'm telling you this because I can remember it. When I was playing there, and getting through into the semi-finals and finals in the singles and so on, and Suzanne Lenglen was there, who was one of the best players ever, who played for France, people would be lying on beds outside Wimbledon, and down that road which is still there, which they still do, I believe, I'm not sure whether they do or not, because I'm not there as early as that, and they'd be there before we'd left the Club, having played our last game, on about the Wednesday or the Thursday, and they were there, waiting to see the final, to see Suzanne Lenglen play her final on the Saturday, so the crowds, and the centre court was quite often full, and the whole ground was full, and the gates were shut, and that is a fact, now that's a good many years ago that that happened, but it was always very popular, and there were always many people in England who wanted to come and

watch, and those from abroad who could get there, wanted to come and watch, it's always been a most popular day for anybody.

Were people as interested in your early days, in tennis, in the personalities and the lives of the players, as they seem to be now?

No, I don't suppose they were. Well, it was a much smaller sort of, well, the reporters were there, and they reported for the newspapers, I don't know how many more newspapers there are than there were, I mean, there were quite a lot, I can remember all the ones that we used to have, I mean, all the leads were still about. I would think that the press has got bigger, in that there are more papers, I'm sure that's true, isn't it? More papers about now than there were fifty years ago.

Did you find yourself doing a lot of interviews, for instance? And

Oh, only a few, oh nothing like, oh no, nothing like this, just a few from, the lawn tennis reporters, usually did have an interview with anybody who was doing well, yes, just a very few, nothing like it is now.

So there was less pressure, really, from outside?

Oh yes. Yes, much less pressure because you see, you weren't losing your fortune, as it were, you were only losing about £5. That made a lot of difference. No, the keenness of those days was the keenness of being the best at something, you hoped you'd get the best at, and, of course, from people like myself, who really couldn't afford to travel in those days, travelling almost all over the world, and the Lawn Tennis Association organised it all, and paid for it, because you were representing Great Britain.

Did you enjoy travelling?

Oh, it was lovely, yes.

Any particular favourite?

Well, we had a wonderful trip in South Africa, of course. We were away for four months then, and that was very enjoyable, and then there were some quite good players there, and they were all really enthusiastic. Yes, that was a lovely trip. Oh, and then I went to Paris several times, and we went to American three times, altogether, and then the Wightman Cup matches were great fun. I mean, we won them sometimes then, you see, it was a more even sort of division.

What was the difference in atmosphere and so on, between the Wightman Cup tournament and Wimbledon, for you?

You mean, which was the keenest?

Yes, how did you find them both, compare them, one to another?

Well, of course, when you played at Wimbledon, I mean, if you were good enough, you could enter, you didn't have to be nominated by the Lawn Tennis Association like you do to play in the Wightman Cup. They choose a team of four, five or six, whichever they want, so that's really, took all the pressure off you, you were either nominated or you weren't, whereas at Wimbledon you had to get yourself good enough so that there was room for you to be included in the draw. So I suppose, I don't know, I think I would, I suppose most people would rather have won at Wimbledon than done anything else in the country.

Did you feel the same excitement in the Wightman Cup matches?

Oh, in those days they were very exciting, yes. We played the one in England, on the Centre Court, I think we did that twice before it was moved onto Court 1, and after that it had been moved about a little bit, hasn't it. And then, of course, they moved it in the States, it was always played as their main place, which was called Forest Hills, which was very well know, and I believe still is, they tell me the Club is still going, it was a lovely Club, and we played it there, so that it was, oh, it was one of the most

exciting events for the women's Lawn Tennis. That was the one thing that everybody would like to get into if they could, in both countries, it was really a very popular move, that Mrs. Wightman, who donated the Cup.

Which players do you particularly remember from those Wightman Cup days?

Well, the one whom I, well, one of the ones who I enjoyed playing with immensely, was Mrs. Covell, she was originally Miss Howkins, when she first came and started playing well, and then she became Mrs. Covell, and she and I played together in the Wightman Cup match in the doubles, and she usually played the second single, when I played the first single. We had great fun together, and interestingly, from my point of view, she had a daughter, who is grown up now, with children of her own, and the daughter and I always meet at Wimbledon every year, and have lunch together, and talk about the old days, which I think is really rather nice, and we both look forward to that very much. She had become a member of Wimbledon, full member, and she'd never been an international, I don't think, but she's been a very good player, but she was not as good as her mother, who was very good. So, that is a very nice thing for me to remember, and I always do it, and it always comes up again every year, because Wimbledon's just over, and I've just seen the daughter and talked about the old days, which is great fun. There were a number, it's difficult to remember how many, because, you see, if there were five or six in a team, the team varied up to a point, so the years have gone by, and the players, some are still there and some aren't with us any more, but they still have fun in the Wightman Cup match, I mean, I think they all enjoy it, even, even the Americans won't let us give it up, because we have offered to once or twice, and said, "You know, this is rather silly, because this isn't a match any more", and they say, "Oh no, no, we love it. And we want to play it at a certain place, and we'll put in a team that just about balances yours", and so it's still fun, because it is a possibility that we might win it, because they might have chosen a team a little weaker than they meant to!

Coming back to Wimbledon, before the seeding system was introduced, you had to apply, didn't you, to play in the tournament?

To enter for the tournament. Yes, well, there must have been some means of judging, they would know how many they could put into each event, because they would know that from last year and the year before, and then they'd have to judge who were the best players, and then, of course, when they started the, they'd play always before Wimbledon, when people had to enter a small tournament that's usually played just down the road from here, and those that get knocked out don't get in, and those who get through get in automatically, there are places left for them, so that's how they do it now, there are always more people wanting to get in than can possibly get in, so the lower lot have to play for their places, and if they don't get through that little tournament, then they don't get in.

You, presumably, didn't have to play after you'd won your Olympic medal?

No, I don't think there was any, I don't remember ever having to judge to get in, I don't think there was any, perhaps there weren't so many people playing in those days. No, I luckily, did get straight in, and I can't tell you why, because I mean, I didn't play many tournaments during the War, you see, it was only after the War I started, but I suppose, I started, say, in March, at a covered court tournament at Queens Club or somewhere, and did quite well, and then I entered somewhere else in April, and by that time, people had realised that I was a tournament player, and was getting better, and so I did, in fact, get in.

At what point did you feel that you could win the singles at Wimbledon?

At no point! There was no point! No, I certainly didn't, because Suzanne Lenglen was there all the time I was there, and I only won when she retired or didn't play on an occasion, but every, if she played in a tournament anywhere, and she was fit and well, and she wasn't always fit and well, I must admit, she wasn't what I call a very healthy, strong, athletic girl, but she was awfully good as a lawn tennis player, she had so many other talents besides hitting the ball, she had beautiful footwork, and she, very good brain, a very difficult person to beat, because she never ever made an unforced error, and you can watch people now playing, and say to yourself, "Now, she's made three unforced errors running, so she's love-40, well, you see, you can't do that if

you're going to win a match, you can't be love-40 down, because you hit your service at the bottom of the net each time, and they do do that, you see, you must keep the ball in play, you must make your opponent hit the ball more often than you do, because they make break down before you do.

How would you describe your game?

Oh well, mine was an all-round event. I served overarm, which everybody didn't in those days, the ladies, I'm referring to, some of them had the underarm serve of before the First World War, but I and my sister, and quite a number of other young players, we, we cottoned on to the overarm serve quite quickly, and we served, you know, hard like that, and I also ran up to the net more often than other people, I noticed, and volleyed, and running, I didn't find too difficult, it was one of the things that came comparatively easily, and we smashed overhead, but all that part of the game was new, and a certain number of us, of which my sister and myself, and Mrs. Covell, for instance, and all those sort of people, they cottoned on to it very quickly, and the other one who cottoned on to it very quickly was Mrs. Lambert-Chambers, who was the champion before the War, and she was not really an overhead server, and then the War came, and then she noticed what was happening, and she said, "I've got to do that or I ..." I'm sure that's what she said, "If I don't do that, I shan't be playing tennis much longer." So she learnt to serve over arm, and she learnt to volley, but a lot of them never got round to doing it, that's why they dropped out rather quickly, and the young ones came on more quickly, and the game changed completely. The Ladies game I'm talking about. I know that [inaud] to talk about the men's game of those days.

Do you have any new memories of winning Wimbledon for the first time?

Yes, I don't think, I didn't expect to win, and I don't think anybody else expected I'd win, they just hoped, because I was the British player who was in the Final, I would, and they [inaud] me marvellously, and that inspired me, and there's no doubt about it, if there's, if the spectators are on your side, and they usually are if you're British, in this country, or if you're American in that country, and if you're French in that country, they will applaud their own person, there's no doubt about it, and perhaps

they applaud good shots, whoever hits them, but their main applause is for their own country, and that does help you enormously, I mean, it certainly does.

Did you have a tough time reaching the Final?

Yes, I should think so, I don't remember a semi-final event really. Who did I play in the semi-final? You see, Helen Wills was the first person I defeated ...

[End of Part 4]

Part 5 [Tape 3 Side B]

You were saying that spectators were helping you along.

Helping me along, yes, and I don't think anybody expected me to win, and I don't think I expected to myself, because Helen Wills was a better player than I was, but it so happened that on the day when it mattered, I played my best and she didn't, now, that's the, you know, now that's when you win, if you can play your best on the day that it really matters, and the opponent doesn't play their best, the chances are you're going to sneak through and get a victory that you ought not to have, and I think that's fair then, I did play my best and I think I deserved to win that day, but then she didn't, so that helped me along a lot, and the spectators were so enthusiastic, you see, to get an English girl to win something that nobody thought she would, was, was exciting.

Yes, you must have been something of a national heroine at that time?

We didn't have those so much then, I mean, that is a fair thing to say about now, I mean, we have dozens of national heroines, don't we, all nations do. I mean, everybody's gone quite mad over sport, of all sorts. I mean, basketball they're thrilled with, and I mean, it's a very good game, basketball, but you'd really never heard of it outside of a girls school in the old days, it was not national at all, it is now. It's very good indeed, so that really, I don't think came into, it was just that the people who were keen on lawn tennis were pleased, but the people who weren't keen, they'd rather watch other games, rugby or racing, or you know, anything else, thought, "Oh well, that's good, oh yes, she's won", and that's that. I don't think there was any national hero about it.

What about your family at this time, were they

Well, my mother and father, I'm glad to say, were really pleased, because they gave us a jolly good start at our public school, and I think they were very pleased. My mother had played a little tennis, my father, when he was younger, I think, played fairly regularly, but just friendly at tennis, so they came to watch, and they were given tickets right in the front, to view the match, and I know they were there, and just now

and again had a look to see, but not very often, I was concentrating, that's another thing, concentrate, and don't make false errors, and then you get quite a lot more of the game! Yes, they were very pleased, I'm so glad that I won, I think, twice, in '26 again, but they were still there, so that was very satisfactory from their point of view and from mine, it gave them a lot of pleasure.

Did they follow you around at the tournaments, or just come to Wimbledon?

No, my father was working, and my mother, well, they hadn't got a motor car, you see, it was the early days for cars, and they, neither of them had ever had one, and they didn't know how to drive or anything, I was the first person to get a car, I think, and I bought mine in a, I told you, I think, yes, so my mother did come with us, and then when I married and my husband and I had a car, and she came with us sometimes, but no, they weren't always there at all, but they did come quite often to watch events, you know, certain things that happened.

You were a close family, were you in regular touch as you travelled round, with your sister and your parents?

No, we didn't, she actually, she married a few years before I did, and she married a, her husband was a very good golfer, and she began to sort of turn her interest to golf, at which she became very good, and wasn't so good at tennis after that, you can't really give your time, she was married and she had a family, you see, so her spare time went rather more to golf than to tennis, whereas I kept up the tennis, because my husband played tennis. You know, I had one very excellent victory, in which we, we won the mixed doubles at Wimbledon, and we are the only married couple who's ever won.

When was that?

That was in '26.

So you had a wonderful year that year.

It was a wonderful year that year, yes, it really was. Yes, so I kept up the tennis interest much more than the golf interest, I mean, I just played, not in any tournaments or matches or anything important, and she switched, really, more to golf.

How did you come to meet your husband?

Well, he was in the War all the time, I mean, I didn't know him, and then when the War was over, he decided to have a bit of a holiday, and he had played tennis locally. He lived down at Brighton, and they've got one or two little Clubs there, and he joined a club and played tennis down there, and became quite good, and then he thought that he'd take a year's holiday off, after the War, and then he played in tournaments, and of course, I played in tournaments, and so did a lot of other men and girls, so you meet, you see, and we didn't actually play together, but I probably played against him in the mixed doubles, and saw him playing the men's doubles, but, well, that's how we met.

Was there much of a social life for the men and women players at that time?

Well, there were, the tournaments you were at, they probably had a party on the Saturday evening when it was all over, or something like that, but if you were playing in a tournament, you see, that meant three matches a day all the time, and I suppose there wasn't, I don't think you did an awful lot in the evening that would keep you from getting a good night's sleep, because everybody wanted to win, I mean, whatever standard they were, they were all out there with the idea of winning, but there were parties, I mean, during the Wimbledon weeks, there were parties, and then they all had to play in the qualifying event, and you know, I mean, everybody took their game, up to a point, seriously, but nothing like it is now, because there was no money in it, there was no reason for doing so.

So were you and your husband,

Well, we actually met so that we got to know each other when we went to South Africa, because he was Captain of the team, the Lawn Tennis Association made him

Captain of the team, he'd been Captain of the Davis Cup, he had advanced quite fairly quickly with his tennis, and with his ability to sort of organise things, so then he was asked if he could go to South Africa, and would he like to Captain the team if he went? So he said yes he would, so they chose the team, and then the eight of us went.

And this was 1926, when you won the mixed doubles, yes?

That's right, yes. It was, in fact, the end of 1925, we were away for four months you see, it was through the winter of '25/26, and we came back in about April, '26, early April, and then we were married by then, yes, we married out in South Africa, so that that was all very quick, and then we joined, well, we joined, we entered for one or two tournaments before Wimbledon, like everybody else did, and then we joined and entered for Wimbledon, and played all the way through the mixed doubles, yes, the mixed doubles, that's right, and we won, we played, the last match was against an American pair, and I think Miss Elizabeth Ryan, who was a very well-known doubles player, well, player, had won doubles at Wimbledon, heaps of them, all the way through, she was playing with an American player from America, and we met them in the Final, and we had, of course, quite a battle with them, and I'm glad to say we managed to pull out, and in the end, it was great fun.

So, those five or six years, from the early twenties onwards, were wonderful years for you?

Oh wonderful years, yes. Oh yes, because I had, luckily for me, I had a lot of success at doing something I enjoyed doing, and I always envy the people who do things, even for a living that they really enjoy doing, like a singer, you see, anybody who does something that they're really good at, and they enjoy doing it, and they earn a lot of money, I mean, that wasn't my case, but these other people, I think, how lucky they are, they can go and sing songs, people love to listen to them, and then they're going to get thousands of pounds for doing it. And now they say that about the tennis players, you see, as well, but it's not so much fun for the tennis players. I think, I think people who do things that give a lot of pleasure, are, and earning a very good

living, is lovely. They deserve it, I mean, because they give such a lot of pleasure to others.

Where did you get married, actually?

Where? Where the diamonds come from.

Oh! In South Africa?

Yes. Where do the diamonds come from? It's ridiculous, I know perfectly well, and I can't remember for the moment. It begins with a B, well, you know it as well.

Yes, I can't think either. It sounds like a whirlwind courtship then, if you married while you were away?

Well, we got to know each other, well, we all got to know each other well, of course, because we were travelling all the time, we were away for four months, but we played at the mixed doubles events, you see, in all the international things that we played, and the test matches that we played against South Africa, there was a mixed double event, and my husband and I, well, we weren't husband and wife then, we were just two players, and we always played together, in these matches, so we were partners in all the matches, and well, you get to know each other pretty well when you're travelling, and you're away for four months, don't you, and so we, we then decided that we would like to get married. And, of course, being very sensible, we didn't want a lot of publicity and fuss, because we didn't, you know, we're not the sort of people who like that, and so we decided we'd be married out there, without telling the press, it was the press we didn't want to know, because we both had families at home, and I mean, we'd have to get information to them, and we didn't quite know how we were going to get it before the press got it, you see, a little tricky, and so we kept it quiet, and we married in, I nearly called it Beverley, it isn't Beverley, it's ridiculous, anyway, we had to pass through this city, on our way down to the South, to play the final test match, because we'd been up to the Victoria Falls, and the journey was three nights and two days, right from the North down to Cape Town.

By train?

By train, yes. And we, we got out and stayed with friends in this town, who's name I can't remember, and they arranged it for us before we got there, and we were married in their home, and then we caught the next train down to Cape Town, and nobody knew about it, you see, and there we played as Mr. and Miss, in the match.

Did you tell the other players on the tour?

They didn't know either.

They didn't know either.

No, no. I think if you're going to keep something quiet, you've got to keep it extremely quiet. I'd been ill, that's really the good excuse we had for me not doing all the journey in one, cos I'd had to give up playing in one match because I'd had one of these throats that you get in these countries sometimes, and I could hardly talk or breathe, however, that was getting better, you see, so that was all right, and by the time I got down to Cape Town, I was quite well again, and then we played that test match successfully, and then everybody saw us off, and my husband gave an interview to the press, and they asked a lot of questions, and had he enjoyed it, etc., and then, well, "Goodbye and thank you very much." And then when he advanced towards the boat, just before he got on board, he turned round and said, "Oh, gentlemen, there's just one thing I have forgotten to tell you, which I think you'll find interesting news." He said, "Miss McKane is no longer Miss McKane, she is Mrs. Godfree." They were flabbergasted! They literally hadn't know, hadn't a hint, and, of course, our team were rather angry with us, they felt they'd been done out of things. However, then we all went on board, and the boat sailed away and all that stuff.

So you had to celebrate again?

Yes! And then we got home, you see, and nobody knew in England, well, I suppose they did, no, no, you see, that was another thing, they couldn't telephone through to England, I mean, there was none of that doing, they had to communicate by sending a cable, a cable, so we also sent cables so ours got to our families, you see, we couldn't have sent a cable earlier, because that would have got out, because the cable had got the knowledge, but we were determined that our families should know the news before ...

[Break in recording]

This needn't come into this need it, it's very private, this bit of. Well, my mother was still comparatively young, she was quite young when I was born, and so it wouldn't have upset her, I should think she'd be jolly pleased really, yes, well, she was, I mean, I know she was. They received it, my father was considerably older, and well, they just took it in their stride, you know, so that was all quite satisfactory. And then we started playing our tennis again in this country, and then he got a job, and well, I suppose I looked after the home.

What was he doing?

He wasn't doing anything, of course, up till then, really. Now what did he do, wait a minute, let me think. I think he began running a tennis Club at Barons Court. There was a very successful small Club there, I know he ran it for some time, as the Secretary, and we lived there for part of the time, in a flat that was built, it was newly built by the people who owned it. It's now been pulled down a long time ago, and it's a very nice block of flats, going right round where the courts were, very near Barons Court station. That's what we did almost at the beginning, I think, from what I remember.

After you got married, was that where you moved to?

Yes, yes, that's right.

You were continuing to play for, oh, nearly ten years after that, weren't you?

Yes, I played until I was about 30, well, I played in my last Wightman Cup match, only in the doubles, when I was about, 32, or 33.

So that's a very long playing career.

So that's a very long spell, isn't it. Yes, with two sons in between.

What made you decide to stop playing?

Well, when did the Second War start?

'39, 1939.

Yes, well, I think my second son was born a year or two after that, both of them were born, and there was a gap between them, I think it was probably family.

When was your first son born? Was it while you were still playing?

I was still playing and I had stopped playing for about two years, I suppose, and then I joined again to play in the Wightman Cup matches in the thirties. He was born in '29, and then the next one, there was about six years gap, and then he was born in the middle of the thirties.

What's your eldest son's name?

He's David. David Leslie Godfree. And the younger one is John Martin Godfree.

How was he looked after while you were still playing?

Well, I had a nanny part of the time. An elderly nanny for about the first few months, and then one who'd been trained to look after young children, you know, she was

younger, and she'd been trained to look after young children. That until the War started, of course, and then we left London, my husband went into the Army again, went abroad part of the time, and we went down to Devonshire to get away from the bombs.

Did you find it difficult to combine your playing career with being a mother, early on?

Well, you see, I didn't play in anything important after that, just the Wightman Cup match, the two matches I played in when my elder son was small, that didn't really matter awfully, and after the, well, then the War came along in a few years, and that lasted six years, didn't it, you know, I mean, that was a huge break wasn't it, really, so then I wasn't playing anything except friendlies down at Wimbledon, with other friends who'd spent much of their time during Wars.

Was it common for women players to have a family and continue playing, at that time?

One or two I know, yes, who did, yes there were one or two who did continue playing, or at least, they started playing again, which is what it amounts to, but not an awful lot, no, but then a lot of them perhaps would marry and go away with, where the husband lived, and have families away, and would just come to Wimbledon to see the tennis, and not so much to compete. Well, it was getting a bit more serious by then, you know, more people were playing, and there was probably a bit more coaching, because there was no coaching at all in our young day, there weren't any coaches.

Did you find it very different then, towards the end of your career?

It began to get different from the point of view of the tennis players who played the international matches, yes, but they still went away and competed in other countries, and there was still the Wightman Cup matches going on, so they, it was beginning to get a bit more serious. I'm not quite sure when the prize money began to be

important, and they really became professionals, and gave up being amateurs, and that's when the big break came, and it happened at one tournament, at Wimbledon, when Wimbledon was boycotted by a lot of the best players, I'm thinking now more of the men players, I don't say the ladies did the same thing, I can't remember. And a lot of the top players said, "Well, if you don't do something or other", which was probably, and this I don't know for certain, to do with money, and I think our people replied that we were still an amateur tournament, and so there was no money in it, we were still amateur, and so a lot of them didn't come, and funnily enough, the people who did come, one or two of them were still very good men players, and the others weren't quite so good, the crowds that came to watch, were just as big as ever. We had just enormous crowds watch that one event, when it was a boycott. Very satisfying that.

Yes, and of course, after those early Olympics that you competed in, there was no tennis until very recently again, was there?

There wasn't a?

Any Olympic tennis.

Oh no, no, that was all really rather silly, because the tournament which, in Paris, the last Olympics, years ago, and it wasn't awfully well-managed, for one thing, because I suppose, people hadn't had enough experience, you see, it was very soon, as you know, after the War, and the Olympic Association, and the French Lawn Tennis Association, two different Bodies altogether, in a way, both blamed each other, because everybody knew that it hadn't been well-managed, and so I think the Olympic Association probably said, "Well, we're going to run the tennis tournaments in future", so in four years time, the Olympic Association, whichever tournament is allowed to play there, whichever country it's in, we shall be running it, you see, and the Association which ran the tennis side of it, said, "Oh no, it's a tournament, it's a tennis tournament, we're going to run the tennis part of it." And so they, you can see, they fought, and so the Olympic Association said, "All right, then, we won't have tennis." Now that was what, sixty years ago? It seems an awful shame that there

hadn't been any international, you know, tennis at the Olympics since then, and look at all the brilliant players who have come through there, and never got a medal, and they all would have got a medal.

Why do you think it took so long for a change to be made?

Yes, why? I wonder why? I wonder why somebody didn't get up and say, "Look, this is ridiculous. We've got in other events since then, why don't we put Lawn Tennis back again." I don't know, there was something, wasn't there unforgiveable, between the two different teams, and they just wouldn't have it. I think it's very bad luck on a lot of the tennis players, the famous tennis players, of say, 30 and 40 years ago, who would have been gold medallists.

And players like yourself, who were deprived of the chance of playing during the twenties and thirties?

Well, I could've gone on playing for a bit, yes, but I, I mean, I did have my innings, didn't I, I did play twice, won one gold and, and I won five altogether, five medals altogether, so really, I think I was one of the lucky ones who came in just before the break.

I was reading somewhere that you'd won, altogether, well over 100 titles. That's a terrifically large number!

Well, if you read that, it's probably true, but I haven't read that, and I've never worked it out, so I haven't a clue! But if you play for a good many years, and you play a lot during the year when you're young enough, you do win a lot, because I played in all the three open events in each tournament I entered, and possibly, they wouldn't count the, no, they really count the open tournaments, not the handicap ones, but they would, yes, well, I suppose that's true. Because if you take that one trip to South Africa, we were there for four months, part of it was travelling, of course, well, we played in tournaments every day, probably, going up through the country, in about how many? Six, no, about fifty, nearly 20 different cities I should think we played

in, and they all had events, as well as internationals. But I haven't a clue how many, you've told me something I didn't know, provided you got it from a, you know, an information that was reliable.

Yes, I think so. Which ones stand out, apart from the Wimbledon, for you?

Well, I think the ones in South Africa stand out, and all the ones in the USA stand out, because they were all Wightman Cup matches, you see, I played a lot of Wightman Cup matches altogether, and well, we played a lot in Europe, you see, that's one of the big places where we got to directly after the War, they all started up, and they were easy to get at, just a trip across the sea. And I played down in the South of France once. Oh yes, and there's one other thing that I played. You see that medal up there, the big one, the tall one, well now, that was the, the Spanish Government decided to have a World Covered Court Championship, which has I don't think ever been, and Spain said they would have it, and in Barcelona, and so our country sent four players, two girls and two men, and other countries sent their players, so it was an international covered court championship, and I played in it, and it was just the year or two when I was doing, you know, pretty well improving all the time, and I won it, and that's the cup that the Queen of Spain of those days, I can't remember which one, she was, but this is in the early sixties (?) presented it for the ladies singles world championship, isn't it priceless! Look at it!

But of course, you never actually had a Wimbledon plate, did you?

No, we didn't, we had, we didn't have anything at all, to begin with, and after a few years, the Lawn Tennis Association made a certain little, ... that is an exact replica of what they win now on the court, and which they never take out of the Club at all, it's put away back again in the cabinet. Now, I was lucky enough to get this, because they decided, the Lawn Tennis Association, decided that anybody who had won Wimbledon, was, of course, entitled to buy their souvenir, provided they could get permission from the Club, I mean, they've got to tell whoever made those, that this person is entitled to it, because they won the singles championship. So my husband very kindly bought me one, but I mean, when we won, and for the next few years,

those weren't given, then, I think, probably money got a bit better among the Lawn Tennis Association and Wimbledon, you see, and now, you see, for the last few years, they've presented one of those to the girls who win, but who don't take the cup away, so that's what you get instead. So I've got one, although it wasn't presented on the day that I won it, but anyhow, I've got it.

And your Olympic medals too, presumably?

I've got my Olympic medals now, they were lost when I was away, the ones I actually had presented to me. Well, I lived in my mother's house, you see, for some years, until I married, and I was travelling a lot, and was away out of England a lot, and they moved house perhaps once or twice in ten years, I don't remember, but I know they moved, and when I got back, I suppose I was looking for, for some of my possessions, which had moved into another house since I last saw them. At a guess, I would say that they were stolen from the van that moved a lot of the goods from the one house to another, because I never saw them again. And we hunted high and low, and my mother doesn't remember seeing them, which she wouldn't remember really, what she'd got of mine, I mean, my possessions that were in my bedroom, were sort of put into the van and went. I never saw them again, and then I was very lucky in that I got to know the chap, another name I don't remember, who is the Head of the Olympic Association of the World, and I asked him whether I could buy the ones that I'd lost ...

[End of Part 5]

Part 6 [Tape 4 Side A]

We were struggling last week to remember the name of the place where you got married, was it Kimberley?

Yes. So silly isn't it! But that's what happens with names like these, it's one that one really would never forget, well, not only because I was married there, but Kimberley's where the diamonds come from, I mean, you could put it together, you can't forget it!

Anyway, can I start by asking you this time, a little bit about your husband? Was he from a large family?

He was from a family of four, two boys and two girls, but he was very much the youngest, there were three of them together, and then a gap, surprisingly enough, of about ten years, and then my husband arrived on the scene, so that made a family of four. And they were a Brighton family, the whole family lived there, and so did the other relatives, other brothers and so on.

Did they stay there throughout most of their life?

They really stayed in Brighton, in fact, there are a few of them still left down there now, yes, it is their city.

And did you have much to do with them once you'd got married?

Oh yes, we went down there often. Great fun, of course, because you didn't have to hang about by the front, which is always rather a crowded busy place, you stayed in their house and then you could go down and bathe and swim wherever you wanted to, and that was lovely.

Were they in the centre of Brighton itself?

No, the big office belonging to them was in the centre, but their houses were up and back and bit.

There was a family business, then, that they had?

They were, now what is the word? They did, well, people went to them if they wanted help over businesses and things like that, they were a solicitors, is what I'm thinking of. They had a large solicitors family there.

Yes, and they worked mainly with business people, did they?

They worked mainly with Brighton people, I think, they were very much a local business, very well-known in the town, and so on.

Did it carry on through the family, to your husband?

Well, he was in it till the War came, and then he, the First World War, and then he left because the War was on and he went into the Army, and, and he went back for a bit, I think, and then there was another War wasn't there, and then he left again, but I mean, he was in it for a long time.

So when you met him and he was playing tennis, was he working still as a solicitor?

Well, I met him when the War was over, and most of us who'd been in it had a bit of a holiday, you know, we took a year off, you might say, that sort of holiday, and he did that, and I did the same thing, not because of him because I didn't really know him, it was not until we'd gone to South Africa where we played a lot together, and the other six players, we all mixed up and played, but that's when I sort of, you might say, one got to know each other well, but apart from that we were just occasionally tennis partners, occasionally we played with other partners, there was nothing about it.

Did he take up his work as a solicitor after you were married?

No. No, he didn't. We, we got involved with the tennis world, and it's not as the tennis world is now, the tennis world we knew was the amateur world, where you could make no money at all. You won a prize but you didn't win any money, so we really got into that world, and played tennis. He became the Secretary of a small Tennis Club.

Was this the one you mentioned, in Barons Court?

That's right. And the people who built it, the builders who built it, because there was a bit of spare land there, and they decided to, that would be a popular thing to do, built a flat for the Secretary, which had two or three bedrooms and so on, and that's where we stayed, and that's where my oldest son was born.

Did he train at University, your husband, to go into the Firm?

No, he didn't, I think he, I certainly didn't go to university, I don't think he did, unless there was one at Brighton, I don't remember, it's so long ago. I don't know what he did before we were married.

Do you think he had any regrets for the loss of income that he might have had if he'd stayed in the Firm?

If he'd stayed, yes, he, no, because I think he'd had two Wars, and I think he felt that tennis was really the thing that he liked, although he was beginning to get older, but he got into managing, in the tennis world, the All England Lawn Tennis Club, he was on the Committee and all that kind of thing, and the Club that he managed and ran was very successful, because it was very well-managed, and everybody enjoyed themselves, and after we left, because, for one reason, the Club was then going to be turned into some flats, which are there now.

Can you remember the name of the road?

The name of the flats?

The road.

Gliddon Road, yes, Gliddon Road, it leads straight to Barons Court Station, and over the top to Queens Club, a little bit further along. And we also, another baby was on the way, and we wanted to move out of there, into a little bit more out, and Richmond Park seemed to spring to our mind, and so we came round here to see whether there was any house that was suitable, and luckily, the people in this house had to sell it quickly because they were going abroad, and so we moved into it quickly, and here we've been ever since, here I've been ever since.

So that would be 1934, or '35 would it?

Yes it was. I've been here now for 52 years, and I can't, my son won't tell me to subtract that well enough, but you're about right, yes.

I think you said that your youngest son was born in 1935.

The younger one. Yes, oh well, that's when we were just here then, yes, that's right, he was born here, and he's never wanted to leave, and now, even now, when he's, well, how old is he? Fifty, just over 50, he still doesn't want to leave, I mean, this is home to him, he was born here, and interestingly enough, you see, they still live in a part of the house that I used to live in, that side of it, I'm now in this half, and he now is upstairs in the bedroom where he was born. He feels this is, you know, his bit of the world!

Do you feel you've got strong links now, in this area?

Yes. Well, very strong, because he is my son, and there's his wife and two little girls, and then about five minutes in the car, in that direction, is my elder son, who has a wife there, and he had two children there, they're both grown up, married and gone. He's now got a grandson, and so I'd say that we're rather, you know, clustered

together here, it's rather nice, because one feels that all the family can see each other frequently. Lovely.

How did it feel when you first came here, and your first house?

Well, it, it was all right. We had to do quite a lot of arranging. The people who'd gone took everything with them, of course, and we brought what we'd got, but we had a flat about one-third the size of this, so that we had to get a lot of fairly new things in, and it meant quite a lot of work, and it was really quite enjoyable because, being very near the park, you could get there in about five minutes, through the park gate, and then you could walk, and when one of the children was old enough to go for a walk, they went for a walk, and the other one was in the pram, and I mean it was all very suitable for a family that was getting a family.

Did you have anyone living in with you, the woman that was helping look after?

I had, now who was here to begin with? We had someone living in, yes, we had. One living in, and somebody came in to help with the cleaning up, the scrubbing, you know, about two or three times a week. Yes, I couldn't run all this on my own, it was too, too much. There are five bedrooms, you see, and three reception rooms, and so we needed some help, and I had some help. When Martin was born, he was born here, that's the younger son, he was born in the house, because, in those days, a lot of children were born at home, and automatically now you all go, perhaps, out, and I had a very nice maternity nurse, they were called, and they always stayed for about a month, they'd come just before the baby was born, and they'd stay for a month, and help you get used to having a baby, especially if it's your first one, and she was awfully good and very nice, and after that, I had a young girl, who came and helped me, continue with things, and then well, nobody at all after that, and then there were two Wars, so you see, one's life changed quite rapidly over those years.

Was David born at home as well?

David was born at the other house, that was at the Tennis Club, yes. He also was born in, in the flat, we also had a maternity nurse for him, and so many of my friends' babies were born in that way, I think that was a very popular way.

When you were younger, had you thought very much about having children?

No. I hadn't, because, my life from quite young, as far as I can remember, thought a lot about playing games, I enjoyed them, even as a, well, 10 years old, 12 years old, I did enjoy games very much, and although I went to school, of course, when I was younger, and didn't do very well at school, I think my mind was on other things, in other words, what I was going to do, playing hockey, you see, we played hockey, and lacrosse, and cricket. A little tennis, but not seriously, because it wasn't a team game, the school was, in those days, I think they probably still are, I don't know, are keen on team games, because it's good for children to learn to combine with other people, and if you play lawn tennis, you're much more on your own, and oh, basketball was very popular, and still is, you see, there are a lot of things you can play, which keeps your mind occupied, and if you don't go away to a boarding school, of course, you can play after you leave the school and join up with others, and play tennis on the local courts, I mean, most of them have got courts now, roundabout.

So how old were you when your first son was born?

About 30, 31, that sort of age.

And how did you feel, being a mother?

Oh I liked it, yes, I was very pleased with it. I liked it very much.

And did your mother help at all? Was she involved at all with your children?

Well, she didn't actually see him because she died unexpectedly, and rather suddenly, which was very sad, but she did know that he was on the way. She died very young, she wasn't 60, which is, which was young in those days, of course, it's very young

now, because so many things have been invented that weren't known of 50, 60, 70 years ago, so people have a chance of living longer, even though they may get ill, they can still get cured, but in other illnesses, 60, 70 years ago, they didn't know how to cure people.

Because, from what you told me before, it sounded as if she was a very healthy woman.

She was. Oh yes, she was. She played various games. She hadn't got the, when she was a junior, she hadn't got the opportunities of playing much, she just went to the local school in Twickenham, and, well, I mean, if there were any games to play she played them, but I think she had to help with her younger family, brothers and sisters, because she was one of the.

So she died in 1934, then, something like that, your mother? Just before the birth of David?

Well, he's now, my son that she didn't quite see, is just coming up to 60.

Is this your older son, or your younger?

The elder son, 60, yes.

Was your father still alive when she died?

No, he lived about two years longer than she did. He was older than she was, about 10 years older, but he died of a very normal old age. She had a stroke, and she didn't get better from it.

How did they spend their last years, your parents?

I think they had a small flat near, which is the district that goes towards Hammersmith Broadway from here? I know the buses go through it?

Chiswick?

No, it's this side of Chiswick, going towards Hammersmith, it's the other one this side. Can't remember what it's called, I very seldom go that way now, but it is, it's a

Barnes?

Barnes, that's right, near Barnes, yes. Funny how one can't remember places one's known all one's life.

Your father had been retired by then, hadn't he?

Oh yes he had, he was considerably older. He, he did very well indeed with his business, because, I mean, I know that, because we had such a marvellous time as children, going travelling so much, I believe I have mentioned that to you, yes. And then when the First War broke out, his business, which was connected with a Company in Berlin, who made pianos, and when the War broke out, of course, everything between England and Berlin came to an end, and it never came back again. I think possibly his Partners may have been killed, or, I know that the factory made munitions for Berlin.

The piano factory?

The piano factory. Yes, the pianos came to an end. I mean, if, if it hadn't been an enemy country, it needn't have come to an end, it could've taken up again, but you see the enemy country used it for other things, and I think the man who shared the Company with my father, he, well, we never heard of him again, I mean, he could've been killed or anything. So that was bad luck on him, but we were lucky in that we had a marvellous very young childhood, and a very good school we went to, up in Scotland. And it was just then, when I was old enough to leave school, that the War broke out, so that the first 4-5 years was war for me, not tennis or anything.

What was your husband doing during that First World War?

Well, he was in the Army, you see. I didn't know him, well, no, I didn't know him, or what he did. I would think he was, yes, well, he was in the Army.

Was he on active service?

Yes. He tells a story which is rather interesting. His group, they went, they all went, or about 15 of them, some number like that, of the Officer ones, went all abroad together, with all the rest of the Army, of course, as well, and they had quite a lot of active service. They had a few casualties, but all of them came back at the end of the War, and all were still alive.

That's miraculous.

Pretty good, wasn't it, yes. So they kept that going for a long time, they had a dinner once a year, and wherever they were, they all communicated, and they all came for some years, and then gradually one or two fell out and so on, and in the end were three left, of which my husband was one, he got it up, actually, and kept it going, and then he died, and there were two left, and they felt that they really couldn't carry it on, and they were too old, and so it stopped. But a very very nice sort of record for him to have.

Did he talk about that War to you at all?

Oh, we talked about it quite a lot, yes, and he told me a lot of what happened to him, and to them, but on the whole, he had, if you can call it satisfactory, that's not a good word, he had a lucky War, for him, because none of his closest friends were badly injured, he wasn't injured, and so I think you'd have to say that they were all very lucky to get back.

How old was he when War broke out?

I suppose he must've been about the late 30s, some age like that.

So he had already been working as a solicitor for a while until then?

Oh yes, he'd been working in Brighton, yes, he had.

Did he go to the same sort of school that you went to?

No, he went to Brighton College, yes, where they played rugby, that was, that was his favourite game, actually. He had one overseas game when they went to France, the team that he belonged to.

What position did he play?

Yes, now what position did he play? He was a very quick runner, so I should think he was a forward, yes. Yes, that was one of his strong points on the tennis court, and it was one of my strong points too, we were both very quick on our feet, it makes a lot of difference when you're chasing a ball you want to catch, and send it back!

So, had he played much tennis before the outbreak of War?

I hadn't played any tennis other than at school.

*Sorry, had **he** played much tennis, your husband?*

Before the outbreak of the First War. But I played a lot before the outbreak of the Second, of course, because tennis started as soon as the First War was over, and they had, Wimbledon was started up again, you see, in '29.

What made your husband start having that year off to play tennis, then?

Well, it seems to me that they had, before they went abroad, with that team of 15 I was telling you about, they had a certain amount of spare time in England, they were

training and doing whatever, and guarding parts of it, you know, I mean, they were were in the Army waiting to go, and during that time, there were certain things they had time to do, other than being soldiers, and one of the things that quite a lot of them did, was to play tennis, and I suppose others played rugby, and he was one of the ones that also played rugby, I mean, he enjoyed it very much, he played it at school, you see, Brighton College was very good at it. So his main pleasure, I think, were the games that he was able to play before they went to France, and then when they came back, of course, he wanted to have a year of, to go on with both games, but as far as I can remember, it was the lawn tennis one that he really played at a lot, and got very good at.

How long did he continue to play tennis, after that wonderful year when you won that mixed doubles?

Yes, mixed doubles! Oh he went on playing, well, so did I, we both did, we went on playing for, oh, a number of years, so did he.

Did he stop when you did?

No, he stopped before that, because I went on playing much longer than, well, I mean, my last few years of playing were entirely pleasure, I played at Wimbledon, with other members who were getting on in years as well, and we never played in a tournament or anything like that, we just went down there, played on Sundays, and during the weekdays, so there was, it was all a friendly bit of exercise, which they're doing now, you see. I was there the other day, and there were quite a number of them, and they were playing, some of them were the men members who'd got the day off and so on, and quite a number of the ladies, and they were all, well, I mean, they were all round 60 age, I mean, none of them then were very young.

I never asked you last time, whether you had any injury problems during your playing career?

Well, I had one, one that was very aggravating, it was my right knee. In some way, I had bruised it, or jerked it, or jarred it, or whatever it was, and I'm very pleased to say that it's still with me, and it hasn't yet developed neuritis, or whatever it is you get in these sort of joints, as long as I don't try and make it do anything which it doesn't like doing, which is running very fast, or jumping or anything, but you see, it can still ride my bicycle without any trouble at all, but then, of course, that's marvellous exercise, that's one of the best ones you can do, I mean, you've got nothing wrong, I mean, cycling on the still run, where you just practice, going up and down, and this is the same thing.

Can you remember when it happened?

Well, it didn't happen during any of the Wimbledon tournaments I played in, because I managed to play in all of those quite fit and well, so it must've been in a tournament, I would say, I would fell, or something like that, and I also remember, after I'd started it being a bit painful, I had a lovely trip.

Do you find, today, people say a great deal about playing on different surfaces, do you feel your style changed very much?

Yes, our problem wasn't what they have now, we had a hard court, that they would call, when they were first sort of made, the "en tout cas" tennis court. And it was made from some form of brick, it was invented by a chap who built, I think, and he thought that "This brick I'm building these houses with, might turn into a good surface for a court", and he made one or two, and everybody said, "How nice." And they were very nice, they were much nicer than the queer things that they had before that, to play, otherwise everybody played on the grass in the summer, there was practically no winter tennis at all.

When did they come in?

Those came in, oh, just after the War.

The First War?

Yes. And they were very popular, and eventually, the tennis clubs that had these other sort of courts ...

What were the earlier courts like then? The earlier surfaces?

Yes, well, now, they were made with something that we know very well, but they weren't, I can't remember what they were made from, but these were awfully good, because they could be raked over, or smoothed over, and then they hadn't any bad bounces, you see, because they did give a little bit for the feet, which was so nice, they weren't hard, they didn't jar, now they do that now, I'm told. The thing they have now, which is the most popular is called shale, is it not? Shale.

Yes.

And they catch the, when you land quickly, they apparently hurt the sole of the foot a bit, and people get injuries from that sort of thing.

Were there fewer injuries when you were playing in the 20s and 30s, do you think, than there are now?

Well, I don't know, because I haven't played enough on these modern ones, and they keep on altering them. Now I would've said that the covered courts, or the outdoor courts that we played on, which were known as the "en tout cas" courts, were very nice to play on, and I don't believe, really, that one slipped or fell on them, as much as they do nowadays, they were very nice, and then we had the grass courts, which we, in England, all loved, because we played with them all the time, I mean, you were brought up on a grass court if you played tennis, and they were very nice, and the covered court, the courts at Wimbledon, where the tournament is played, are quite beautiful, they're very well looked after, and lovely for the feet, the footwork's so good you see. You never hurt your feet on them, and you do on the other sort, so that I think we were very lucky, we had these very nice outdoor courts to play on all

through the summer, and then the "en tout cas" courts which you could play on, except in, well, you had to leave them to dry, they would drain, and they dried, and you could start playing again, and if it was winter time, and they froze, that was another problem, you had to wait until the thaw had gone, and then the water had drained off, so they weren't as good as having covered courts. We hadn't got very many covered courts.

When did covered courts start to come in?

Well, there were just a few, there were two at Queen's Club, for instance, and they've been there a very long time, they've now got about six or seven, or something. Queen's Club, yes. And a lot of country houses, funnily enough, wealthy people, for some reason, which I never have understood, they built themselves one covered court in their garden, and there are several courts that I know of, that did belong, and probably still do belong, and I don't know who owns the houses now, but the estate then, were owned by some wealthy people, and they, for some reasons built themselves a covered court, and presumably they played there in the winter, but not in any publicity manner. So that was very nice. Well, then, gradually, other places began to build covered courts, and so gradually, they came into being, and there are very many more of them now, so that they can be played on in the winter, which is what we never had in this country, which I think put us behindhand quite a bit.

Coming back to your family life, where did your oldest son go when he went to school?

He went to a local school in, near Kensington, to begin with, and then he went to Sherborne, as a boy of 13.

He boarded, of course?

He boarded there, yes. And the other one went there as well when he got old enough. They were there for about five years, 4-5 years.

Did you deliberately choose a similar sort of school to the one that you'd experienced yourself?

Yes, we went down and saw two or three, down in that part of the world, where Sherborne is, and we liked it very much, and we, and the Headmaster interviewed us, as you might say! And then we went to another one, not far away, a very well known one, and we thought the Headmaster there was very nice, but by and large, we liked the first one, we thought he would make a very good Headmaster, and we liked the grounds.

[End of Part 6]

Part 7 [Tape 4 Side B]

Would they have overlapped at school at all?

No, they just missed, there was about five or six years between them.

So they would have at no time, been at school together?

They weren't at school together, no. No, the elder one was just old enough to leave when the younger one went. Well, that didn't really matter, I think in a way, it was better.

Do you think it affected their relationship as children, to each other?

I don't think that did, especially, I think the fact that they had just on six years between them in age, might have done, because the elder one, his interests were so far ahead of the younger one, that they, I mean, they had a fine time at Christmas and birthdays, and all those kind of things, but they hadn't much in common, because one's a youth of 17 and 18, was so far ahead of another one of 13, that they didn't really do things together so much, they each had their own ages of friends. No, I don't think it did them, no, I think these two now, my two little granddaughters, I mean, they're nearly five years difference, you see, now she's at school, and the little one won't be going until she's left and gone on to somewhere like St. Pauls, or somewhere like that. But the fact is, they are together as children, and they're interested in each other's, as far as they can be, each other's doings, and they're great fun to have.

*When your children were very young, what kind of ambitions did you have for them?
Did you want them to follow in your footsteps at all?*

Well, I think we always wanted, both of us, because my husband was very good at games as well, I think we were interested in games, so rather naturally they had the interest of games, I suppose they heard us talking about it, and that sort of thing, and I think, I always thought, games were very good for children, because it gave them

other interests, other than whatever children do who don't play games, and I'm not quite sure about what that is, because both of ours did, and my grandchildren will do, the others, and my sister had a family, you see, and her boys played games, the older one played for England at hockey, I think it was, so it's been there all the time, and I think it's a very good thing, I mean, I don't think you want to be only games, I don't mean that at all. But I think you want to have an interest in a sport of some sort, because then you're interested in watching it. I mean, cricket, I found awfully interesting, I used to play it, and I, you know, there are other things to do. Then, I think dancing is a very good thing for both boys and girls to be taught when they're young enough.

Were you taught to dance?

Yes, we were taught dancing.

Were your boys taught to dance as well?

No. No, they weren't, it had rather gone out, you see, with the Wars about, you didn't do that sort of thing so much.

So with the outbreak of War, David would have been 10, and Martin 5, is that right, something like that?

Yes.

And you said you went to Devon.

Yes, we did. I had, well, funnily enough, school friends, you see, who'd grown older, of course, and I wrote to them and said, one of them was married with two children, and her husband, and they lived right down in Devonshire, and I wrote to her and said, that, "London is not a good place for young children now, is it possible for us to come down to Bideford," where she lived, "and could you find out if there's any place for, you know, two children and myself, where we could stay for the rest of the war?"

Because London was getting quite dangerous, it seemed silly to stay here. And she wrote back and said, "Well, to start with, you can come and stay with us, and we'll find a place when you get down here." And we stayed there for the whole of the War.

Your husband was involved in War work again, wasn't he?

Oh yes, he was. Yes, he went abroad again.

Where was he sent to, during that War?

Well, I would've said it was sort of France and places, because I know, when he came home, he got back on the last boat to leave France, to get to England, before France fell, it was that sort of narrow escape, and he was one of the last few to get on board before it sailed away, and so he got back safely, it was very lucky, otherwise he would have been interned, you see, or whatever they do to soldiers. So from that point of view it was very lucky. Oh, he had a lucky escape, one way and another, all the way through, I mean, he didn't really have any injuries at all, and he wasn't captured, and

I suppose up until that time, compared to a lot of couples, you'd spent a lot of time together, because your interests were so close.

Yes, yes.

So it must've been quite a shock really, when he went off to War?

Well, it was, it made a lot of difference, of course, because one had to look after and take care of, all on one's own.

Was this the first time you'd been left on your own, with the children?

Well, I suppose until I got married, I lived with my parents, so that it was the first time, because they, they, naturally died, and he was there instead, and then he, he

went away, to first one War, and then another, and yes, it was, it was a gap, well, but you learn to fill gaps don't you, if you've got to.

Were you a practical mother?

Very, I would say. I should think annoyingly so!

In what way?

Well, well, rather in the way that you wear your winter shoes and your winter coat in the winter, and you take them off before you go into a house, so that you don't make the floors dirty and that sort of thing, and that you eat meals regularly, it isn't just one of those things, "There isn't time, let's dash off and have it later", we had them at the right sort of times for children.

So you were a strict disciplinarian, were you?

No, only, only strict with things that made life easier for everybody. I didn't want to have jobs to do that I felt needn't have to be done, because they needn't have occurred. I think I was a bit strict like that.

You were very well organised, put it that way.

Well, put it that way, yes! Chiefly for my own benefit! Because I wasn't very fond of housework.

Did you like cooking?

Yes, I did. I did quite a bit of cooking, and when, well, let's say about 17 or 18 years ago, and coming up to these years, I had my eldest son and his two children living here, because his wife had gone with somebody else, and he had the two children, and we all lived in this house together, and I did a lot of cooking then, because they were then about 8, 9, and 10, and that sort of age, and there were one or two things that I

did, you know, they were awfully simple things, and they absolutely loved them, anything with treacle in it, I don't know whether you like treacle tart, treacle pudding, they loved them, and also there was a sort of, not a shepherds pie, but that sort of thing, that I made, and that is now called, always, "Grandma's stew", now, if anybody says, the other family, as you know, who live just over there, if I meet them, or they ring up, and they say, "Look, Grandma's stew is this evening, would you like to come and have some?" I mean, it's just recognised as that! And they loved those sort of things, but then, of course, I'm talking now of so many years ago, that a lot of the modern things that people have now, weren't, hardly existed, you know, these sort of meals were the sort of meals that we had.

Did you have to watch your diet when you were playing, at all?

Not so much watch the diet, as eat at the right time. If I'm playing a match at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, a single, it's going to be hard work. I'd work out that I would like a nice meal at about half past twelve, not enormous, but something that would last, in case the match took two hours to play.

What sort of thing would you have?

Well, I would have lamb cutlets, or you know, anything easy like that, or even a stew, anything that's easily digested, and not a heavy pudding either, nice, simple things, that I felt would sustain me, and yet wouldn't make me feel, "Oh dear, I can't run", and I worked it out always, by the time I thought I was going to play. Now, that was easy if you were playing at 2 o'clock, because you knew that at 2 o'clock you go on and play, but if you're the next game, you see, you don't know how long the next one's going to take, so what do you do? You say, "Well, now, they'll probably take an hour and a half, if they start at 2.00, we might be on by about 3.30", well then, you see, if they take much longer than that, you've got to work out when you'll be starting, and how long you'll be playing before you begin to be hungry again. I think it's quite difficult really, if you're one of the people who like regular meals, because, you see, and some of these matches now, take four hours, and the person following, the people

following, they've got to watch the score all the time and work out what they ought to be doing for themselves, for when they start off in four hours time.

What's the longest match you ever played?

In a single? Oh, I wouldn't have thought it was more than two hours and a bit, possibly. I didn't have very very long games, no, we didn't somehow. It's funny. A three-set single, of say, a 6-4, 7-5, 6-3 one, would probably take nearly 3½ hours to play, that was quite a long, good match.

You didn't have some of these very very lengthy sets?

No, not going up to sort of 12, 14 and that kind of thing, no, I didn't seem to have many of those. 7-5 sometimes.

Do you think it was a good idea to change the rules so that the tie-break came in?

The tie-break. I think it is a good idea. I can remember watching at Wimbledon when a men's double would be playing, or even a men's singles, and they would sometimes, the first set would go at about 20, 22, so you see, they're the games that took very long, and boring to watch, you see, they always had to see what the spectators were doing on these occasions, because, in order to play, they didn't play, pay prize money then, but they had to keep the courts going, and you know, it cost a lot of money to run Wimbledon, and so they had to make sure the spectators got something they liked, so they'd go on coming, and, of course, they never didn't go on coming, even that year, years ago, when the men, particularly, boycotted Wimbledon, there was one year when they said, "No, we won't come, because you won't do so and so", and I can't quite remember what the so and so was, but the Wimbledon Committee, it was not on for them, and we only had about two or three really tip-top men players, all the rest said, "No, we're not coming." The place was even more crowded. It was absolutely marvellous, and we never to this day, realised whether it was because the British people were going to support the Club, or whether they just simply enjoyed watching tennis, and it wouldn't have mattered who was playing. But

they were all there, absolutely crowded. It was a very good thing that, because it made people realise that the spectators counted a lot.

Coming back to you, was your husband, like you, a very practical person? Did he help about the house?

Yes, I don't think, no, I wouldn't say that he was good at helping about the house, I think, if he happened to be alone, if I went for a tournament and was away for a bit, he always organised something, he wouldn't be there and say, "Now, I don't know what to do, I don't know how to do anything." He'd either arrange to go and have a meal with his relatives, or with my relatives, or he'd, no, he didn't, he got on all right when he was left alone, he didn't like it, mind you, but he wasn't one of the people who said, "Well, I don't know what to do." all hopeless, I think he was before he started, but once he realised that he'd got to do it, he got on quite well.

Yes, cos you both had your own tennis lives at that stage, hadn't you?

Well, yes, we had, you see.

What did he do? Did he help in the house at all? Did he wash up, or ...

Oh yes, he could wash up, he was better at that than the cooking. The cooking, he didn't take to at all. Well, he'd never been, he always complained really, when I complained that he couldn't do any cooking. He said, "Well, you see, I was the youngest of four children, and I had a mother and a father, two sisters, much older than myself, and another brother much older than myself. I was never allowed in the kitchen. If I wanted to go in, they would say, 'No, don't come in just now, we're rather busy, go into the so and so, and we'll come out in a minute'. So I never really saw any cooking done", he said, "I wasn't given the chance, and then he'd laugh and say, "Well, I don't really mind, of course, cos I didn't like it, I don't want to cook." But that's the reason, I quite agree with him, that is the reason that he really never cottoned on to cooking at all. He was never allowed in the kitchen. He was always

given the impression that he was in the way. Well, I mean, you can understand it with all those other people there, so that was the result.

Did he help you with the children when they were young?

Well, he was very good with them, yes, he read to them, and he'd play the little games with them, that they could play and so on, yes, he was, he was very good with them.

Did you, at any point, think of having a larger family than two?

No, we didn't, I think what, I think two was our limit anyhow, we were unlucky, I was unlucky really, because I had a miscarriage, which meant that there was a bigger gap than normally there would have been, but I think two would have been our limit, because of, financially, and because of the time it took to look after them, if you want to be doing your own thing as well, you see, you couldn't really do both for a good many years.

Coming back to the War years, did you like being in Devon at that time? It was so different, I should think, from East Sheen.

Oh, very countrified, very far from danger, really, although they said that a strip of the seashore, down the side of Bideford, and a little bit away from it, that strip would have been a very good place for the Germans to land if they did ever decide to come and invade, and so we had quite a lot of troops down there, all prepared to guard that bit of the shore, which made it quite interesting. And on one occasion, my elder son, who was then about 11, came running back to the house we were staying in, which was five minutes from a bit of the shore, said, "I've seen a dead German." And we all said, "Oh really? Yes, where?" "Oh, over there, in the rushes." So we sort of looked surprised, and he said, "Yes, I know you won't believe me, but I have, come and see." And so it was too, I personally didn't go, but there was a dead German lying in the rushes, just by the edge of a river that was going out to sea, and apparently, it was a plane, a German plane had been shot down, on its way back from Wales, where they went regularly, because we made an awful lot of munitions in Wales then, and he was

shot down, poor chap, and he landed just at the side of the river, and the plane was bumped along a bit further, and it was quite true, this is why he was there.

Was your son frightened by this?

Not a bit! Thrilled! And what was worse, in a way, without telling us, we all came back to our house, because we let the police know, you see, and he said to Martin, the younger one, well, Martin said to him, "I want to see the dead German", he was about 4 or 5, and so David took him along there, and said, "Well, there you are, that's a dead German", and he was thrilled. They weren't in the least upset or anything at all. I mean, it was just a body lying there, it wasn't moving, and so what?

Did you go and look as well?

No! No, it didn't appeal to me at all!

Did they have lessons in Devon during the War?

Yes, there was quite a nice school there, for juniors, it went up to about 11, I suppose, or 12, and then there was a bigger school, but the War was over before that, and so we came back to London.

Was your schoolfriend's husband fighting as well? Was he involved in it?

Oh no, he was older. No, he had been in a War when he was in, where were they? They were abroad for years in the Army, out there, and they had one or two skirmishes. Can't remember which place it was, but they were out there, and, of course, she was out there, and she had a son and a daughter, and they lived out there for many years, and then when he retired from the Army, they went to Devonshire to live, and they bought this house down there.

So were their children grown up by then?

Yes. Yes, the girl, the younger of the two, was not quite grown up, she was, you know, getting on, but not absolutely grown up. The boy was just about grown up. I think he was, perhaps, in the Army, I'm not quite sure, but they were older than we were.

How did the boys feel about coming back to London after the War?

Well, of course, they enjoyed it down there, because there was a lot of marvellous bathing, you see, in the summer time, and do you know, I think they quite liked it. They made a lot of friends down there, and it was a countrified sort of place. Bideford's a very attractive town. It's on a terrific hill.

Yes, I know it quite well.

You know it quite well, yes. Well, the place where the German was found was near the bus stop, not the bus stop, but where the buses were put to bed, at night.

The Depot.

The Depot, yes. Right down there, near the river that goes out to sea there, and that's where these people, their house was there. A lovely part of Bideford.

Were you in touch with that family after the War?

Yes, well, we'd known each other at school, you see, so we'd kept up for a long time. But they have both died, and my own sister has died, and I still seem to be kicking over. The sad part, as everybody knows, when all your friends and all the people you did things with, begin to leave you, and you think now, "That's another one gone", you see, I've got quite a lot of friends, but they're all so far away, in the country, in England, that I can't get to them, and they can't get to me, we're not young enough to be able to take ourselves about.

Yes, you are in contact with letters?

Yes.

Through letters or the telephone?

Yes, or the telephone.

Were there other school friends that you kept up with over the years?

Well, there are one or two, but you see, for me to have a school friend, they've got to be the same age, or a little older, and you haven't got many people like that about, have you? I mean, at 93, you can't find many other people of that age, there are just a few. But my school friends, there aren't any.

Do you think your living to this age has had anything to do with your fitness and your way of life earlier? Do you think it's helped?

I think the reason I have lived to this age is because, I was a very fit child, luckily for me, I was very keen on sport, and was given the opportunity of playing them all, and I happen to be one of the people that think that sport is good for people. I never liked, in fact, disliked, I did dislike smoking. Drink did nothing for me at all, except give me a headache, so if you put those things together, you realise that I was the sort of person who should remain pretty fit, because I didn't do the things that we're now told are bad for you. You see, I didn't like luxury food, and that sort of thing didn't appeal to me very much, which was lucky, because you see, everybody has their own weaknesses, and I had a lot of other weaknesses, but drink and food, and staying up awfully late at night, and all those sort of things, didn't really appeal to me awfully, because I wanted to do something else tomorrow, for which I wanted to be fit enough to enjoy it.

Have your sons inherited your good health?

Yes, they have. The elder one had a nasty motor accident, which hurt one of his legs, but he was always very fit. And the younger one is still dashing about on the tennis court. Plays regularly every Sunday, plays squash during the week, and is very fit.

What did your sons do once they'd left Sherborne?

They're both engineers. One is essentially an electrical engineer.

Which one's that?

That's the younger one. The elder one, he was, now what actually did he do? He was a general engineer, his job in life has been, he's going to retire pretty soon, has been interviewing people who want someone to do the work for them, and so his Company could do the work for these people who wanted it. I think most of it was sort of engineering, I think both essentially, I mean, the younger one is essentially, he passed his, they both passed their exams when they were young, and have got whatever things you need now, to show that you, a Degree or something, to show that you are qualified.

So did they both go to University to study engineering?

No, University, they studied engineering.

They went to College?

I think it was College, more than University, yes.

Were they in London?

Yes. Yes, we are real Londoners.

And afterwards,

Well, then afterwards they had to get jobs. They, they were quite good at the jobs that they can do, because they were trained to do it, and I think, on the whole, they're good at meeting people. They're good at speaking and talking and getting on.

Are they both similar in their personalities?

No, not a bit. Not a bit. The elder one is very lively, and greets everybody and knows everybody, and everybody knows him, and he laughs a lot, and, and talks on the telephone for hours, but a lot of that is business, of course, getting to know people and so on. The younger one is much quieter, very efficient at his engineering job, and knows a lot of people, but in a quieter way, it's really rather interesting, they're so different.

[Telephone interruption]

[End of Part 7]

Part 8 [Tape 5 Side A]

We were talking about the differences in personality between your two boys. Did these differences emerge from a very young age, or later on?

Yes, I would say that the elder one was always a much livelier, noisier, know everybody chap, and great fun. The younger one has always been quieter, well, has his great fun in a quieter way. He plays a lot of games as well, they both played a lot of games. The elder one has, he can't play games because he can't run any more, but he's got a car, a 1928, now what's the name of the car? Car, anyhow, which he loves. He loves, because he's interested in everything, it's quite extraordinary. This car, he goes out in, in the summer, and people stop and look at it, and he leaves it at the Tennis Club, Wimbledon, he's a member there, and people walk past and they look at this, and they look at, and you know, everyone's interested in old things, I've come to the conclusion. They all want to know about anything that's old, it's strange isn't it, that it happens.

They're very very valuable now, those cars, too.

Well, yes, you see, a picture, anything you can say that is very old, and everybody wants to buy it, and the price goes up by the thousand. You know, something that would have been £10,000 is now £150,000, quite extraordinary.

Do you think your children were trying to follow you, when they were younger, in their choice of career, and subject? Did they show an interest in engineering, of their own accord?

Yes, I think they did, because academically, they were not clever. I mean, they wouldn't get 90 out of 100 for arithmetic, or anything like that. On the other hand, they, they could do all the things they had to do, but not in any way that they were going to be brilliant at anything. So that they did have a huge interest in all the things that came into engineering, whichever you can think of really, they've both been interested in it. My younger son was very clever in that he was responsible for

turning this little flat into a granny flat, which is what I think is a very good name for them, occurred, when people began to have the older member of the family living near them, but separate, that's the point, that you don't have to see each other, or do anything together, unless you want to, and then you both can if you do want to, and it's a lovely arrangement. And he was very good at designing this, first of all, to decide how we could get me into part of the house which they didn't want, because it was much too big for them, and this is really, a lot of this he did, I mean, this was here, of course, but a lot of saying, "Well, we can get the kitchen there, and we can, you know", all that part of it, and he's done it really awfully well. So from that point of view, he has been useful from my point of view, to have got me in, you see, I have been living here now, I should think, for about 60 years, something like that, a long time, it's very nice, and there's a lovely bit of garden right round it, except that it's a bit untidy because the dog, well, not our dog, a friend's dog, lives here a lot, the two children, prams and bicycles, and all that going on.

Which one of them married first?

Oh, the elder one, yes.

And can you tell me a bit about his wife and their children?

His first wife was very nice, and she had two children, and so he's got two grown up children, both of whom are married, and the daughter, has got a little boy now, of six months old, who, of course, is my great grandson, which I find very nice. He was here the other day, lovely little boy. And then the elder one married, the younger one married when he was much older, and he's 50 and both children are young, that's the older of the two, and so that both my daughters-in-law, I'm awfully lucky, they're both very nice indeed, charming, great fun.

Is there any sporting link there as well? Any sporting link with your daughters-in-law?

They, the daughter who lives here, the daughter-in-law who lives here, that's Helen, her mother played in international tennis, she was very good. Her father didn't play tennis well, I mean, he could play, but I don't know, he never joined Wimbledon, he couldn't get in there, I'm not sure, I think he played rugby as a young man, but he's still alive and he's quite old now, but he's fit, and very well.

Did they meet through your tennis connections, then?

No. Now, wait a minute, Helen, Helen's mother was a member of Wimbledon for years, she was a very good player, and Helen is a good player, but not international standard at all. And they were, both my sons were members of Wimbledon, and Helen's mother was a member, and they met there, and they probably played some tennis there, and that's how Helen was probably invited to go and play there, and that's probably the connection between them. My elder son, he didn't marry anybody connected with games at all, and when she left, he came to live here with his two growing up children, they were still young, 5 and 6, sort of age.

So there was a lot of extra responsibility for you?

Yes. It's really quite extraordinary. For about 2-3 years, there were about eight people living in this house, because I count two dogs, who I had to look after, and who had to be fed, so there were, there were eight of us all to be fed every day, you know, all the washing that had to be done, you can imagine, and when this happened, I was just 70, so it was quite an effort, and yet, I was so fit, that I did all I had to do for the family, and make the Grandma's stew, and the puds with treacle, well, most men like treacle, you see, don't they, and the boys loved it, and so on, and take the dogs out and that, and yet I said to myself, "I'll give up the other social things that I have, but I'm going to play my tennis once a week." And so I used to give them the lunch here on Sunday, and then I went directly afterwards, and left the whole lot to wash up, and I went down and played tennis at Wimbledon, with friends, from about 2 o'clock onwards, and had tea down there, and then I came back in time for bed, to put them to bed, I mean. So that was an energetic time. And yet, you know, I was fit all the time, so it was very lucky for everybody.

You didn't have any help at all?

Yes I had, oh yes, I did have a very nice helper, she came twice a week in the mornings, so she did quite a lot of cleaning up and everything. And in those days, I had no washing machine, you see, I don't think people had as long ago as that, at least not many people had them, and so I used to take my bundles down to the ...

Launderette?

Yes, the launderette, and have them done down there, and then come back and do a few more jobs, and then dash down and pick them up again, and bring them back and so on, it was a very busy time. And it didn't do me any harm, I mean, I was as fit as a fiddle, wasn't it lucky?

Mmm. It sounds marvellous. Do you see much of your grandchildren now?

Yes. The older ones, the boy lives, oh, about 20 minutes in the car from here, and the girl, who is married and has the little boy, who's my great grandson, she lives about two hours away, no, about an hour and a half away, down in the country, the South. So I see them fairly regularly, because she comes up here regularly to her father, and they stay there, and quite often when she wants to move around, brings the little boy up to be looked at by everybody.

Did you find it different being a grandmother, to being a mother? Or a great grandmother, come to that!

Yes, well, I don't have, really, anything to do with him, except that I see him quite fairly often. These two little ones, grandchildren, I see a lot of, and do a lot for, because I do a lot of babysitting, and the two elder ones, which is my son's son and daughter, I see fairly often, because they, they live very close here, the boy does.

Were you tempted to offer advice to them, to your sons, when they were having their own families?

Oh I think so. I think they, yes, because we were so close together, and they asked sort of for help, and so on.

Have they followed the same pattern? Have their children gone to public schools?

Well, of course, the boys follow the pattern really, of what the mums want to do, and if they're not one's own family, which they aren't, they're probably following the pattern that their mother has taught them to do, but as far as I can see, they were more or less the same as I would've done, especially now, with the second wife of my son, who's quite delightful, and she took the children over from me, after about 2½-3 years, she had married my son, and got to know them, but that was a slightly difficult effort, but it all went perfectly, because she's so nice, and therefore, they were lucky, you see, they had a stepmother who was, well, you couldn't have chosen anybody nicer, she was delightful, and still is, I mean, I see a lot of her. So we had quite a, we've all had our own careers, and some of them have been successful and,

During the years of retirement from competitive tennis, what did, apart from tennis for pleasure, what did you and your husband like to do in your leisure time?

Well, we used to go to the pictures, you know, the cinema. Oh probably once a week. I think I went regularly once a week, and if he didn't fancy the thing that was on locally, then he might not come, he'd read the papers and that sort of thing, but usually once a week. Then occasionally we went out with friends, and had dinner, and he was a good dancer, and liked dancing, and we danced for a bit, and then went home. What else did we do? Well, we used to go out in the car a bit, to go and see some place, and take one of the boys, or two of them, if they were old enough.

What sort of thing would you go and see?

Well, we'd go to the zoo, or probably not so much into London as there's a zoo outside London where you can go.

Chessington?

Yes, that's right, we've been there, and I think we drove down to Brighton, where my husband's family all lived, and saw them, and well, just generally, you know, saw what was going on, but not ...

What about holidays?

Well, holidays, yes we did. We went frequently down to Devonshire, Westward Ho! where we had friends living, and they used to, we had one marvellous arrangement, they invited us, the whole family down there, well, the four of us, and it was agreed that we should live in their house, we should do the breakfast between us, we'd take a picnic out, and we'd have dinner out at night, and that's how we worked it, and it was very successful, we did that a great many times, and one of those daughters is still alive, she's married. I see her every year, because she comes to Wimbledon, I give her tickets to come, and she watches the tennis, because that family all played tennis, they had a, a court in their garden, so we played tennis, and we bathed, and we had a typical seaside holiday.

Did you have a winter holiday at all?

Yes, my husband and I went for winter sports quite often. I had been, as a child, many times. He hadn't been for the skiing side of it, so he had to learn that part of it, and we went as a party of eight, on one occasion, to Lenzerheide, which was a nice place, and then later on, we, yes we did, we went, we went for winter sports about two or three times, I think, in the winter, before the family arrived, of course. So we had, we had a very interesting time with the sport and various things that one did in those days.

Which year was it that your husband died?

When?

He died, the actual date, you know, I'm awfully bad at remembering the exact date, but he died, I should think, well, he was 80, 83 or 84, so he was really quite elderly, and he now would be over 100.

So twenty years ago?

Yes, twenty years ago, yes.

Was this after an illness?

No, I think he was just gradually getting weaker. He didn't have a very bad illness, nothing like that, he just gradually, well, just couldn't do the things that one could do, and then gradually he didn't get up, and just died peacefully in his sleep.

Did it take you a long time to establish a pattern on your own?

It was a shock, although I knew it was coming, for a year or two beforehand, I think, he was getting weaker, and less able to do things, and when you've been very active, you see, this hasn't happened to me, you see, when you've been very active all your life, and suddenly you can't do the things you used to, you get rather fed up, you don't mind, and you think, "Oh Lord, well this is not as much fun as I've been used to, I've had enough", and then you just don't bother. I would think, I don't know, I haven't got to that stage yet! But I'm sure it's going to come upon me quite soon! But I've got so many interests all round me that there isn't time for that yet, but one day

What about your sister's family, how many children did your sister have?

She had three, two boys and a girl. The girl was the eldest, and then came a boy, and then about ten years later, another boy, who, of course, is comparatively young, compared with, well, the sister, my niece, she died about two years ago, she was ill,

but both the sons are still alive. The elder one, well, they both came to Wimbledon, I give them tickets for the Centre Court, my Members Tickets that I'm allowed to buy every year, and they came, each of them actually came with their wives, and watched. The elder one was good at games, he was a good rugby player, and he's a very good golfer, he is an athlete. The younger one is quite good, but perhaps not quite as athletic, but a very good golfer, and they both play tennis in their way, and altogether, we mingled very well, but we weren't awfully near together, they didn't live like we live here, so, I saw them this year, I saw them last year, and their children have been as well, to Wimbledon. We're a good family group for all the families, because, you see, my, both of my sons are members, so they're able to buy their tickets, and so we can separate them around among all the families.

So is it some kind of family reunion as well, at Wimbledon?

Yes, we have lunch there, yes, that's what we do, and then we part company, and they go and watch what they want to watch, in my seat, or another court if they want to, and then they go and get their tea, because you can get tea at Wimbledon, and then well, everybody then, does what they like. We meet for lunch and chat about the family, and then we all go and watch the match that we want to watch, so it's very satisfactory.

If any of your little grandchildren decide they want to go into professional sport, what advice would you give them now?

Well, at what age would you think you would be talking about? That's most interesting in a way, because when they're at school, they're working and they're playing other games, and I'm in favour of that. I mean, basketball is a very popular girls game, and they do play hockey, and lacrosse, I mean, a lot of schools play, and a lot of schools play cricket, so they have a lot of interest, and of course, the boys all play either football or rugby, whichever their school does. I don't know that I would ever recommend a young one, like this age, in about two or three years time, when she's 10, or 11, you know, beginning to sort of say, "Is she going to go in for lawn tennis?" You know, I mean, I'm sure that's what will happen, but it may not. And I

would never advise anybody, boy or girl, I don't think, to go in for lawn tennis in that sort of way, because so many children are doing it now, at the age of 9, 10 and 11, and on upwards, and everybody tells you like, "I saw a girl playing yesterday, she was awfully good you know", and I've heard that over and over again, it never materialises into anything really good. You've got to have something quite different in a person to get right to the top, and it's got to be mental as well as physical, you've got to be athletic, you've got to concentrate, and you've got to be dedicated now, which I don't think is a good thing for sport. I mean, I know they make a lot of money, but so many people try to get there, and don't succeed because they get stuck, they're very good, but they don't do that last bit which means that they get into Wimbledon and get through to semi-finals, possibly finals, become a millionaire, you see, hundreds and hundreds of them start with the idea of doing that, and their parents, apparently, hopefully, hope they'll do it. I don't think I would want it.

What drove you on, do you think? What was the force behind your achievement?

Well, you see, when I played, it was amateur, and that's a very different thing from being professional, because there isn't any money in it, so you haven't got that terrific urge to get better and better, and all this beating somebody and getting, you know, up one on the list, and if you don't get up into that stage, you can't get into that tournament, I mean, it's, I think it's awful now, it doesn't appeal to me in any way. Well, when I played, I just played. The international matches were very good, but there again, the Lawn Tennis Association asked you if you'd like to go, and then they pay all your expenses, and then you went as representing Great Britain, and you played the Wightman Cup matches, and the man played the Davies Cup, and there were other matches, there was the Championship in Paris, all of which I played in, and all of which I was representing this country, the Lawn Tennis Association sent us, you see, we were always about four or six, all British players, so we had company, and we stayed at more or less the best hotels and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Where do you think you got that extra bit of mental, whatever it is, that got you to the top?

Well, I don't know enough about all this, but I can only speak for my own experience. I liked games from the age of four and five, and was good at them from the age of four and five, and was given the opportunity of playing them as I got older, but you see, there was no terrific urge in it, because there was no money, however good one got in those days, you earned nothing but the prize voucher that the tennis tournament gave you. You always won a prize voucher for about £4 or £5, so you really played for the pleasure of playing.

And for the pleasure of winning?

And for the pleasure of winning, definitely for the pleasure of winning, but that didn't get you any further unless you got there under your own steam, and I think that I got there over all the games I played in, I got there, because I was keen, as a young child, although I didn't know what that meant, but I always wanted to play, and loved it when I did well, probably wept when I was very young, and didn't do well, you know, disappointed and fed up, but always kept to it.

Were you like that in other things?

Other than games?

Yes.

No, I wanted to pass my exams when I was at school, just because, well, everybody else was taking exams, and you know, everybody wanted to pass. I did quite well, I didn't do brilliantly, but I, I passed enough.

But in the games, it was that real urge, that got you to win?

Well, in the games, I don't know what it was. At school, you see, we played all these games at school, lacrosse and hockey and cricket, and I played golf for us as well, it was just natural, it was the thing I was good at, and I had been good at, it didn't mean anything other than it was fun doing it.

How did you feel when you lost?

I was a bit disappointed when I lost. I didn't often lose against somebody I ought to beat, do you know the feeling that, "Well, I know that I'm a bit better than they are, because I played them a fortnight ago, or three weeks, or last year, and I think I've got a bit better, and I think they're a bit nervous of playing me", and so I was disappointed if I played not well, for me, and they played very well for them, then they would win. And that, I felt, was a waste of time. It was stupid.

Did it make you work harder? What effect did it have on you?

Yes, it made me determined not to lose next time, you see.

So would it be the urge to succeed and to win that ...

Yes, oh, I was very keen to win, yes I was, although there was nothing to win, just a question of, it was a game which I was keen on and was good at, and I wanted to win at it.

Which of your achievements are you most proud of?

Most proud of. Well, I find it difficult to say that, because I think most of my thoughts were, which gave me most pleasure, which did I like doing the most? And looking back on it, I think, really, I liked winning at Wimbledon, most of all, women's singles at Wimbledon, when I beat Helen Wills, in a way, I think that was my outstanding match, because I ought not to have won, you see, that's one of the occasions when the person who won, really shouldn't have one, because she played better than she usually did, and the person who should've won, didn't play as well as they could, and so that switched the win on to my side, and another time, I did beat her twice that week, in the Wightman Cup as well, but you see, you have to qualify that by saying that she was 18, and it was her first trip to London, and having been to America several times, I knew that the first time that you go to a new place, it's all

very strange, and you don't, well, they talk the same language, well not in a lot of Europe, they didn't, but you don't perhaps get quite the same food, I don't know, little things were different, when you were abroad, and she probably found the same thing here, you see, and she started off well in that Final, and gradually she wasn't quite so good, and gradually, I felt, for some reason or other, I was a little better than I had been, and then gradually I caught her up, and then overtook her, and, and on the day, I played better than she did, but she turned out to be, within the next year or two, better than I ever was, and she was the best American player, until they started having these enormous amounts of money to win, and then everybody took it more seriously. There was more coaching and more everything, better racquets, changing the foot fault rule, all of which we suffered from, and then it changed, and it's become a much easier game, although it's a harder game, and, of course, it's a very wealthy game.

I don't know if it's a fair question, but how would you think players of your generation compare with today's players?

Well, I can only say that most people, even of any generation, most people say that you can't compare, it's not two likes, they're two different, the one of years ago, we played a different game from what they play now, because all the circumstances are different. The shots were the same, the scoring is the same, the rules are the same, practically, but everything else is different. Helen Willis and Suzanne Lenglen, Suzanne was the better of the two, actually, those are the two best players I played against, and they were my generation, played the same time, if they lived today, with these racquets and balls, and the money and the coaching, etc., they would be as good as anybody playing now, providing they could be bothered, that would be in their, for them to decide, because they had no experience of it, any more than I have. So they would be the same age as me, a little younger, definitely younger, Suzanne was a few years younger, Helen was about eight or nine years younger, so roughly, you could say they were of about the same age now, so I can tell you what I think they would feel. They would feel that they had the new racquets which are much easier to play with, I mean, I know that, because I had one before I gave up playing, and everybody admits that they're much easier to get the good shots, they're easier, because you get better shots with them, they help you. Then the foot fault rule, which most people

nowadays don't understand, because it was abolished, really, about 40 years ago, as far as I can make out, which makes serving much easier. If anything to do with the service, which a lot of us think has spoilt the game a bit, because the men can serve balls that the opposing man can't even touch, well, that isn't lawn tennis, you see, you've either got to accept that, or you've got to say, "This isn't ..."

[End of Part 8]

Part 9 [Tape 5 Side B]

So the men now, have spent so much time, the young men, particularly Americans, to begin with, and then all the other countries, they've spent so much time in being taught how to serve, with the racquets, and with no foot fault rule, etc., that they all know they can serve a serve that the opponent can't take, and so they're struggling to do that all the time, so they do serve a few double faults, but they also serve serves that the opponent can't touch, well, I mean, it's not very interesting for the spectators, just to watch people slogging the ball, for all they're worth down, once or twice it's rather nice, and you say, "What a good serve", but you don't want mostly that, and no rallies, that's really what the tennis game now is lacking. You don't get the good rallies, now, that isn't true amongst the girls, because they can't hit as hard against each other, and so most of the serves come back, and so they do have lovely rallies, and I think to see Suzanne, no, we don't see Suzanne, she had lovely rallies, but to see Steffi playing another girl, equally good at returning the serve, and they have the most wonderful rallies, and they're so quick, and they hit so hard, that really, it's a joy to watch, and I'd rather see them play than the men, because they have rallies, they're very sporting, they're nice on the court, they look delightful, and I love watching them play, and I always go off to watch a woman play, rather than a man, and I think there are quite a lot of people like me.

I'm like you, actually, in that respect! Would you ever have any sneaking regrets about not being able to play in today's conditions?

Well, you see, I had my success when you played for fun, with a determination to win, if you could. There were no people coaching, there might've been one odd person, or one, Dan Maskell, he coached years ago, at Queens Club, always, and he probably coached, but he'd only just started when I was playing, I mean, he wasn't really coaching in my era at all, so that you played in a totally different frame of mind. Now would I have still been good at the games that I was good at, if I was struggling all the time, to get better and better, because the other people were getting better and better, I'd have to be coached, I'd have to play every day, I'd have to be

trained, do exercises, only eat what I was told to eat, get to bed when I was told to go to bed, and then I would become a millionaire. Now, that's the great thing that we've got to answer. Did we like our life as it was, or is it a better life doing what they all do, and having a lot of money? Well, what's your bet?

You tell me!

Well, quite frankly, I don't know! I very much wonder whether I would have the determination and the patience to lead the life they lead now. I wouldn't want to be only an "also ran" at it, because I wasn't an "also ran" at games, you see, it wasn't in my nature to be, so it wouldn't please me, just enough, to earn my own living. If I did it, I would want to be a millionairess, and I'm not sure that I would have the patience and the determination to do it, for that reason.

There are a lot of additional pressures now, aren't there, on today's players, from quite outside the game as well.

Yes. And when you've finished playing, you can coach, I mean, a lot of, well, I'm talking now of the girls, but the men as well, they all turn to coaching.

Were you ever asked to coach?

No.

Were you ever interested in it?

Not a bit, no, except friends, families, families children.

Do you have any regrets about things you might have done?

I might not have done anything else well, except play games. Those are the things that I was good at, mostly games where you had to run, had to be very quick, had to use your arms very well, your feet very well, all that part of it, I, I think it's fair to say

that I was good at, and I don't know, I think that's what took up my time, mostly. Because, don't forget, I existed through two World Wars, so 4 and a half years of the first, and 5 of the second, took over ten years, didn't it, and the best years, from the point of view of youth and, we're apt to forget that, all my generation lost at least ten years of the best time when they could've done whatever they wanted to do, they were energetic and active.

So there's nothing you can look back on in your playing career, and say, "Well, I regret having done that", or "If only"

If only! No, because, you see, I was lucky enough to have done, had a go at all the things that I was good at. I mean, I went for winter sports with my parents, seven times before I was 10 or 11, all as a little child, well, you see, I skated out there, and tobogganed, and skied a bit, that was just coming in when I was out there, we skied a bit, and well that was all in me, without any trouble at all, it was my Christmas Holiday, so, I mean, that I did. I did, no, I think I was lucky enough to be able to do, all through my life, the things that I enjoyed doing most. Mind you, I didn't try other things, so that I don't know if I would've enjoyed doing them, even fairly badly, because there wasn't any time to do them.

You lived through two Wars, as you just said, were you, or your husband, or your family, but especially you, were you involved at all in politics and things like that? Did you have very strong views?

No. I'm just trying to think, I don't think any of them were involved in politics. My father, who, of course, was living a bit in the last century, I mean, he was a Queen Victoria person for years, he was interested in politics, but in no way a politician. He would go and listen to people, holding forth.

But he didn't discuss politics at home?

He and my mother did a bit, and he did with other people a bit. He got a little heated over politics. I mean, he was definitely, now, what's the word? The middle, there are still some of them now, what are they called, the middle?

Liberals?

Liberal, he was a Liberal, yes. And very strong from that point of view, he was a Liberal, and so, of course, I think my mother was as well, and if I was anything, I suppose I was. I'm a Conservative now, in a mild sort of way.

As a woman who achieved a lot, when women were barred from achievement in a lot of fields, have you ever felt strongly about

Yes, that I would like to have gone into something that one wasn't ever, yes, no, I don't think, quite honestly, I was clever enough to be able to talk on subjects that I didn't know very well, and as the things that I knew well, were all to do with sport of one sort or another, the other part of life, which I listened to, and agreed with or disagreed with, but it didn't urge me on to join in in an official capacity.

So, as a woman who achieved an enormous amount, at a time, you know, when a lot of women were tied to the home, and denied opportunities that they have now, in a lot of spheres, were you aware that you were a singular achiever?

Well, no, not a bit. I was aware that I married later, and roundabout the same time as a lot of women, but later than the ones who married at 20 and onwards, so I had that spell, when they were married and having children, I had mine a bit later on, so I did have that, well, few months, all through the 20s, in which I was playing games, and playing tennis and that kind of thing. Then I had a gap, you see, after that, when the family arrived, and then I went on doing it again, when I was 40, but only in a friendly manner, not in an international manner, just went on playing games. It was a very healthy sort of life, you know, because you always wanted to be fit, so you didn't do the things that you knew would make you feel not so good, and that's why I feel I've lasted up till this age, not having anything drastic wrong.

Are you a religious person?

No. I'm not. I'm one of those people who believes in historical things, that we all know happened years ago, I believe in history. So from that point of view, I don't say, "Oh, that's not true", or anything, but I don't, I can't say I totally believe in the things that you have to believe in, if you're going to be really religious. It must be something for me that is true, that you know happened, historically.

How did you bring up your boys?

Oh well, they went away to school, you see, so they were brought up by the school, going to Church, and going to hymns and all that sort of thing.

Have you been a churchgoer yourself at all?

No. Not later in life, no, I went at school, and at other times as well, but not a churchgoer as my family are now.

What do you think has been the best thing in your life?

Oh well, I suppose the best thing is being married and having a family, because it lasts, you see, it goes on and it's an intense interest all the time. So if you've got your own interest, and it's added marvellous interest, because I'm so interested in what they're doing now, and what the children will do. Oh, it's a wonderful thing to have a family that you can stay close to.

And what about the worst thing, on the negative side?

Well, the worst thing, in a way, I think, was when my mother died. She was only 56, which was young in those days, but very young now, I mean, so many people are cured, but she had a stroke, you see, and she had a bad stroke, and I'm glad to say, that she didn't recover at all, she never recovered consciousness, because she wouldn't

have been any use to herself after that, she was an energetic, happy, friendly, delightful person, and after the stroke they said then that, well, really it was a devastating one, and so she's much better off. Now, if she had it now, or if they knew as much about things now as they did then, she, it might not have been as bad, they might have had cures for people who were inclined to do that, you never know, but at the time when she died, it was a better thing for her. So that is the saddest, because my elder son was six months on the way, so if she'd lived another four, five, six months, she would have definitely had her little grandson, which she would've loved having, but then she was all right, because, you see, my sister was older than I am, or was, two of her children were already born before my mother died, so she knew her two grandchildren, so that's consoling, but it was an awful shock, I didn't realise that it would happen, and it was an awful shock. I was rather nervous that it might affect me, because David was coming along.

Well, for somebody over 90, you've had an extremely active life, and are a real celebrity these days.

Well, funnily enough, yes, I mean, you, you weren't a celebrity all over the world in those days, when I won at Wimbledon, though, of course, everybody knew that I had won, because Wimbledon then, was the best tournament to win, and still is, but not to the extent that has been happening this last five years and so on, because, you see, people have got so much keener on knowing people now, and well, the BBC and all that, they've got to fill the BBC with something, and so they choose the people who they can produce who have done things that people are interested to hear about, that's what it amounts to, isn't it.

Yes, but you've done some marvellous work for tennis, haven't you, going to those Olympics in Los Angeles, when it started again,

Well, I don't know that it was marvellous work for tennis, exactly, I mean, I've talked a bit about it, and explained what I feel about it, and told everybody what it was like in my young day, which is a very long time ago, and which a lot of people wouldn't have known about, unless people like myself had talked about it, and I think I've, I've

enjoyed it all immensely, and I've enjoyed all this part, which has been quite different, immensely, and I enjoyed playing, up till about two, three years ago, with a new racquet, you see, I'm able to talk about the new racquet, and when I talk to other people who are younger than I am, and who are still playing quite energetically, they all remember the old racquets, and they said, "Of course, these are quite different." The men who play now, they're quite honest about it, they say, "Oh, these are far easier to play with than when we all played", and meaning me as well, and I said, "Well, I'm awfully glad because one doesn't want to make the fact of the different racquets, and all the other things that have changed a bit, about lawn tennis, any excuse for the fact that that's why we weren't so good as they are now. I mean, the reason we weren't as good, is because none of those things were there for us to use, and to help us along, I mean, that's a fact, it's not making an excuse, it's a fact, of what it was like. And now that the best players of, say, 30 years ago, and 40 years ago, the men, who were very very good in those years, and they say, of course, "Oh, these racquets are totally different", they said, "We couldn't hit the ball as hard now, at our age, 60 and 50, as we do now, with the old racquet we played with when we were 30 and 40", I mean, the whole thing is quite different. And it is, I played for two or three years with one of the newer racquets and it was quite different. I don't know why it's so different, but it's lighter, for one thing, and it seems to, when you have to run forward to a shot, that's a little difficult to get to, the racquet seems to help you get it over the net, the modern racquet now, and the old racquet didn't, you had to lift it up hard. Yes, it's a totally different game. If you like the very hard hitting, bashing of the men, then it's a better game, and I think there's no doubt about it, for girls it is a better game, it's fun to watch, they haven't spoilt it by using a new racquet and hitting hard, they're still elegant, they move beautifully, are attractive, full marks to the girls.

What advice would you give to a young girl starting in tennis, to give her that extra mental thing that's so important?

Yes, the mental thing is important. Well, now, if she hasn't got it naturally, and I think she would know, and her family would know if she had, then she has to work at that a bit, it's another job that's got to be done, you've got to be able to concentrate to the exclusion of all else, when you're on the tennis court you mustn't see your family,

you mustn't see friends, you mustn't see anything, you must just concentrate on the ball, and the next shot you ought to play, and the mistake you made doing that one, don't do that again. Complete concentration. Now, if you've got that naturally, this concentration, and ability to realise that you've got to develop something that is going to make your opponent not find the game easy, you're going to make it difficult for her, you've got to find out all that for yourself, and you've got to be able to produce it. So, there's an awful lot in it, and I would say to her, and I'm sure all these young people's, people who coach them and the parents and so on, will have said all this to them, but I think they've got to have it there a bit, to start with, it's got to be slightly born in them. I mean, a pianist, a singer, all these people have something born in them, of that, that they start with, and then they get right to the top, because all that part is fairly easy compared to the people who haven't got it born in them. They've got to learn it first, and then improve, but if you've got it born in you to concentrate, to have the know-how, of what is the best shot to play on certain, it's all very tricky, and it's all great fun.

Thank you.

[End of Part 9]

[End of interview]