



Speaking for Ourselves: *An Oral History of People With Cerebral Palsy*

Tony Wilson
Interviewed by Alex White

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Interview Summary Sheet

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Tape 1 Side A [Track 1]

Tony Wilson, on 24th November, 2004. Right, [rustling noise] first of all, Tony, could you just tell us about when and where you were born?

I was born in London, in, is it Marylebone? Marylebone, near Baker Street, and I, and I was, I was born.... can you ... what's the name of the person?

O.K., so you were born on 14th June...

Yeah.

1934

... 34. That's right.

And the address given is 1, Northumberland Street.

Yeah, that's right, yeah.

And can you tell us a little bit about the, how you came across your birth certificate?

Well, I came across it about four years, because I was, I wanted to go to abroad, and I couldn't go abroad until I had a birth certificate, and Mick Goldsmith looked up in the library, on the computers, and he got it off the computers, in London, that's what he came up with that.

So up until then, you hadn't seen your birth certificate.

No. No, I hadn't.

So what did you know about when and where you were born?

Only when my keyworker, Mick Goldsmith, told, showed, give me the certificate, and that, you know, 'cause I was, I always thought I was born on 13th June, all my life, but, [laughing] no it wasn't to be.

So your birth certificate tells you were born on 14th.

On the fourteenth. Yes.

Oh, right.

Yes.

So you're younger than you thought.

Yes.

So, what did you ... so you didn't know your parents, is that right?

No. No, I don't, I can't remember my parents at all. No, because, about, I think it must have been, ooh, about nearly twelve years ago, when Mick, when Mick Goldsmith, my keyworker took me over, because the one I had before, we used to call them a social worker, she left, and 'cause then Mick took over, and he looked through the files, and he found a letter, and it stated that I was down in Bournemouth, under the Shaftesbury Society, which was soon to be the Federation on the Old Shoreham Road, where they look after disabled children, and all that, in that, and all that.

So was...

It was at Victoria House, but it looked like a hospital, in the early days, when I was there.

Right, and where were you actually born, then?

In London, well I don't know ... well, as far as we know, it says on the birth certificate, doesn't it?

Right, so it says, 'Marylebone in London ...'

Yeah, 'Marylebone in London ...'

'1 Northumberland Street...'

'...and Street', yes: where my Nan's place is, so it says.

Right, and, but what, so what is your first memory, then?

Well, my first memory is when I was down in ... I thought I was in Uppingham, Middlesex, in a home in Middlesex, but I wasn't. It's when I was in this Victoria House, home in Bournemouth., and then, I didn't until about, I think about ten or twelve years ago, I was down in ... when Mick read this letter, what he's still got, you know.

Mm. So, from what you've been told, you were born in London...

Mm.

And you don't remember your parents...

No, I don't, no.

Do you know anything about them at all?

No, no. I don't.

So, just their names on this birth certificate.

On that birth certificate.

So that's 'Grace Ellen Wilson, a chemist's assistant ...'

Yes, right, a chemist's assistant, yeah.

'... of Ickenham ...'

Yeah.

... and G.E. Wilson.' So that's the only name you have.

That's the only name I've got, yes.

So you don't know ... your father's not listed on here.

No, no. No, no, I don't know what happened or anything, no.

And so you were christened, were you...

I was christened 'Anthony Basil Wilson'.

Anthony Basil Wilson. [rustling]

Mm.

Yeah.

But all, everybody, always been called 'Tony', I've always been called 'Tony'.

Right: and so you were then, you were then told you were that you were at the Shaftesbury Society's Victoria House...

House, yes, in Bournemouth.

In Bournemouth, and do you remember anything of that?

Well, the only memory I can remember is, 'cause it was all country, it was right in the middle of Bournemouth, and it was all fields, and it was right in the country, and there was a farm next door to it, and I remember seeing these cows, 'specially at night, when, in the summer, when they left the French ... those big doors pulled back, like a big wall, I remember that: and, also, I remember one or two nurses taking, lifting me up and all that, and all that.

So how old would you have been then?

Well, I would be around about ... I must have been about, between two and five, because it was almost seven when I came to Brighton, when the War started. I came down in, it must have been about May I came in, 1940, I think, it was; would that make me right, just coming up to seven? Yeah, and I remember that, and it was around about May, and a month later, it was my birthday, I remember that, so ... and I moved to, when I come to Brighton, I went into a foster home, to a person called 'Mrs Wood', and it was Number Seven, Urquhart Road, and I was there for about nearly eight, nine years, I think, before they had to move me, because she was took ill.

Right. So tell me a bit, going back to Victoria House: we talked about...

Mm.

... you remember the cows, and the house...

Yes.

Can you tell me a little bit about, what the house was like? Do you remember anything...?

Well, it wasn't that, it wasn't, it didn't look like a house. Well, the only bit, the most, it might have been a house, up the end of the, the end of the building, it was just like a hospital, you know, like a big ward, with these big doors. It was just like that, and we was in there, and I believe they had a, they had a little building on the side somewhere, because we used to go, I remember once or twice, being in a play, in a children's play area, sometimes, and that's all. You know in, like a, like a fence thing: what do they call these baby things?

Oh, like a sort of cot bed, with large, sort of play...

Yeah.

Oh, what do they call....?

Yeah, so you wouldn't want to get out or walk or anything.

Yes, I know what you mean: oh, what do you call it? Um.

Um.

Play pen.

Play pen, that's right. A baby's play pen: yeah.

And how... so you were in a ward, like a hospital.

Yeah, that's what it looked like it, yeah.

And what, how many people, how many children were there in there?

Ooh, quite a few. [laughs] I never counted 'cause I didn't ... you see, I didn't know nothing about school, or anythink, or about counting or anythink. I saw a [?] with lots of other children in it, and most of the time, specially, specially, I don't, specially in the afternoon, and early evening, we went back to bed there, you see, because, but there used to be somebody, when they had the, I don't know if they were short of nurses in those days, but I remember somebody used to be up in, up one end of the ward, I think she was a woman, whether she was ill or not, I don't know: she probably was, she used to, she used to be up there all the time, and if anybody moves or got out of bed, she used to press the button, and the nurses would come, press the button and the nurses would come.

And it was like a bell, was it?

I think it was a bell pull, [laughs] I don't know. It was something like that, but she, but she was expected to do your staff [ph]

And so you had to stay in bed all the time?

Well, not all the time, but, that is to say, in the afternoon, 'cause, you know, in those days, they used to 'ave a ... I think we used to play in the morning, but in the afternoon, we used to go back to bed again, because in those days they believed that children should have a little sleep in the afternoons, didn't they, and all that sort of thing?

So...

They said, it did sound [laughs] if you was in, more or less in bed all the time, but it wasn't, you wasn't, but, but that's what happened, you see: you played in the morning, in another part of the building, of Victoria House, because when you went in into the play area in Victoria ... in another part of Victoria House, we didn't go any further, you see. Staff used to take you there, and be there, and then, when you had somethin' to eat, after you'd had somethin' to eat, they used to take you back, to your bed.

And so what were the staff like?

Well, I think they were very, very good. They were very, very good, but the trouble is, they wore like nurses' hats, the big nurses' hats on, that what they used to have to wear, i'n't, on top of their heads, but, which they don't do, these days, and all that, and very dark suits on: and that.

And do you remember any of them particularly?

Ooh no, I don't. Well, I do remember, well I remember one or two faces, but I don't remember names, because, because I was never told who they were, you see? Well, I can't remember, I may have been told who they were, but, 'cause sometimes you didn't always see the same one, [laughs]: and all that.

And do you remember any of the other children?

Well, well, only a little bit now, because I am seventy. I am seventy now, you see, because, because I do know there was a, you know, a mix, boys and girls, you know, and that, but ... I can imagine one or two small ones, children's faces but not many.

Did you have any friends there?

Well, it was very difficult, because, you see, I don't know if it was because I was handicap, and I think a lot of the other children were, some of the others were handicap as well you see, because it was a, for disabled children, you know, and that's why we didn't always mix, you see, stay together, you see, because we had, we either had somebody in between us, you know, to help us. That's all I remember.

What sort of ages were they?

Well, I would say they were between, between, what, I would say between two, and seven or six.

So, but they weren't all disabled children?

I'm not sure about that.

No: and you were talking about playing in the mornings, what sort of things did you play?

Well, with little balls and little rattles, and [laughing] all that sort of thing, you know: and that.

And what's your, what's your sort of overall impression of it?

Well, it's very, very hard, after all these years, because, once I left there, I forgot, I made, I completely forgot about it, once I left there, you know: it's only in the last twenty years, I've, it takes me back, you know.

Do you ... how do you feel about it, when you think about it?

Well, it does make me think, because, because I don't know my parents, and all that, and, you know, I've been in foster homes, and all that, it seems that my child life was

very, very hard, you know: and the War came; and, of course, I didn't get many things to play with, either. You didn't get many things to play with. That was one thing. I used to have one or two books when I was colouring or scribble, but that was it: 'cause it wasn't till I came to Brighton, that I went to a, I went to school, but then, as I say, the War was on, and I went to school down Preston Drove, called the Preston Manor, Preston Infants School, and it was only two classrooms. The building is still there. It's two cottages, in North Road, Preston Park.

So when was it you went to school?

Well, it wasn't until I was seven, and I went down, as I said, I went down to this school in Preston Park, and it was called Preston Manor, Preston Infants School, I think it was, 'cause they were all young ones there, but they had one or two senior ones in another room. They had all the young ones like us in one room, and some of the senior ones in another room. It was only two classrooms and two teachers, and it was two cottages.

Right: and what kind of school was it?

Well, I don't know a lot about it, because, like I said, it's only like a young school, and I think there were up to about twelve, or it might be, fourteen, in those days, 'cause a lot of children left school at fourteen, didn't they, because the War came and 'cause they had to find places for all these children, didn't they, I suppose. I suppose it was an infants school more than anything, but we had one or two senior ones there, during the War, and that, because there was supposed to be one per ... one was supposed to pick me up. Some days, she never went herself, and some days, I don't know what happened, whether it was because the sirens went or some'ink, and then Mrs ..., the foster parent who was looking after me, wouldn't let me go, so I lost a lot of schooling as well.

So can you explain how you got to Brighton, from the Shaftesbury Society?

Oh, [laughs] I do not exactly know how. We think it's because they wanted ... the bed was for some very bad person, who was disabled, you know, or can't walk around, and all that, and all that: so I don't know a lot about it. There was only, the people along the Old Shoreham... Mick Goldsmith only knows, the Federation on the old Shoreham Road only knows, because he was going to give me some letters, some bits of it, how I came to Brighton, but he, he hasn't done it yet, because he's a very busy man, as well, very busy, going to, going to, he's got other people to go to and attend to, and he goes to meetings and all that.

So what are your memories of Brighton, then?

Oh, a lot of memories. In the War years, I didn't, I didn't go out quite a lot, because of the War, and because I was disabled. I spent, as I say, I did go to school, but not very often: and, and, during the War, I didn't go down to the sea front, because you wouldn't let ... Mrs Wood wouldn't let me, take me, or wouldn't let me go down there, during the War. She took me out, down into the park, Preston Park, now and again, only into Preston Park, and then I went to pictures once or twice, but then she got her daughter to take me to the pictures, and then I went shopping and that, and that's all I know: and then, when the War finished, she, and I got older, she let me go out on my own. I used to go round Preston Park and all that, and round the Preston Park Station, because, because [laughs] I love steam trains, I love steam trains, and all that. And once a year, I generally go on the steam trains with Mick, takes me, Mick Goldsmith, my officer takes me in his car, and we go to the Bluebell Railway, once a year.

Mm hm. So tell me a little bit about your foster mother, then.

Well, I don't know a lot about her, because, because I've had several, because she was took ill. She was alright, but the trouble is, she had other people to look after as well, you see, as well, this was the trouble: that's why she couldn't always take me out, I think, and that: mm, 'cause we spent most ... in the summer time, we spent most of the

time in the garden: 'cause she had chickens, and rabbits, and that, and of course, a cat, and all that. That's all I can remember, you know, and I've told you that in scribbling on colouring books, or something, and of course, when that's gone, or finished, I'd got nothing to do all day, or anythink: I mean, some days, nothink.

[rustling] So where was the house that you lived, when you came to Brighton?

The house, well, it was, it's off Sunderland Road, and it's off near the Drove, near Preston Drove, and off Sunderland Road and it's called 'Erbert Road, Number Seven, 'Erbert Road.

And what was that like?

It's nice semi-detached houses, and they're still there today. Still there today.

And who did you live with, at the house?

Mrs ... a lady called Mrs Woods. She had a daughter living with her for a little while, until her daughter got married, you know, and when her daughter got married, she moved out.

And what was her name?

Oh, I can't remember her daughter's name now, 'cause it's so many years, it's so many years back, and, you know, and she didn't have a lot to do with me at all. It was mostly her mum seeing to me, mostly.

Well, and what was she like?

Alright, she was alright, Mrs Woods. She was alright.

And you said she had other people to look after as well.

Oh yes, during the ..., yes, as well, yes, and she had a blind person there as well, to look after.

So how many other people?

Oh, I would say there was about three or four other people besides me, and the blind person, which were about five or six people.

And what do you remember of them?

Not a lot really, no, because some only stayed for a very short time, and all that.

And did you have your own room?

Well, I did at first, and then I shared it with somebody: I can't remember who it was, the person: it was a young boy, but I can't remember his name, 'cause it's going back so many years.

So you, apart from your colouring books and going to the park...

Yeah.

... what other sorts of things did you do?

Well, when it came around about Christmas time, I went round to the church hall, I was invited to the Christmas parties, but that was all.

What were the Christmas parties like?

Well, they were, they used to give us a little tiny present, and all that, and give you something to eat, but that was only for one afternoon, your one afternoon ... there's one afternoon, and that's a year, you know, but I didn't go to Sunday school or anything, 'cause I didn't know nothing about things, you see: so I was really tied down, wan't I, during the War.

So what other things do you think affected, the War affected your life? How else did it affect your life?

Well, as I say, it did affect my life a bit, because I couldn't go out much, and I lost a lot of schooling. I don't know if it's because of the War. I know somebody from our street should have picked me up, you know, to take me to school, but some days she didn't go to school, and I was told I'd got to stay at home, but that was all. 'Cause, as I say, I never used to go down town much at all, only now and again, and all that, and I never saw the sea front until after the War.

Oh really?

No.

So what was it like, the first time you saw the sea front?

Well, it looked alright, really, as far as I know. You know, there was a few buses, and there was a few people, and all that, when I first went down there, because in the summer time, it got very busy, but I think it was early Spring, when she allowed me to go down there, or it might have been late Summer, 'cause I think the War ... when the War finished, it finished round about June, didn't it, or somethink, somethink like else.

So it was 1945...

Yeah.

... when you were about eleven...

Yes.

... was the first time when you went to the sea front.

Yes.

And how long had you been wanting to go?

Well, to be honest, one thing, I didn't know I was near a sea, a sea front, 'cause she never told me: see, she never told me till after the War. No. Mm. Very strange it was, 'cause as I say, after I was eleven and onwards, she let me go out on my own after a while, round Preston Park and all that: and of course, of course, I walked down to the sea front once or twice, and I remember, once I walked down there, and it rained hard, and I thought it was going to, I thought it was going to stop raining, 'because it was rainin' so heavy, but then of course, then it didn't, and then I walked home, and I got ticked off for gettin' wet, 'cause, and all that, you know: and I thought to myself, 'I must get home, otherwise she'll be worryin' about me', but, [laughs] I got ticked off just the same. Yeah. Otherwise, it wasn't, it wasn't too bad. It wasn't until I moved again; I think that was nine... I can't remember what year that was, but it was in the 1940's, I think it was either 1948 or '49, I can't remember what, one of those years, when I had to be moved, and it was more or less in the winter time, and I was moved to a lady called Mrs White, in St Martin's Place. I think that was Number ... I'm just tryin' to think, Number ... that was Number Seven, that was Number Seven, St Martin's Place.

That's just behind St Martin's Church, is it?

No.

No.

No, that's on the other ... on the left, the right-hand side, when ... well, you know those flats at the back of Wellington Road have been built...

Mm.

... 'cause there used to be a police station, round the back there, when I was a child, it's on the main ... it's off the main Lewes Road.

Aha. Right.

And I can't, well I can describe it; it's near to St Paul's Street. You know St Paul's Street?

Aha.

It's off St Paul's Street, and you go straight up on that side, and that, and the houses are about three storeys, and that, and you go, when you go into the front door, you go in from the pavement into the front door: they're over a hundred years old they are, those houses.

And what was Mrs White like?

Well, she was alright, but she was a little bit older, she was in her sixties, I think: sixties or late, in her late sixties, 'cause I stayed with 'er for about ten years or more. No, she might have been just over seventy, 'cause when she died, I think she died in her early eighties, so then I had to be moved again, you see.

So you were, what, in your teens...

Yeah.

... when you went there...

Yeah, fourteen: I was fourteen. I was fourteen, sorry, I was fourteen.

Right: and so ... oh! you went to Preston School...

Yeah.

... when you were with Mrs Wood...

Yeah.

... and then what happened after that, in terms of your schooling?

Well, when I left Mrs Wood's, I went to Mrs, as I say, Mrs White, but I didn't go to school for a little while, but, 'cause then the War finished, and then there was, there was a special school for learning difficulties people, along the Lewes Road, the bottom of Hollingdean Road, and that's where I went.

What was that called?

It was called 'Hollingdean Special School for Learning Difficulties', and it was a very old building, opposite The Bear pub, which is still called The Bear pub: as you know, that big hill goes up Bear Road, opposite there, and the building, 'cause it's not there now, 'cause it's a church, but the trouble was, when I went there, it was a very old building, with half brick, and half galava ... metal stuff, up the walls and on the roof,

and when I went there, they had gas light still: gas lights, still; and till about when I was about there for about a year or so, and then they changed into electric.

Mm. So how long were you at that school?

Well, I was there from, what, I would say, from ... what was it from? I would say ... ooh no! I went to that school before I ... sorry, I went to that school before I went to Mrs White, because I remember ... that's right, sorry, I remember goin' from Mrs Wood's, and I used to walk all down, down the Drove to this Fiveways, and I used to get on at the Stanmer Park pub, get a bus at the Stanmer Park pub, bus, and it was called the Number Fourteen bus, and that took me down to the Gaiety, 'cause there used to be a Gaiety at the bottom, the bottom of Hollingdean Road, didn't there?

Mm hm.

And the school used to be on the left-hand side. Sorry about that, missing that out, 'cause I went there bef... as I say, I went, it must have been about, gettin' on for twelve, wasn't it, and that, and I was fourteen when I ... I think it was near enough fourteen, when I went to Mrs White's ...

And you carried on going.

Carried on going to that school from St Martin's Place, yeah.

So what was that school like?

It was alright, but, you know, they'd teach you, try to teach you to read, which I did, caught up a little bit, with my reading, but, and all that, but not a lot, and adding up, I can add up and all that, so, as I say, it's such a shame I lost a lot of schoolin' during the War, and also I think I'm lexy [phon.], is it called lexy, when you can't learn all that well? Is it lexis? [phon.]

Not dyslexia?

Yeah, I think I've got a bit of that as well, in me.

Right.

Because I, because I, sometimes I know how to spell a word, but I'm always missin' out, like some of the word, like an 'a', when, in some of the words that I say: so I must be a little bit lexy [phon.] as well.

And so how, do you know, roughly, how many other children there were at the school?

Ooh no. No, you're tellin' me now: I should imagine there would probably be about, over a hundred. It was a mixed school as well, and I think they had about four classes, classrooms, and there was different ages.

From how young until how old?

Well, I would say from, from eight onwards; not little ones, I think: from eight onwards, say, something like that; it could be six, I don't know, but it wasn't the very young ones they didn't have there: 'cause as I say, I'm stickin' to eight, up to sixteen, and that's when I left, at sixteen.

And so you did, you learnt to read and you learnt to count...

Yeah, well I learnt to count and then almost learnt to read, but then I had to leave, you see, at sixteen.

What other kinds of lessons did you do at the school?

Well, we did some art and some woodwork, and there was a , there used to be somebody come in, to teach them to do shoe mending, but I didn't do that, 'cause of my arms, and that, but I did a bit of woodwork, and that, 'cause I did readin', and arithmetic, and all that, and addin' up. [end of side.]

Tape 1 Side B [Track 2]

... and I left, and I wanted to go out to work, and the, and because the authorities on the Old Shoreham Road, and the, and the people what looked after you, like Mrs White, said I wasn't, wasn't able to go out to work, at all, because of my disabilities, in those days, so I, so I just, so I had to go, so what happened when I left, I'd go to the Old Shoreham Road, the Federation on the Old Shoreham Road, and it was only for mornings. The young la... the young males went in, the young males went in the mornings, and the, and the ladies went in the afternoons, and all that, but we were told ... we only did two hours in the morning, and we were told to leave the Seven Dials area by one o' clock: if you don't, you'll get, you're in serious trouble.

Why was that?

Well, they didn't want us to mix with the girls in those days: they were very, very strict in those days. They wouldn't let disabled people mix together, the opposite sex mix together.

But your school was a mixed school.

Yes, the school was, but the Federation on the Old Shoreham Road wasn't, you see: that's why I say, the boys went in the mornin', to this, 'cause it was a, it wasn't a school, it was a, like a, like a day centre, which they didn't even call it 'day centres' in those days: they called it ... I forget what they called them in those days; we used to call it 'mornin' classes' and 'afternoon class, classrooms', you know, where we used to make things, and all that, and do, and all that, and do weavin', and do embroidery work, and do drawin' and all that, whatever they think disabled people was fit to do, 'cause a lot of them, a lot of them were much older than what I was, you see.

And what sorts of things did you do?

Well, I did, I did embroidery work, and I did some weaving, like making mats, and one thing and the other: and I did some ball making, well with cotton, threading cotton, and making balls, and all that, pom poms and all that, making them look like pom poms and all that: and I did some drawing, which I liked, which I used to like: art and that. Then, I think, one day, one day, I used to go, when the, the Feder... Spastics Society started up in Brighton, I think that was in the for... they used to call 'em 'The Spastics Society', before they called it 'Scope', and it used to be local: they started up in, at the end of the 1940's, and I didn't, I didn't used to go, I used to go on the outings and all that once a year. I used to go on the Brighton and Hove Spastics Society outings, and all that, and I got mixed with several people, and all that, and, and one day, when I went in to Hamilton House along Dyke Road, I used to go and see 'em now and again, visit, and there was a called lady, a lady called Mrs Washer, in the, in the, I believe it was in the si... sixties, and she asked me if I wanted to come to, to come to Hamilton House, and I said I would, but I said, you had to, you had to make arrangements with the, with the Feder... with The Guardianship Society along the Old Shoreham Road, so, which they got in touch with, and it was in, and I think it was 19...68, January 1968, that's why I left ... 1965, I left Graveshead Foundation, which was called 'The Guardianship Society' in those days, and after Christmas, 1st January, I went to Hamilton House, up Dyke Road: no, sorry, Hamilton House, they moved from Dyke Road a year before, in 1965, to Wilbury Avenue.

Wilbury Avenue.

Where they are now,

Yeah.

And it was, like I said, it was on the ... 1968, January 1968, 1st January 1968, I went to Hamilton House, and I was only there on a six months', six months' trial, to see how I'd get on, and I've been there ever since, and it must be nearly, thirty-nine years, is it, somethin' like that. [laughs.]

So what was Hamilton House like, when you first went there?

Well, when I first went to Hamilton House, there was very few grown-up people there. I think they must have had about, I think about, six or eight grown-up, 'cause they had a mixed group: they had young children there as well, quite small, from two onwards, and they used to, they used to be upstairs, you know, and we used to be downstairs: but there is, there is two people up there, what have been there longer than what I have, been up there: Teddy Giles and Janet Robinson, they're still up there now, to this day: and, when I went to Hamilton House, in 1968, I started making, stuffing toys, and doing embroidery work there, and doin' all sorts, [?] stoppers, and that, everything, and making calendars out of cigarette packets; you know the cigarette packets? We used to make calendars out of those.

How did you do that?

Well, we used to make 'em, cut them into a, one side, you used to cut one corner off like that, make it look like a round, and the other bit square, on the top: you used to cut like a, like a 'V' shape: it used to be square all the way round, but cut out like a 'V' shape: once you cut up the 'V' shape, you used to join them up, together, and I think you'd have about ten, and it used to be like, join 'em up again, round, and you used to join them up, and you used to put an elastic band in the middle, to keep the whole thing together, and you used to stick a, stick a picture on it, from either a birthday card, or a Christmas card, [rustling] and you put a little candle on the bottom, and that wasn't, at the back, at the top: you used to do that at Christmas time, start from September onwards.

What would happen with the calendars?

Well, you used to sell them, at the Fair: we used to have a Fair at the Corn Exchange, in those days, and all that, [?] ten years.

And did you enjoy those kinds of things?

Yes I did, yes. I used to help at the Fair, and everythink. Yes.

And what do you think about embroidery?

I used to, I used to enjoy embroidery work, but also, I've got one mat which I made, and I've got it here, at home.

And what's that like?

Well, it's, It's alright, but I'll show you later.

O.K. Alright. So, going back to when you left school: you said you wanted to work...

Yeah.

What kinds of things did you hope you would be doing?

Well, the only thing I thought I could do, is somethin' like garden work, or lookin' after animals, but even then, [laughs] they said I wasn't capable of doin' that, so ...

So that was it: you...

Yeah, 'cause in the early days, I haven't told you this, in the early days, when the War finished, the people what looked after you, especially Mrs Wood, and the foster parents what looked after you, right up to when I was with Mrs White, I think it finished in the end of the 1950's, we used to have to go, every five years, you had to go down to the Town Hall, in front of a Junior Court, before the Court started, you had to go in front of some judges, in a little room: you were only in there for about, for about, five or ten minutes, and that was it, to get, to get a licence, 'cause they had to get a licence and that was the only way they had, to get a licence, to look after us: and all that.

And you had to go as well?

I had to go as well, yeah.

So what was that like?

Well, that was alright, because they asked you lots of questions and all that, you know.

What sort of questions did they ask?

Well, what was the home like, and all that, and all that: because, when I wanted to go out to work, they said, 'Would you like to go out to work?' and I said, 'Yes', but then then foster parents then, she said, 'I don't think he's capable of doin' it', you know, 'cause, in those days, they didn't let any disabled people go out to work much at all, did they, when I was young, at all. So...

And how did you feel about that?

Well, I felt very, very bad about it, because, I remember once, I came 'ome, when I, this was when I was with Mrs White, I think it was the last time I went to the Town

Hall, and when I came home, I felt so bad about it, when they told me I couldn't work or anything, so I, so I went out, out, out without lettin' Mrs White know I'm gone, and I went and sat out on the Level, cryin': 'course, in the end I had to go back home, didn't I, and I got ticked off [laughs] over that, you know, for leaving home.

Mm. So the level, which is a... [?talking together: inaudible.]

Yeah, by level: it wasn't far from home, anyway. I was just upset, I was just upset, and I went down there to try and get over it. I remember cryin', but...

And so, instead of going to work, you had to go to the Federation...

Yes.

Can you explain a little bit more about what the Federation was?

Well, it wasn't the Federation in those days.

It was called?

'The Guardianship Society'.

The Guardianship Society. Yes.

Yes.

So can you explain a little bit about what that was?

Well, it was like a day centre, like Hamilton House, where you did, where you either do, make things, your stools, or weavin', or perhaps woodwork, I did some woodwork sometimes there, you know, because, as I say, we were only there two mornin's, two

hours a week, no two hours a day, sorry, two hours a day, five days a week: like I said, we had to leave, finish at twelve, and we had to be out at the hour, by one o'clock, or be home by one, 'cause that's what we were told.

And did anyone ever disobey that?

I think there was probably one or two did, 'cause I heard one of our teachers say, 'You was in the area when so-and-so was comin' to the afternoon session', you know.

And what happened to that person?

I don't know. I do not know, because, because I tried to get out of the area in those days, get away, causin', if they were causin' trouble, I tried to keep away from it, you know.

Did you make any friends there?

Oh yeah, I made lots of friends there, yes, with the, with a females, no, with the males, sorry, and that, but we had, as I say, by the after..., by one o'clock, you wasn't supposed to meet the females, but I think one or two did over the week ends, and one [laughs] thing and the other, they used to go on that way, anyway, so.... yes. But, like I said, I was there for a while, and I was asked to go along to the, would I like to go to Hamilton House, and I did, you see, and, like I said, I was only there, supposed to be there for about twelve, about six months, twelve, and I stayed there ever since.

So, in what ways was Hamilton House different?

Well, it's, the trouble is, it's changed over the years, because when I was there, there wasn't many senior, and as one or two couldn't do nothin', like Ted, he couldn't do nothin', Marie Hicks couldn't do nothin', Marie's not up there now, but Marie Hicks couldn't do nothin'; they used to have somebody to play music with them and all that;

you know what I mean, and talk to them and all that: you see. But, like I said, I made, I done all sorts of things at Hamilton House, even to this day, I do all sorts of things. I've done pottery, I've made of lots of pottery stuff up there. I've done lots of art stuff up there, and a lot of it's on, a lot of it's on, up on the walls in Hamilton House, what I've done, and all that: so I've done quite a bit. Because these days, we do and all that, as well, at Hamilton House, besides pottery and art, and, and that: and cookin'. Do cooking classes as well. Is there anythin' else you want to know?

Well, yeah. So if you could maybe ... how long would you go up then to Hamilton House?

Well, these days, I go, I started goin' to Hamilton House five days a week for quite a number of years. Since I've been independent for the last eighteen to nineteen years, 'cause it was, I was fifty-one when I become independent, fifty-one and a half when I become independent, and I'm seventy now, and I did five days a week for about, about three or four years, but then after that, I thought, 'Well, I must try and cut it down a bit, because I've got jobs at home to do, like washin' and all that, and tidy the home up', so they give me a day off to do that. Then, then, then, a little while afterwards, I thought, 'Well', because I used to do my shoppin' once a week, when I, when I was at Hamilton House, I used to go down to Sainsbury's down George Street, which used to be down George Street, Sainsbury's, and bring it back, and take it home, home on the mini bus, but when Sainsbury's closed, closed down George Street, I decided, I asked them if I could have another, take another day, I asked my keyworker if I could take another day off from work, and he said, 'Yes', to do my washing and all that. Yes, and do a bit of, do a bit of tidyin' as well. That's Wednesdays and Fridays, and it's been like that for about, it must be about, eight years now.

And so you were at Mrs Wood's and Mrs White...

Oh, and I went to Mrs Allen.

So you were at Mrs White.....

Sorry about that.

... until what age?

I was twenty-four.

Twenty-four.

Sorry, twenty-four. I went, I was twenty-four when I went to Mrs Allen, and that was, that was just inside [?] along the Lewes Road, near the Avenue, Southwall Avenue, near, near there, and I was there, and I was in Number eleven there. South Wall Avenue, and her name was Mrs Allan, and her husband, and she had her son livin' with her as well, and she had one other person, which I become very friend of, about ten years ago: no, no, sorry, about fifteen, fifteen, sorry, fifteen years ago, I became, when he, when we met up again, at a party, and he, 'cause he got married again, no sorry, he got married, he got married to somebody called Alison and he, the pal who, what shared the same foster home as me was Peter, Peter James, 'cause, as I say, we got, meet up together again, because about, about four years ago, his wife died, and a year later, he died, about two years ago, so so, so I lost, so I lost two friends there: 'cause they used to invite me one or two, three times, or four times a year, over to lunch, over to their flat, at Hangleton, and that.

So, at twenty-four, you went to live with Mrs Allan: what kind of arrangement was that? What happened?

That arrangement wasn't, wasn't too bad, because I was allowed to go anywhere. I went out: out, I went to Eastbourne once or twice, and I believe I went down to Portsmouth once or, once: and I, and I went for bus rides and, and that: and I went, 'cause, as I say, I went on holiday once or twice, well, a few times, there. I went on

holiday a few times from there, and that. That's when my holidays started, when I was with Mrs Allen: with the Federation on the Old Shoreham Road, you know, well The Guard... not the Federation, the ... The Spastics Society, sorry, The Spastics Society, not the Federation, the Spastics Society: and that. And I went to Woodlarks, and I went to Westcliffe, near Southend, and Clacton, on holiday, and all that, once a year. That's where the big holidays started.

So where was your first holiday?

The first holiday was at Westcliffe, near Southend. It was a small family hotel, which, run by The Spastics Society, which is called 'Scope' now, isn't it? 'Cause they used to have one there, and I remember it was only ten pound a week, and I don't know what happ... if the Society paid the other half, I don't know, the twenty pound a week, I don't know, but we only had, I only had to pay ten pound a week, that's all I paid, and that went on for about three or four years, and after that, they closed that one down, because it wasn't, it wasn't ... fire-proof or somethin' for the wheelchairs or somethin', you know what I mean, 'cause, 'cause the trouble is, when we used to go into the building, you couldn't go in the front, garden way, the main entrance, with wheelchairs: you had to go up a side, a side entrance, and at the side entrance, especially when it was windy, there used to be like a big door, and when you went in through this big door, you went into the lift, straight into the lift! And it, and it was, like I say, it was ever so windy, and that was the way you got into the building with wheelchairs, but I managed to get into the front way when you, down the steps, and all that, but most people up the side entrance, and I think that's why they had to move there, because it wasn't, it wasn't fire-proof for wheelchairs, and that, 'cause they moved to Bognor Regis, down in Bognor, they bought a place, which was a nice place: and, of course, as I said, they had one at Clacton as well. I went to that one, but, 'cause, 'cause after we, they closed the Westcliffe one down, 'course, prices went up a lot: they kept on goin' up, quite a bit, and the last time I, 'cause in those days, I should have said, I never used to pay for my 'olidays. It used to come out the ... it used to come out the social security benefits: they used to pay for it, in the early days, for the 'olidays, and that, 'cause, 'cause then they went up so high, so deep, nearly two hundred, 'cause when they went up to two hundred, they, I think they had to help to pay for it, and that, and then it went up to three hundred, and that's when they were losin', they were losin', you know, a lot of holiday people, because, 'cause, a lot of disabled people in the early eighties, started to go abroad and all that, with their parents, and with groups, and, because the, the two, the two, well, they had three, Scope had three holiday homes, which wasn't called 'Scope' in those days, it was called 'The Spastics Society', they had three holiday places: one in, as I say, one in

Bognor Regis, one in West... no, one in Clacton, and the other one was up in Scarborough, but I never went to the Scarborough one, and that, so, of course, now they're all gone now, 'cause most disabled people go abroad: and all that.

[rustling] So, how old were you, when you had your first holiday?

I would say I was in my twenties. I would say, about twenty-six or twenty-seven, I can't remember what year, but around about that.

So...

That was...

So would it have been with the Sixty-Two Clubs that you would have gone on holiday?

Well, I'm not quite sure whether it was the Sixty-Two Club, because I was going with Hamilton House. They used to arrange it.

Right.

Hamilton House used to do the arrangements. Maybe it was the Sixty-Two Club, because I didn't arr... left it to them, I left it to them to do it for me, and that, you

know, and as I say, I only paid ten pound, and I expect the other money came from the Society, or somethin', or the Sixty-Two Club, which you said: you see.

And, what are your memories of your first holiday?

Well, the memories of the first holiday, as I say, it was down in Westcliffe, 'cause we used to walk along the sea front and go down into Southend, to the pier and all that, and round the town and all that. We used to walk in. It used to be about a mile and a

half, but we used to, we used to enjoy it: and all that, you know, and sometimes, it seemed to go so quick, the week.

Mm. And what sorts of things did you do on holiday?

Well, we went on the pier, went to a show ... some of them went swimming, but I didn't, and we went to shows on the pier, you know. Well, we didn't go to a show on the pier: we went when, off... at Southend, we went to one off the pier, but when we went, when I was at Clacton, we went to a show on the pier, 'cause they had a pier where they, they had a pier where they had a sh... a whatsername on it, you know, a hall, where they had small concerts and all that, there. I remember goin' on those, 'cause, when I was at, when I was at Clacton, because the Butlin's Holiday Camp was there as well, course all that's gone these days, so I've been told. Hm. And, of course, when I was at, when I was at Clacton, they used to take us out in a minibus as well, at Clacton. Well, at Westcliffe, you didn't, I don't think, I don't remember goin' out on a minibus, because I don't think they had one. I think people made their own, at the beginning, when they had one at Westcliffe, I think people, it was a family concern, and the families went out on their own, you know what I mean? 'Cause I went out with a few other people, but, 'cause then you made your own movements, and where to go: and that. As I say, the one at Clacton they had minibuses, they had two, I think. They used to take you out, and all that, round Essex, and round, into Suffolk a bit, you know, all that, you know, round the Flat Mill area, and all that.

[Rustling] Well, what sort of outings did you do?

Well, we went to Flat Mill, and went to, went to, went up to Colchester, into the and ... and down to, and toured the, what is it, the, down Flinstone, I think they went down to, you know, it's down on the Suffolk coast, you know, not far: and that. And, 'cause, I, once or twice I did one or two trips myself, on the coach, went up to Norwich: went up to Norwich quite a few times from Clacton, on my own. They let me do that: and that, and I went to, I think I went up to Cambridge from there as well, once or twice. I enjoyed it. Hm.

Going back a bit, to when you were at Mrs Woods, and you were allowed to wander about in Brighton, what kinds of places did you visit in Brighton, when you ...

In my first home?

Mm.

Well, not a lot: because, because she only told me to go round the park area, at first. 'Cause then one day, as I say, I went down, down to the sea; because I said I was goin' to go down into town, and she said, 'That's alright', and of course, I went further than the town, 'cause I went down to the sea, 'cause I knew the sea was there, and I thought, 'Well, I'll go down to the sea myself, this time, and have a look', and, 'course it, then it started to rain, and 'cause I should have been home, what, by, by twelve o'clock, and I didn't get home till about nearly four, because of the rain, so, and I told you, I got ticked off when I got back home.

So, can you remember what it was like, the first time you saw the sea?

Well, it looked like any other place, like, more or less like it is today: because, when I first went there, all the barriers, all the barriers were down because people could walk onto the sea, beach, couldn't they, and that, you see, but, like I say, I don't remember goin' down there at all during the War; not at all. I didn't know Brighton, Brighton had a sea front, 'cause she didn't tell me, see, so...

Mm. And when did you start going sort of more [rustling] further afield than your ...

Well, mostly: when you mean further afield, no, I went further afield before I went to Mrs Allen's, when I was with Mrs White's at St Martin's Place. I went, like I say, I went with the, with the Society, The Spastics Society. We went up to Windsor, and another year, we'd probably do to Arundel for an outing, and went up to London and

all that: once a year, they used to do that. They used to hire a small coach, to take us up, and it was called 'Taylor Coaches', from Rottingdean, you know: I remember that. And that's where I met quite a few peo... and some of the people what went on the coach, never went to Hamilton House either, they were just on the, on their books, like I was, and it just made a day's outing for us, you know.

So that started, what, in the fifties, did it?

Yes, somethin' like that, in the fifties, yes.

So in your late teens, early twenties, you started going on these outings?

Yeah. That's right. That's right, yeah. Late twenties, I started going on the outings with Hamilton House, and Hamilton House comes under, started, it was started up with the local Spastics Society, but there used to be a doctor who used to work up the Sussex County, called 'Dr Hamilton'. Of course, of course, he's retired now; he lives in Australia, and retired. They moved to Australia in the, in the sixties, because his son caught polio, or somethin', when they were very bad, very bad polio flu, flu epi... about, and he, and after that, they moved to Australia. They thought it would be better for their son, and then, of course, they stayed there, but they have been back to Hamilton House, once or twice, in the seventies and eighties, come back to Hamilton House, but not since.

So did Dr Hamilton leave his house ...

[End of tape 1 Side B/ Track 2]

Tape 2 Side A [Track 3]

....schoolmaster, you know, not his name, but what was he like?

He was alright. He helped me a lot. He helped me on, he did help me a lot; when he could, you know, in spelling a bit, but he did help me to spell a bit more. I think he was the one what tried to get me goin': and all that; and he did a bit of addin' up with me as well: and that helped. Like I said, during the War, I lost a lot of schoolin' during the War, terrible: you know, so ... so I did, I think he helped me a lot, by the time I, I left, you know.

Could you maybe talk about what a typical day was like for you at you, your school?

Yeah, a typical day at my school. Well, the trouble is, I tried, I try not, not to think about it, you know, I tried to do all I could, you know: because I had, because I already had about eleven to sixteen, what's that, five years, was it?

Mm hm.

Five years at school, and I tried to catch up what I could, so it wasn't too bad at all: and that. And also we did a bit of, 'cause they had a little bit of allotment in the, in the playground, 'cause they made a, they had a bit of a playground and they built a little bit of garden, where we grows vegetables, and all that: and of course, of course the school was right next to Saunders Park, which is there today: Saunders Park is still there today, isn't it, as well?

So what kind of things did you do with the vegetable patch in the playground?

Well, I think, I think some of the children took 'em 'ome. I don't remember takin' anything 'ome, but some of the other children did take, take some vegetables 'ome with them: 'cause when, when the summer holidays come, we had six weeks off in the summer holiday, I think they used to get, to get most of the stuff up for then, you know, what they could, you know, and give to the children to take 'ome, and what

was left up when we got back, I think they give to the children as well, like tomatoes and all that: but most of the vegetables, like potatoes and all that, they gave, they gave, when we broke up: 'cause I remember doin' a bit of gardening as well. And I used to, I used to go, well, like I said, I used to go for walks and all that, when I was at, at, near Preston Park, and I used to go up to the, up to the railway st... at Preston Park railway station, and I used to hang around there, when a steam train come in, and all that: 'cause, cause, 'cause there used to be a steam train, come down from the West country, and sometimes it used to come to Preston Park, and before it went into Brighton station, it used to, it used to meet another engine, it used to wait there, and pull it into Brighton station, and the, this, the other train what came from the West country used to, used to stay at Preston Park for a little while, and, of course, and then, that used to go, go into, into the sheds near Preston, near Brighton station, to get all cleaned up, to, ready to go back, when it's got to go back. Yeah. And that's where I used to meet the, the steam train and the boiler man: and that, and have a little talk with them, you know. Got ticked off, I got ticked off for doin' that, [laughs] when I got home once, because somebody split, somebody split on me, and told Mrs Wood: that I was talking to, at Preston Park station, talking to the steam train, steam train, and she said, 'You shouldn't have been there.' [laughs.]

Why not?

Anyway, I don't know, but she ... that's what it was in those days, wa'n't? So... Yeah, very hard, those days were: but, but, but since I've become independent, in, I've enjoyed my life even more. I've done lots and lots of things, I've been on holidays in the last twenty years on my, on my own. Been down, been down ... well, first of all, I was with, we went with Campins Coaches: 'course, they've all gone now, and then I went with Alpha Coaches on holiday. I went, I went with day trips with Campins, but with Alpha Coaches, when I come independent, I went on outings, and about three or four years after I've been on, been here, at home, that must have been about, what twenty ... no, about fourteen, fif..., fourteen years ago, that's when I started to go on holiday with Alpha Coaches, and ever, ever since, I've been goin', goin' on holidays

with them, goin' on excursions with them, when they're not goin', for about three, about four or five years. About four years ago, they packed up, and Worthing, all in with Worthing now, so it's Worthing Coaches I go with now: go on excursions, holidays. I'm going on holiday this year with Worthing Coaches: I'm going down to, going down to Falmouth, in Cornwall: the Falmouth Hotel, for Christmas: so that'll be nice, something to look forward to.

[rustling noise] So, how have holidays changed, since you first started going?

Ooh, they have changed quite a bit, yeah. Like I said, as I have become independent, I've been doin' most of it myself: goin' on, as I said, first of all, with Alpha Coaches, and now with Worthing Coaches, 'cause it's more or less the same family, but one family, one part of the family's retired, and the, and the, and the other, his other ... and the, what is it, uncles runs the, runs the business now from Worthing: you see, but it's, 'cause Worthing's got an office in Brighton where the Alpha Coaches along the Preston Road, they got an office along there, which is called 'Worthing Coaches', office now, where, what was, 'Alpha Coaches', so ... so that's how I managed to keep goin' on holiday, and that: and excursions and all that, which are quite good.

So, I mean, as a disabled person, have you found it... easier to go on holiday now, or harder?

Well, I, sometimes, I find it harder to go on holiday, because, because I can't get, find anybody to, to go with me: that's the only reason. But I meet friends on holiday, but I can't seem to get anybody to, I can't find, easy to get anybody to go with me; on holiday. You see, even on a coach excursion, I find it hard: even when my friend was alive, he didn't, he didn't like coaches at all, so ... so I said, 'Would you like to come on the excursions with me?' He thought about it, but then he changed his mind. 'No,' he said. He says, 'I can't do it now, especially my wife's gone,' so there you are. Course, he's gone now. He's been gone the last two years.

And talking about friendships you made...

Mm.

I mean, sort of, can you talk about, maybe, you know, some of the friends that you made and where you met them: your sort of real friends?

Well, you say the, yes, the real friends I made was my friend what's died. I did see, see his wife, but not a lot, when his wife was around, because I don't think his wife wanted it, but when his wife died, I saw him more and more. He wanted me to see him more, because he had, he had lots of things wrong with him: not only heart problems, he had all sorts of things wrong with him. 'Cause I think that's, I think losin' his wife as well, and that's what made, that's why he died, because, I thought he would live for another two or three years, but, he only lived another year, after his wife. His wife, his wife died with cancer, you see.

Sorry, what was, what was his name?

Peter James: sorry, Peter James.

Peter James: and where did you meet Peter?

I said, I met Peter at Mrs Allen's, 'cause he was one of the, one of the people she was lookin' after, but he was almost independent then; but he had to have somebody to guide him, to guide him at first when he was young, you know what I mean, 'cause he was disabled, you see: but I came under the ... I come under, he didn't come under The Guardianship Society, but I did, you see, so... but anyway, who he came under, I don't know: but she was, she was lookin' after him, but he was more independent than what I was, in those days.

What was his disability?

Well, learning difficulties, and all that. He was a chef, in an hospital: he could do all that, but he couldn't do, do the writing bit, or the reading bit, you know what I mean, he had somebody under him. He worked at the Sussex, at the County for years, I think, and then he had to give it up because of his illness, and all that, nerves and all that.

So you ... how long did the two of you live together at Mrs Allen's then?

Ooh, I'd say, I would say, about five years. He wasn't there when I first went there. It was only, only in the last five years.

[Rustling] And...

And, of course, when she, when she, when Mrs Allen died, 'cause she died under, under operation theatre, her daughter took me on, she took us on, but then that only lasted for about eleven months, and her daughter died, 'cause she had a hole in the heart, she died under the operation theatre as well.

Mm.

It was very sad, and then of course, then, they had to find, find me a new home, but I don't know what happened to Peter, because whether he had to go and look for himself, or whether he got, got somebody else to do it for him, but he wasn't under The Guardianship Society at all.

So, how old were you when the second Mrs Allen died, then?

I would say I was in my, in my late thirties.

And so, what was it like, thinking of, 'Where am I going to live next?' or ...

They did, yeah, I did, they did put me into another small place, at, another small place in Peacehaven, with another Mrs Allen. I was only there nine months or more, it might be more, because, the trouble was, I was livin' on top of the cliffs, and the Fed... The Guardianship Society, The Federation, wouldn't allow it, in those days, at all: living right near, on top of the cliffs: but what happened was, she was havin' a bungalow built, you know, for 'erself, and she said she would take me, and probably somebody else, as a, as a foster parent, into the bungalow: but it went on for months, and months and months, and the bungalow wasn't finished, and in the end, they took ... The Old, the people on the Old Shoreham Road, The Guardianship Society, who was in charge in those days, took me away from Mrs Allan, and put me up with Mrs Humphreys. I was only there for temporary, up near, near the Seven Dials, up there for a little while, for about, for about a month or two, and then I left, I left there and went with Mrs, Mrs Spencer. She had a very big ... she had lots and lots of boys and that, 'cause she didn't only have one big house, she had several. She had her flats as well, and I used to live in the flats, down the road: and that, and I was, I was with 'er for about eight or nine years, as well, it might be more, up till about nearly twenty years ago, and then, and then, twenty years ago, somebody came down from Brent, and The Guardianship Society, to The Guardianship Society, and somebody came from Hamilton House, and they had a talk together, and about three or four months later, I had a, there was a letter which was sent to Mrs Spencer, and Mrs Spencer read it out: whether it was supposed to have been for me, straight to me, I don't know, but she read it out, and she said, 'They think that you might be able to become independent,' or something, you know, and, of course, she didn't agree with that at all: and the, and then they had to send somebody down from Brent, a young fellow down from Brent, to see me, at Hamilton House, he saw me at Hamilton House, and he asked me, he said, 'Would you like to, to live on your, be independent?', and I said, 'Yes', but, cause then they arranged it for me to go with Mrs, to go with Mrs Knight, in York Road, Hove, to learn all the details what you have to learn, to look after yourself, and I was only there nine months, and I, 'cause I'd picked up a lot of things at Mrs Spencer's, you know, 'cause I used to help, do all the washin' up at Mrs Spencer's, in the kitchen, and all that, when I could, you know, to help her, to help

her, you know, and, and I think that's why I picked up lots, lots of bits up, you know: and I, and I was only at Mrs Knight's for nine months or more, it might have been a bit more, and then she said, she said, 'You're ready to move in, to your flat somewhere. Would you like to go?' I said, 'Yes', because this is why I came: and I took this flat on, you know: 'cause I said I didn't want to go anywhere, except Whitehawk: I don't know why, but Whitehawk's a bit rough area, so I came in, and I've been here ever since, about twenty years, since 19...

So you've lived in this flat in Coldean, for the last ...

Yes...

... twenty years.

Since I was fifty-one and a half, and I'm seventy now.

Mm.

Yes, is that nineteen years?

Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Mm. Mm. Mm.

So, had you thought about it before then, living independently?

No, no! It was only because, because the, they thought I could ... the person from Brent and the, someb... I don't know if it was somebody from The Guardianship ... from the, from the fir... from the Scope, well, it was called 'The Spastics Society' in those days, thought I could, I could look after myself, thought and they thought, well, they'd give it a trial, you know, so I learnt from Mrs Spenc... from Mrs, Mrs Pat

Knight, I learnt from her and she said, 'You're ready for it', and then they put, then they found me a place, and they said, 'You can, you, would you like to stay here? I said 'Yes', start here?' Well I remember comin' 'ere; but that was February, but we, but we came, but we could, we brought some stuff in, but we couldn't move in, because of the water was frozed up, so we had to wait a month later: go back to Mrs Knight's, Pat, Pat Knight's, and then, for a month, and then, move me here, in March, and, and I've been 'ere ever since. So: and that, and I've fair enjoyed it, you know, being independent.

So why didn't Mrs Spencer agree?

I do not know: well, she 'ad lots of other people, and she thought we weren't capable of lookin' after ourselves, and, a lot of us, you know: course now, now they try to get one or two, if they can, well, the authorities do, don't they, to try and do it, if they can, but not all can't do it, you see, not all of them can't do it, but I'm managing alright, as you know. I've been, I've been here for so long now, and managing very well, lookin' after the flat, and everythink.

Mm. I mean you were helping her up, her with the washing up, and things like that...

At Mrs Spence, Mrs Spencer's and all that, yes.

So you could, you were showing that you could do things.

Yeah. Yeah.

So what sort of things did you learn at Mrs Knight's, before you became independent?

Well, I learnt to, learnt to cook the meals, but, like I said, I had a small Belling cooker at Mrs Knight's, and she showed me on, how to do it on the big cooker in 'er kitchen, which I picked up very, very quick, because I knew a bit about it anyway, from Mrs

Spencer's: and all that, so: and that: and I did very well on my own, 'cause, 'cause within nine months, she said, 'You're ready for it', because I was told by the, by the social worker, it was a, it was a Mrs Robinson, I think: I can't think of 'er Christian name, but I'll say 'Mrs Robinson', 'cause her second name was 'Robinson', and she said, 'It will take you two years to learn', but it didn't. It took me just nine months, 'cause I picked up a lot, as I say, I picked up a lot before I went to Mrs Knight's.

So, when, when you had the letter from Brent...

Mm.

...and Scope, saying, 'I think you can be independent.' How did you feel?

Well, I don't think it was from Scope: I think it was just from the...

From Brent.

From Brent, yeah.

So what was your reaction?

Well, first of all, she, Mrs Spencer read it out, and she said, 'I don't think you can manage on your own', but, but, but then, she told, she must have told the people on the Old Shoreham Road I can't do it, and then they got in touch with Brent, and then, this, then this young feller came down and had a word with me, at Hamilton House, and we went into the garden. He says, 'I think you could look after yourself.' I said, 'Yes. Well,' I said, 'I'll have a go at it anyway,' you know: 'cause they left it like that, and they left it with the people on the Old Shoreham Road, the Federation on the Old Shoreham Road, and, and that's where it went on from there, and they found me a place, you know, at Mrs Knight's, you know: 'cause the trouble was, they, they had to tell, they had to tell Mrs Spencer that, that I was only goin', goin' for a little while,

to see, to see what I can do: to see what I can do, you know: and, of course, in the end, I did alright, and, of course, I never went back to Mrs Spencer's: 'cause, they said, if you didn't, didn't manage on ... Mrs Knight, you'll have to go back to Mrs Spencer's.

So, how did you feel, when you saw this flat for the first time?

Well, when it we came, it was awful, and we looked at it, and then we did a bit of cleaning up, and then I, then I was goin' to move in the next week, the week after that I was gonner move in, because, then they said, 'Ooh,' they said, 'can't get no water!' Couldn't get no water or anything, because it was very cold, and everything was frozed up, so we 'ad to wait till it thawed out, you know, for for a mon..., for three weeks.

So it was 1984, was it, you moved in here?

Yeah, it must have been: yeah, if it's nearly twenty years, yeah. I was fifty-one and a half.

And, what was the best thing for you, about moving here?

Well, it gave me more independence, didn't it? And more freedom, and that.

Freedom to do what?

What I wanna do. Well, goin' out, and all that sort of thing, you know. Gettin' up when I wa... well, I have to get up when I go to the Centre, and all that, and then, if I'm goin' out, I have to get up, but, if I don't have, gettin' up in a rush, then I don't have to get up till I'm when ready for it: but I still get up, more or less, not too late, like this mornin', I got up, I didn't have to go to the Centre, and I got round about, about a quarter to seven: and all that: well, to get a wash, and do my 'air, and all that.

[Rustling] And what other things have you been able to do here, that you weren't able to do before?

Well, well, look after the flat, and get things what I want, and all that. I've got more or less everythin' I want now: and all that. And I can put the telly on, and, put the telly on when I want to, but I never, I never go to bed too late at night anyway; I'm in bed by ten o'clock. It's only now and again, I might stay out, stay up a bit later, like I did last night, because I, because I was watchin' that programme ... what d'you call it? The.... The Family Tree.

Who do you think you are?

Yeah, *Who do you think you are?*, yeah.

Yeah.

Yes, which was quite good, yeah.

What do you like about that programme?

Well, some of them, some of them, do find out, find out where they came from, and their, and their relations, don't they? And some relations, these days, don't want to have anything to do with them, do they? It's strange. 'Cause I always want to find out what, where my relations are. I'm still tryin' to get hold of Mick. He said he was goin' to get into the Salvation Army, to see if they can find anybody, he said, because I've got a birth certificate now, but, but he's so busy, and he, I'll have to ask him again, when I see him again next week, or some time: you know, if he's gettin' in touch with the Salvation Army, see if they can get hold, find out about my relations, 'cause I've got a birth certificate, or I don't know. I would like to find out if there is any relations of mine around. I would, that's why I keep, you know, hopin' that one day they, that somebody will turn up, but whether they will or not, I don't know. Otherwise, otherwise, in the early days, my life was quite hard: it was really hard: and

some days, you know, I felt, you know, a strange world, and you've got nobody, and yet, all, a lot, millions and millions of other people have got families, ain't they, and all that, you think of that, sometimes, you know, and you wish you 'ad a family and, or somebody, somewhere: but life has to go on, go on, doesn't it, and all that, doesn't it?

Did you ever try and find your mother?

Well, which I said, I don't think they could find my mother, but they tried to find somebody related to my mother: The Salvation Army, you know: because it wasn't until about ten years ago, or twelve years ago, when Mick tried The Salvation Army, you see: and I suppose, I suppose I could have gone to The Brighton Salvation Army, and asked them, years ago, if I'd known, known that, if they could have done that, but I didn't know, know about that, but, but Mick, when he took me on, he said, 'I'll get, get The Salvation Army to look into it', but they couldn't find anybody, but, but since they've had my birth certificate, you know, they might be able to do it, but I don't know: 'cause now I've got a birth certificate, and all that's come up with a name, so, I don't know: 'cause where I was born in London, it's nothin' like it now, 'cause it's all big buildin's round there now: round Baker Street, isn't it? That's, that's what I've been told: it's near the Baker Street area.

And have you ever been there?

Yeah, I've only ever been there about once, to the, is it the Wax Museum, down Baker Street?

Tussaud's: Madame Tussaud's.

Tussaud's: yeah, I've been there once: to Madam Tussaud. Mm.

When you, when you were growing up, were you aware of the lack of having a mother?

Well, I did, did, in some ways, I did, you know, because, because, you... it don't, it don't matter, it don't matter if you ask anybody, anybody in the foster parent, they say, 'No, you haven't got anybody' and all that, you know: 'cause I believe I asked one foster parent, I don't know if it was, if it was Mrs Wood or Mrs White, you know, and they said, 'No, you haven't got anybody', so there you are.

And that's all they said?

Mm.

How did that make you feel?

Well, it made me feel sad, and I could have cried, you know. Yeah: but I knew I had, I knew that, probably knew that, there must have been somebody, but, because, because they couldn't find out, and if they could find out, you see, because, there's been a War on and all that, and who knows? She probably got killed in the War, you know. Nobody knows, do they? You see. 'Cause that's where they lived, you see, my parents, they lived up in London, even when the War started, I understand, they did live up there, but when the War was on and of course, everythin' went: and also, I didn't tell you this: when I was nine, nine years of age, I went back to Stanmore, in London, to hospital, to have two operations on my leg: because I used to, I used to walk on my toes, right up to nine years of age. Sorry about this. I used to walk on my toes, you see; 'cause I went, 'cause I used to go to the clinic down in Sussex Street: there used to be there which you, down in Sussex Street, and I saw a Doctor Chumley, and, and they went ... it was 1944, and they arranged for me to go into hospital in 1944, and, of course, there was no National Health or anything. I think the Council or somebody paid for it: somebody must have paid for it: I think it was the Council, or

the ... that come out of the funds or somethin', and that's what they paid for the hospital treatment in those days.

What was it like, going into hospital in 1944?

Well, I went, when I went to Stanmore, it was just opening up again, because, in the first part of the War, they closed it down because of the bombs, and bombings and all that, so they closed it down, but, but, later, before the War finished, they opened it up again, and, of course, the trouble is, what they used, when they moved, moved, moved the ordinary people out, they used it at one stage for the Army, because, when I went up there, there was a children's ward, and there was only about four of us in, four of us on the first, the first week, sorry, there was only four of us, but, but, and there was a, and there was a girl's ward next door, and I don't know how many in that ward. But the trouble was, in the fields, they built these huts: I don't know if they just built those before the War finished, or whether they built them, built them when they, when they closed the hospital down, but they did open it up again, and it would be the Army and the Air Force there, for the, for the wounded soldiers, 'cause they had wounded soldiers up there: because when I had my operations and all that, and when I went into the pool, 'cause I was very frightened, goin' into water, there was a, there was a physio person there, and then there was a nurse, but there was one army bloke, he tried, I don't know if he was tryin' to frighten the [laughs] physio or the nurse, he used to, he used to, when he was goin' into the pool, he used to get right down the bottom of the pool, and try and stay there for quite a few minutes, about, it could have been about fifteen minutes or somethin', and the physio says, 'Come up, come up! Come on, you mustn't stay down there too long,' and all that, you know: and that frightened me, as ... [laughs] her getting scared of things frightened me as well. Seeing 'im at, a man on the bottom of the pool. Hm.

So why, why were you in the pool?

Well, for treatment, wasn't I? For the treatment, sorry, for the treatment. You had to try and get my strength back in the leg, I think.

Oh, I se: so it was building up the muscles?

Muscles: yeah.

Right.

But I was very frightened, especially when I saw this, this bloke layin' on the bottom of the pool: yeah.

So, what else can you remember? Can you remember anything about the, the operation?

Well, not a lot, because the trouble was, we were in a ward, same as I was, when I was a baby: it was like a big ward, and they had these long doors, and there was a long, it was a long ward: and the trouble was, they didn't do the operation in, on that, in that building, 'cause they had to, 'cause where the ward was, they had another big building in the middle, or upstairs, and, and the kitchens, and all that, you see? But when they used to take you for the operations, they used to put you on a trolley, and wrap a blanket over the trolley so you won't get cold: this was in the winter, and take you to the central building, in the middle of the hospital. I remember that, [tape ran out]

Tape 2 Side B [Track 4]

... had people, parents to come, come to see 'em, every Saturday, every week end, because they only allowed what, Wednesday afternoons, I think, which, they didn't get many in those days, not [rustling] Wednesday afternoons, during the War, but mostly week ends, and, of course, me, didn't get anybody, at all.

And how did that feel?

[Laughs] Well, if felt, it felt very strange. It felt very strange, not to have anybody to come and see me, you know: 'cause then, then, the nurses used to take me into the kitchen, sometimes and give me a, give me a, bread and drippin', or bread and butter, butter and jam, you know: and somethin' to drink, you know.

How long were you in hospital for, then?

Well, I was in hospital for six months or more: six months, right up from November, right round to next March, I think it was: March: nearly six months, 'cause I had one operation, and that was, and I was, and that wasn't necessary, so I had a operation on my ankle, and that wasn't necessary at all. So they, when they took the stitches out, and they started walking with me, and Dr, the one in charge, Dr Chumley, 'Ooh,' he says, 'that's not right now. We've probably got to do another one on him, you know.' In about three weeks, they did another one on me, at the back of the leg, and I think they, I think they broke the back bone of the leg: what do they call it, the ... panapolist [ph] bones, one just right up the leg and they broke it down in the ankle, and then joined it up again.

What was the idea? What was the idea behind the operation?

Well, to get, to get me heel down on the ground, to get me heel down on the ground: where before I was walkin' on my toes. Like I said, the first operation, I was still walkin' on my toes slightly: you see, so ...

So you had to, presumably, you had to learn how to walk all over again.

Again: yeah. Yeah.

And what, how was that?

It wasn't too bad: 'cause I was young, it wasn't too bad, and also, I was very anxious to, to do things on my own, as well, though I didn't have anybody, mother, or had anybody to help me, family or mother to 'elp me, show me how to do it, I just did it myself, you know: with the help of the physio and the nurses, you know: you know. I was glad, you know, to try and walk myself, you know, and in the end, I managed, so ... because, after six months they came back to Brighton, and Mrs Woods. I forgot all about that, what happened then.

So you ... it was seven, you went to Mrs Woods, and then, at nine, you went to Stanmore for six months...

Six months, yes.

... to have this operation ...

To have this operation: yeah. Two operations.

Mm.

Because, because these days, it plays up on me, because I've, I'm so restless, because, what with the circulation in the, in the leg, it's not the same, and of course, I have to be careful I don't get ulcers now. I've got a bandage on my leg now: you know.

And that's from the operation that you had all that time ago.

Well, it is, and of course, that's the age, my age now, because of the circulation in your leg: like, when it, when it gets, everybody, when it gets circulation, your blood circulation's not the same when you're about, after sixty, is it? You've got to be careful: it's not the same. A lot of people get lots, all sorts of things wrong with them, arthritis, but touch wood, I don't, I don't get that, but I've had, I do get this bad circulation in the right leg: even in the left leg sometimes, it plays up, because it's the balance, you see: the balance of both legs, you see, it plays up, because of the circulation: and that, you know. It's mostly the right leg what plays up a lot.

And that was the one that was operated on?

Mm, yeah: and that's why I've got the joint: that's why I wear a calliper, on the leg: a calliper, on the right, up the right side of the leg.

And how ... when did you start wearing that?

After I, after I left hospital. I start... they started putting it on, they started doin' it after I had the second operation, before the six months were up, before I left hospital, before the six months were up, before I left London, I had a pair of boots, to come to Brighton, and the calliper, on my leg, and the calliper used to be on both sides.

Right.

But they, but they found out, when I had a calliper on both sides, when I walked, it used to break the straps a lot. I don't if I used to put a lot of pressure on one, on one side, I don't know, but, then I used to see Dr Chumley every six months, and he says, 'Ooh,' he says, 'you don't need the calliper both sides: you...' I think he said, 'You're pulling, you're pulling on, on one side, you're pulling on the inside of your leg, you're pulling it too much', so we just have it on the one side, and that's why it's been there ever since. Like I said, I had two, two [rustling, as if demonstrating] metal things down both sides, to start off with, but he thought I was pulling, because of my walking, and all that, and I was pulling it too much, and it used to break the straps.

So... [rustling] so how did it feel the first time you had a calliper put on?

Well, it didn't feel too bad, at all, but it did, it did seem funny for quite a long time, because I was more or less draggin' my feet, I think I was draggin' my feet along, when I was walking, and, 'cause of the weight as well: I think that was why the straps were breaking. I think that's why the straps were breaking, and that, so ... but, but when I saw Dr Chumley at the clinic, Sussex Clinic, he says, 'You don't need straps on both sides: you only need it on one sides,' and that's why he, they done it on there, and ever since then, they've only ever had it on the one side up, on the outside: that's to keep the leg straight, more straight, to walk along.

Mm, and, as you've got older, have you found that there any other physical changes that you've noticed?

Physical changes. Well, I notice on this right side, and I've been told I've been like it all my life, according to the opticians, when I went to the opticians about, about fifteen years ago, he told me, 'You've got a very, very lazy eye,' and he says, 'It's been like that a long time. There's nothin', there's nothin' you can do about it: it, you just have to put up with it.' I can get up, I can see alright out of the left eye, and when I've got glasses on, I think that this eye is doin', doin' the same, but it's not: it's very lazy, and, and if I went to do that, I can't see ... cover that left eye up, I can't see a lot out of that eye at all: so... so it is, it has affected my, all down my one side from eyes, from top to bottom, all down one side.

And after you had your operation, when you were nine, did you have any other sorts of treatments, that you had?

No.

That was it.

That was it, yeah. I didn't, even when I came to Brighton, whether it was because they were short of staff, or short of physios, and all that, after the War, I don't know: I didn't get much treatment at all after I left the hospital: none at all.

So no physio or...

No. No, whether they thought I didn't need it, I don't know, but I would have thought I'd need a little bit: and all that, but, when I was in hospital, and also, I did have the physio for a little while when I came out of hospital, I suppose because of the leg, but then she put, she put a splint, she put a splint on this right arm, and at, it's supposed to be at night, not during the day time, for night time only: I used to have to wear this splint in bed: and, of course, and of course, that didn't last long, because I don't think the foster parent, Mrs Wood, or Mrs White, wanted to do, to do it much, you know: because it was only supposed to be on at night, not during the day time, you see: 'cause I couldn't do it myself, unless somebody done it for me, so that got for... it went for a little while, for a few months, and then, all of a sudden, it stopped, but I don't know why: but whether because they thought I, I didn't need it, or what: whether Mrs Woods thought I didn't need it, I don't know, but the physio did: the physio did at first, but, as I say, I only had the physio for, I think, about six months, and after six months, after I left the hospital, it was all finished with.

And do you think it made a difference at all?

Well, I don't think it, I think it could have made, strengthened the arm a bit, a bit stronger quite quickly, but, this arm got, got a little bit better as the years went on, 'cause I used it a bit, and all that sort of thing: but the trouble is, if I put anything in that hand, I can't ...and hold it, I can't, I can't feel it much, and if I open that hand, that hand opens up, so I drop things in that hand, [laughs] so that's why I have to be careful, and that's why I learnt, I learnt that myself: if I open the right hand, yeah, the fingers in the right, in the left hand, sorry, in the left hand, I gotta, I gotta put things down, down on the table, or somewhere, in my right hand, and have nothing in my

right hand, because, if I do things with my left, the right hand will do the same. I think it's to do with my disability.

So, did you want to have the splint on at nights, or were you happy that Mrs Wood...

Well, the problem was, I didn't really know what it was for at the time, you see: nobody told me.

Mm.

'Cause all the physio told me, she said, 'You've got to wear it at night time.' That's all she said.

But she didn't tell you why?

No.

Mm.

Well, she may have done, but, course, being so young, you don't, you don't remember every... you don't remember it, do you, being so young? She must have told Mrs Wood, or somebody at home, 'Make sure he gets on every night', but, even when I went home, I had it on the first couple of nights, then some nights, Mrs Woods didn't ever put it on.

Did she say anything about that, or...?

No, she didn't say anything to me about it at all. [rustling]

So, she just didn't put it on?

No: whether she thought, 'It's not goin' to make much difference,' I don't know: because it was a splint, and then they had to bandage it round, didn't they? They had a bandage round. [pause] So ... what else can we say? I'm just tryin' to think.

Are there any things that you can remember about the War?

Oh, yeah. It were, well, the trouble is, not a lot, because, as I say, I didn't hear much news, and I didn't hear many bombs drop, but I know they dropped in Brighton, and all that, because we, now and again, we heard them come over, and, and one dropped on the clinic in, down in Sussex Street, the clinic in Sussex Street, and some people got killed: that's what I was told by Mrs Wood. She said, 'You can't go to clinic today, because the clinic is shut, and it's been bombed: you know, and some people have been killed', so that, so I didn't go down there for months and months and months and, and that was that, and there were some bombs dropped in other places as well, but I, but she didn't tell me where the bombs were dropping, you know: she just said there was a War: and once or twice, specially at night, [rustling] when the, when the sirens went, she didn't even get me out of bed!

And what did you think then?

Well, I didn't, well, I didn't know much about things, did I? Being young, you know, or I thought, 'It won't drop, they won't drop 'ere,' you know.

So you weren't scared?

Well, a little bit scared, yeah: but not a lot, 'cause you didn't know what to do: 'cause we had to go up ... she didn't have no air raid shelters. The only thing she told us to get, during the day time, when the, when the sirens went, was under the table in the sitting room. She 'ad a big table in the sitting room, and she told us to get under the table: 'cause, as I say, at night, when the sirens went sometimes: I don't know how many times it went at night, but, you just stayed in bed. SO I don't know what Mrs Knight, Mrs Wood did, I don't know. And all day, and also, sometimes the nights

seemed, when you used to hear the sirens go in the War, and all that, and things comin' over, seemed so long, you know, 'cause you couldn't get back to sleep, or, sometimes: just stay awake.

So you didn't, you were saying you didn't really hear very much news at all.

Oh, no, no: and what news she had was a couple of days old, because the news she 'ad on her radio, she 'ad these battery radios, you know, with the liquid: I don't know if you've ever heard of them, have you?

Not really.

They're battery ones, and they had liquid in, and you could see them in the glass: they're like glass ones, and you could see all the liquid in it, and the news was a couple of days old, 'cause I saw 'er I don't know if it was 'er 'usband or what, I saw this fellow, I don't know if it was 'er 'usband: he, he joined, he got these bottles, and he, and he used to, when he wanted the news on, or put the radio on, he used to, he used to plug it into this liquid stuff, and it was like a battery thing: and it used to be liquid. And the news was a couple of days old: two or three days old.

Why was it a couple of days old?

Well, he used to go and buy it, in a shop. He used to go round the corner, and get it from the shops. 'Cause as I say, it wasn't electric: it was a battery, the old battery ones, like a liquid: I remember those, you know, like a char [phon.] You know, it was like a little char. [laughs] I don't know how it worked, but it did. Of course, the batteries today, it's all thick white stuff, isn't it, when they run, if you leave them too long, i'n't?

Mm. So, were you allowed to listen to the radio at any other time?

Well, now and again, but not very often.

What sorts of things did you listen to?

Well, the news, and what was it, *Worker's Playtime*, *Worker's Playtime* she, they used to put on, and [pause] ooh, *The Night at the Savoy*; I think it used to come from Eastbourne, you know, every Saturday night, we used to have *Music Night at the Savoy* : you know, from Eastbourne, you know, but, and some music they used to put on, I think, they used to, you know, when the BBC used to put records on, you know. As I say, all that used to be days old: days old, from these batteries: and I don't know if they did have electric ones, but, but I did see these battery ones she had, once or twice, you know, and I was told this, the news was, by this man, that the news was a couple of days old, 'The things what you listen to is two or three days old.' As I say, he used to go to the shop and buy it: round the corner, in the hardware shop.

Mm. [rustling] And what sort of other things did you do, for entertainment?

It's very, very hard to remember: as I told you, I did a lot of drawin', scribblin' and drawin', and playin' with little Dinky toys now and again, but, not very much, and the days, sometimes the days seemed very, very long, 'specially in the winter: seemed ver... seemed very, very long, you know, but the trouble is, I took as, really, I took life as it was, you know, because I didn't know about, about much of life really, only that there's people and all that: and I didn't even know how I came into the world: nobody told me. Nobody told me how I, how I came into the world: and that, and that wasn't until about I was, I was about, I think I was about ten, I think, or nine, and I went up to London, when I went up to hospital in London, when you saw other people comin' and all that, and, and the nurses talkin' about babies, and all that, you know: but otherwise, nobody told me how I came into the world, till then. [pause] And I did go to, when I was with Mrs, Mrs White, I did go to London once or twice, with another disabled person, which her daughter looked after, and he used to go out to work, and work in a brewery, but he was disabled, and he had an accident in the

brewery once, and he couldn't do no more then, after that, because he, they were puttin' the cover, when the, when they filled up the crates, the bottles, and put all the crates on the lorry, they were coverin' it up once, and all of a sudden, he slipped and all the things fell down off the lorry, and he was in hospital for quite a while. But before then, he took me, he took me up to London, once or twice, 'specially on Armistice Day, I don't know why, but he did take me up to London, 'cause I suppose Mrs White said, 'He would like to go to London.' 'Cause, when I knew we were goin' up to London, it was very cold, and it was Armistice Day, and I thought, 'Why is he goin' up to London on Armistice Day?' you know. And we went up there, and we went up there by coach, or by Southend Coach, and they used to stop at Crawley, then, and then Victoria, and we'd go from Victoria to the memorial, and then, after that, he, he went to Petticoat Lane, and all that sort of places, you know.

Why did you go to Armistice Day, do you know?

I do not know.

So what did you do? You went to ... you went to Vic...

We went to, up to Armistice Day, but we went by coach to Vic... from Brighton to Victoria, but they used to stop at Crawley: [rustling] there used to be a place in Crawley, where they used to stop for about twenty minutes, before they went on, and then we got up there about half past ten, and then we went straight to the War Memorial, where they have got service.

And can you remember anything about that?

Yeah. Oh yeah, meeting lots of people, and all that. That was strange, meetin' lots of people and all that, and watchin' the, watchin' the parade, and all that. And after that, you know, we went to Petticoat Lane, and sometimes, sometimes we went walkin' round London, because once, we walked round London, round Buckingham Palace,

you know. I, I enjoyed that, when I went up there, because I was just beginnin' to think what life was, but, before then, I didn't think what life was so much: and I was, I was, what, I was only, I think I was only ... sixteen then, when I, when I first went to London. As I say, it was a funny sort of time to go, wa'n't it, Armistice Day? 'Cause I didn't know whatever happened on Armistice Day: whether he went up to remember somebody, I suppose it might have been. Mm. [pause] And of course, one, as I say, when I first went there, Mrs White said, 'Would you like to go up to London', and I think his name was 'John'. I think his name was John. She said, 'Would you like to go up to London with John?' you know. I said, 'Yes.'

Mm.

Because I didn't realise that it, that it was the Armistice Day, you know, so...

And you said there was another time you went up to London, as well, was there?

Yeah, there was. I went up ... I think I went up one, one, one spring day with him, and that was cold, He went up ... the trouble was, see, I know what he went up for, he went up to see his mum, she was in the hospital up there, and he was near, not far from the Arsenal ground: it was one of these hospitals ... well, I think his mother was losin' her memory, because, because the trouble was, he went into the, he had to go to this gateman first, and he left me at, he left at, by the gateman. You see, he said, 'I won't be no longer, no more than twenty minutes,' so he went to, he went to the gateman to get a key, so he could go to his, to this place where his mother was in this hospital, but she, it was like a, it was like a flat or somethin', but they were locked up, 'cause they, had when they went in there, they had to lock, open it and all that, you know. It was very strange: I thought, 'That was strange!' I thought, it was more like a prison, rather than a hospital, but it was hospital, where people were losin' there memories, you know, and ... I think they were losin' their memories and ... and, you know, he went into see her and he came out, and when he came out, his mother came out to the front door, and he turned round, and he said, 'This is my mum', and then he

told me to go back inside, and all of a sudden, he locked, he locked the door, and gave the key back to the, the man at the gate. I expect he goes in there, but I don't think they wanted the people, these people with these memories to run around, round the, round the grounds, while it was cold. I expect they did it in the summer, but we never went up in the summer, we didn't: but it was in the early, early Spring, and it was cold then.

And what did you think about when... you know, waiting outside?

Well, I thought, I didn't mind really. I thought, 'Well, he's got to go and see his mum, anyway', but he didn't tell me that she was ill until afterwards, you know, 'cause I thought, I don't know if I said to 'im, 'Why is your mother locked in there?' 'Well', she said, 'that's because', she said, 'she wander around too ... on her own too many times, you know.' I don't know if it was because they were short-staffed, then, or what, but, but he said there was always somebody goin' in and out there, anyway, but he had to go to the main gate, to get this key, and his mother was in the first row. They looked like, they looked like fee-phab [phon.] houses, you know what I mean? Very strange. I think it's 'Holloway', I think it was called: 'Holloway Hospital'. They don't have places like that any more now, at least, not these days: [laughs] like the Victorian times.

Mm. Shall we stop there? What do you think?

Yeah.

Yes. O.K.

Yeah.

[end of tape 2 side B]

Tape 3 Side A [Track 5]

The 19th January 2005, tape 3. You were just saying to me, Tony, about your pocket money.

Yeah, when I was in the Victoria House and I was quite young, I didn't, I didn't know what money was. Because I didn't, didn't see any money cos I suppose they must have handled all the money cos I was only a baby and all that. But when I came to Brighton and I had my first money given to me. And it was one shilling a week we used to get for quite a while; and it lasted right up to about, I think to fifty ... near enough to the end of the fifties: and then it went up for £3 for a while and then it went up to about £5 a week pocket money, and it carried on in that way for quite a long time. And I think it was in the late eighties, when they started giving you ten pound a week pocket money; and, and so it went on to then, until I become independent then, then I had my own, I have my own money now - my own keeping and everything. And I, and I do all my shopping, and shopping and going on holidays, and coach excursions, and I go to pantomimes and shows sometimes and, and it's very, very nice to be independent and, and looking after yourself. Well I've done from, I've done it for now for nearly twenty years so, I'm thoroughly enjoying it ... and what else can I say? Well when I, well, when I was in my thirties, I used to go the Eldale [?] centre on the Old Shoreham Road, which is run by the Federation Society now, but in the old days it used to be called 'The Guardianship Society' but now, but they changed their name now, because in the early days it used to come under the government, they used to help to run it during the war and for quite a long time, but now they're independent like Scope is. And so, what, when I, I think it was, like I said, it was in 1968, January 1968 when I, when they give me a chance to go to this, to Scope - it's called the, it used to be called 'The Spastics Society', but now it's called 'Scope': and that's why I started ... then I was only supposed to be there for about six months but I've been there ever since, coming up to thirty-eight years, in January. What else can I say now?

Well, going back to when you first had pocket money, which was...

Yes.

... about the age of seven wasn't it?

Yes that's right.

And you got a shilling? Is that, is that right?

That's what, that's what, in, in my, yeah, in my first foster home, yes.

Who gave you the shilling and what did you spend it on?

Well the foster, foster parent did. Well the only thing I did spend it on was sweets mostly but and cos, cos some of the, some of the, during the war, I didn't always get this shilling cos she, cos I didn't go out so, so, much during the war, but she used to get sweets and all that, you know, as well, so... 'cos like I say I didn't, during the war I didn't go out a lot, and I should have gone to, like I said, I should have gone to school - down to Preston, Preston Manor School which was only a small school with two teachers, which is, which is, which was cottages, along the Preston Road, off of Crown and Anchor and it was South Road, and the cottages are still there but now they've been made into, been made into houses...people live in them now. But it looked, but it looked, it still looked like the school because the door's in the same place, and everything, the windows is the same. But there's very few of us there. And well, and, and when I used to go, go to that school we used to, we used to do a bit of writing and all that and sometimes - I dunno oh'f [ph], I dunno if I did reading but some of the others did: but, because I didn't go all that time, I don't, don't think the teacher bothered with me, with me too much because, because I didn't do a lot of reading you see, and then there was nobody to help me in those days at all... So, so - when the war finished, I, they moved me from there and I went to a special school down Hollingdean Road off, off the Lewes Road, near Bear Road. That was a special

school, and I was there from, from eleven until I got sixteen: and, and I did learn a bit, a bit of reading and spelling ...adding up and spelling and that, and I caught up a little bit but it was, I think it was, a lot of it was too late and everything as well, to keep up a bit, a little bit more: and after I left, left the school at sixteen, I went to the, along the Old Shoreham Road like I told you, the, which was the Guardianship Society, The Foundation. And that's where I went for about three or four years, but we only used to go, we only used to go in the mornings, each morning: From, from I think, from 9.0'clock to 12.0. But, but the men, the men and the boys only used to go in, we used to have to go in the mornings, and we, and we had, and when we finished at 12.0, we had to leave the, that area where the Seven Dials is, all in that area, and the Seven Dials, by 1.0'clock, because they didn't believe, they didn't want us to mix with the girls in those days at all. And so we did that, and like I said, when I become in my thirties, like thirty ... '68, '68, that's where I changed to go along to the Spastics Society which is called 'Scope' now: and that's where I've been there ever since, all these years, I think it's thirty-eight years, and something like that: and, and I've done all sorts of things there: stuffing toys, embroidery work ... making calendars out of cigarette packets: like the old, you know like the old grey ones? We used to use, used the outside of it and do, and they used to be cut, on a mach... on a cutting machine like the shape of V. And, and we used to do loads of them, and I think it's about ten, and you used to slot 'em in, all in, all in together, and you used to put an elastic band on them, to keep them together, and we used to stick a picture on in the, in the year of the calendar, a little calendar on the bottom of the year and a little ribbon at the back, so you could hang it up. We sold hundreds and hundreds of those each year -to raise money for the local Spastics Society, the Brighton and Hove Spastics Society in those days. Because they were independent to the main headquarters, and we used to, we used to raise lots of money. We used to have, we used to have jumble sales, and coffee mornings at Hamilton House, perhaps twice a year, and a big one at the Corn Exchange which carried on for quite a number of years, quite a number of years, and we, they used to raise lots and lots of money cos they used to have lots and lots of stalls for all sorts of things: jumble sales, selling, selling our things what we used to make up at Hamilton House, raffle tickets, coffee, tea and coffee, and cakes and all that sort of thing. And our people had stalls as well which used to make things and

sell, and I think from, right from the beginning that first one it was from ten ... it was from number... nearly two thousand pounds and then last one they had there, because it got so dear, I think within ten years or twelve years, they were, on the last one they had at the Corn Exchange they raised £14, near enough £14,000: and cos it got so dear to hire the hall cos, cos nearly £2,000 I think one and a half thousand pounds they had to pay for the Corn Exchange in the end, so they moved to the Hove Town Hall which we had about three or four, might be five; five; three, four or five, ones at the Hove Town Hall: and course even that was getting too much because, a lot of our members couldn't manage, or they'd gone, and so they had, so we had to hire another church hall along the New Church Road, I think it's called 'St Andrews' I think, and so we hired our hall for a little while, but in the end, I think I think it was 19... I'm not quite sure, I think it was 19, 1998 or 96 when, when they had a meeting and, and Scope in London took over. It was round about the time when, when they were changing the name: round about that time, and, so, so that's what happened and cos now it's, we don't have anything like that now it's all done by headquarters. But we still, we still make things up Hamilton House, and that, and sometimes they sell things but very, very little now. We do pottery, I do pottery, I made all sorts in pottery; a fruit bowl I made, and I made a church, 'course I've got it in my bedroom and I made a cottage over there, a cottage, and, and I've, and I've done sculptures, two or three sculptures, and I've done lots of other little things like candlesticks, and, with like deers, I made Father Christmases and all that, I got in my cupboard: and I've done loads and loads of things in pottery, and another thing I love is, is art: I do loads and loads of art sometimes. I've been, in the last year, that was, that was 19, 19, 2003, I think, to 2004, I went to Lewes College to learn art and I picked up a little bit there: but we still do art at the centre as well. I love doing art: and we do a little bit of drama, which, which also I used to go to Lewes. That's where I had the same, the same time, 1963 to 1964, went, went to Lewes College for, for drama, but we do a little bit up the centre now as well. And now we are trying to learn a bit about history, about Brighton history which we're going through at the moment, every Tuesday morning, with a person called Penny, and it's very interesting: and, and also I do up the centre is cooking on Thursday mornings: same as I do cooking at home, you know, I mostly cook my own food here; and all that, and I do all the veg. and all that and, and I

generally buy a pie or something, or do a little bit of roast, because you can buy the meat already cooked now, and then do that. And I thoroughly enjoy my being independence: and, I got ... can you stop it for me? I'm trying to think what else to say see.

Ok, well, you know, take your time, you don't have to...

Oh, right...both talking together]

- *Worry*

Oh um, independence and um...just trying to think, cos I, have I, I don't think I mentioned I used to do a bit of the garden outside on my own at, at Hamilton House, doing the garden; but, but I did that for, I did that for about eight, eight years, I think it must've been about eight years, all on my own, and cos in the end, I think it was about, about 19, 1995, I think I was told I mustn't be out there on my own. So, so I wasn't, I did a bit of gardening afterwards with some, somebody out there but, but I don't do a lot now because of the, because of my leg and also they have somebody coming to do the gardening now so, so I don't mind.

Why, why, why were you not allowed to do it on your own?

Well, because, because of being disabled and just in case I had, I had an accident. That's, that's what it was for. They found out I shouldn't be in the garden on my own, doing it, so...[inaud] Not with somebody there.

'Cause when you were leaving school, one of the things your, you wanted to do was to work in a park or a garden, wasn't it?

Yeah, yeah that's right.

Yeah

Couldn't, couldn't do it those days. Even look after, look after animals on a farm no, you were not able to do anything, so ... that's what they said that's why I was talking, because, I did, I did say, mention earlier on in one, I think I did, in one of my earlies... recordings that, that, that in, after the war we had to go down to the Junior Court, in front of the magistrates before they did the junior court cases, because the person what was looking after me, they had to get a license, they had to get a license to look after us and 'cause we were, I was there to ask them questions was it alright, and was the home alright, and I said 'yes' and all that sort of thing, and all that and ... This, this, I said 'There's one thing I would like to do is to go out to work,' and then they said 'Oh', because then, then ...the person what was looking after me said, 'He can't do it, he's not able to do it,' so, and that was that. So that really upset me a little bit but then I couldn't do nothing about it, so life was [inaudible] on, and on, and on, and like that was going on, and course, one day I got really upset about it because, I left, I walked out the house, like I said in my early recording, and I went down onto the Level and sat on the Level for about an hour, and course then I cried a little bit, and then I went back home and I got ticked off for going, going out the house without telling her, without telling Mrs White: and, and, and so that was that, but in the end I had to play it by the rules, and all that. But life did come a bit hard at times. And it was hard. But otherwise life wasn't too bad really but, it's only because I don't know my f-, my relations, my parents... that's all I know is my Mother's name now, but that's all I know. Grace Evelyn Wilson and where I was born, in London in Marylebone in London in my Nan, in my Nan's house and all that, but that's a, that's all I know, and that's all I know my Mum was an assistant pharmacist person, a drug's... behind the counter in, in the pharmacist, in the chemist, assistant to the to the head to the one up above her, what looked after the drugs and all that. It tells me on my certificate, birth certificate which I've got now, but that's all I know... So, so about four years ago, I did, when we got our, my birth, my birth certificate because I didn't have a birth certificate: I dunno what happened to the first one, but they had to get a new one and they had a job getting it, but in the end they did get me one, and it, and it turned out to be what I said my, where I was born and that, and my Mum's name, Grace Evelyn Wilson and, and where I, and where I was born in London at my Nan's place, and, and I, cos I we had to get this birth certificate so I could go on

holiday, and I went to Holland: and when I went to Holland I thoroughly enjoyed the five-day holiday and that, round the, round the gardens of the tulips and all that, and some daffodils they had, all sorts of flowers: and it was very, very nice. And, so we, so I do thank Mick Goldsmith for taking me on that, on this holiday, because it was, it was worth, worth that, worth the effort of going, and so I came, came back home, and I've been on other holidays since, mostly on my own, but last year, 2004, I went to the, with the Federation on the Old Shoreham Road, we went to Blackpool and, and the Isle of Wight with, with the Federation on the Old Shoreham Road, with Mick Goldsmith, my keyworker and some more staff, and we thoroughly enjoyed both holidays: one was in September, the Blackpool one, and the Isle of Wight one was in October, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And I went, and I went, this Christmas gone, 2004 I went on holiday with Worthing Coaches, down to Falmouth in, in the Falmouth Hotel with Worthing Coaches and I thoroughly enjoyed that one. We went to, we went to St Ives, was it? Penzance, and we went to Truro and we had a lovely time at the hotel. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I might be doing another one this year. I am doing one in Oct... in June, going down to North Devon down to Tinterton: Tiverton, for six days, in June: and, and I do go on, I do go on coach, coach excursions for the day with Worthing Coaches. Like I said, I do all sorts of things. I try to keep myself active. Though I am getting on, I do try to keep myself really active, and I thoroughly enjoy it ... what else can I say? ...

Well, talking about you, the Christmas that you've just spent,

Yes?

Can you maybe tell us a little about that, and then...

Well, we, we, like I said, the 'otel was nice, they greeted us nicely cos we, they, on Christmas Eve they, all the staff and the management before we went in to dinner they gave us a drink of our choice, what we wanted, and that was very nice. And we had, we had, during the evenings, the four evenings we were there we had Christmas and all that, and, and people danced and all that if they wanted to: and we had plenty to eat

cos it was one of these hotels where you, where you have to carvery and help yourself and it, we thoroughly enjoyed it. And it, and it was a very nice room I had, and all that, and I walked along the sea, I walked along the Falmouth seafront, Christmas, Christmas Day and I thought we were gonna get some snow, because we had little tiny flakes come down, but it didn't last long: and all that. And there was over 200 people at the hotel, so, so that was a very good old Christmas I've had for quite a while.

And how does it compare with sort of, the sort of first Christmases you can remember as a child?

Oh yeah, well, well, the first Christmases there wasn't much going because the war was on, and I was in a home. Like I said I only had one little present or two little presents: perhaps a little, a little book for writing or scribbling, and a little tiny toy. That's all I saw throughout the year, I didn't have nothing else, till the next Christmas: and, but the first two years when I was in this home I, I didn't go anywhere at Christ... after Christmas but, but, but after, after two years, I think, I don't think, I can't think, I can't remember the name of the church down the road but I went to their, to their Sunday School parties and that was quite inter... quite nice and we had a little bit of nice games and all that, and something for a couple of hours but it did seem strange, going round there at night, well almost at night, early evening 'cause it was getting dark and coming home in the dark. But, that's all I can remember, but, like I said,

because I didn't have no family or anything, presents were very, very far between, 'cause, what with the war on things were very hard.

Can you remember any of your presents that you did have?

Well I did yeah, I remember Ronald's scrap books where you, where you print between the, between the pictures or draw or something, or, or sometimes a little toy you played with, but, even that got boring in the end, [laughing] it got boring in the

end. But like I said there wasn't much to, to, to get. I don't think many children did get many presents in those days, only the big families...

Do you remember any toys that you did have during your childhood?

Yeah, well there wasn't many, there was a little car, I think I had a horse once... That's all but they wasn't very big, very, very small: like, I think they were made in lead. Cos there wasn't many motor, there was motor ones but very few motor things around in those days. I think they used to be worked by a clock, clockwise thing inside.

But you didn't have a clockwork one?

No, no [both talking together].

Yeah.

No.

And what was, what was Christmas Day like, in the home?

Well it was very, very quiet because, because she, she never liked to have people come round, round, round her. She had her son came because he was in the army, but

he came home once or twice. If, if he didn't come home Christmas, it was after Christmas, because he, I don't know if he was fighting or where he was but, but he did, he did come home now and again: and all that. And the lady what looked after me was Mrs Wood, my first one. My first lady, when I first came to Brighton was Mrs Wood and it was No. 7, Urquhart [ph] Road...

And did she used to decorate the house?

I can't, actually I can't she may have done a little bit but she didn't do a lot. I know she didn't do a lot, because, because there, because I can't remember much being up, you know. 'Cause things were hard to get, in those, even in those days things were hard to get... I think she used to make her own mince pies and that: and that. And there was a bit of fruit around, a bit of ... not much fruit, but we used to get a bit of fruit, and that, but, but ...and that, but time used to, time used to, felt so long. It used to feel hours because I only hardly listened to the radio, or not, and that's all she had: and sometimes we didn't, didn't, didn't even have that on, because, because, I think it was a couple of days old, because I remember her having a radio, but she had to get this special liquid power thing, to get to get all the news, which was a couple of days, old, and it's been in like a little bottle and they used to plug it in and it used, you used to get the news from that. It used to be a couple of days old. I know some people had, had, got, got, got the main news from power, but it was mostly people what could afford it, you know: but that's all there was, there wasn't much programmes or anything. 'Cause I think there was the, there was the Forces and the Light Programme. There was nothing like what you've got, get today: all these different channels and all them, tnothing like that. I think, I think there was only three stations. I think the third one was, was to do with, classical music and Beethoven and all that: and, and, and storytelling, story telling. Then, then, then after the war, I think Channel Four came. Channel Four.

Radio 4 you mean? yeah

Like I mean Radio 4, sorry. Radio 4. Sorry, Radio 4 came: and, and they had that on sometimes, you know. But there was very, very little around. It wasn't until, it wasn't till the Queen's Coronation that I heard about the television. I think it was that year when, when most people tried to get televisions [laughs] to watch the King's, the Queen's Coronation Year, 1953. But it was around before then, but there was very few people had televisions, but when the queen got married, more people had it that year, and, but still a lot of people went, went round to people's homes to see it, and also I remember, before I left Mrs Wood's they had a street party in Herbert Road, and I remember going to that one summer. Yeah the Queen's well the Queen's

Coronat..., the Queen's wedding but wedding whatsername and that: I think, I dunno, whether it was June or July, but it wasn't the same day as the Coronation, the Queen's, no, not Coronation, the queen's wedding, wedding, wedding: and that's why I went to this, this street party outside; and that was quite good, but it did seem strange to me, meeting all these different people, and seeing these different people, because me, me being on my own most of the time, didn't know anybody, and all that. And of course that's when, that's when ...I [tape ran out.]

Tape 3 Side B [Track 6]

'park... yeah an' walk around and see the children [inaudible] and see the cricket, but also I used to go and see the trains at Preston Park, the steam trains. And that was very good, interesting, that was, I think that was in 1946 when she let me do that, because, just after the war I didn't, didn't, wasn't allowed to go out even then, because I spose because of my age, but until I got a bit older, and then she, then she, then she let me do that. Then I asked her one day, 'Can I go down into the seafront?' She said 'Yes,' but I should be home at a certain time. And course I did that quite a few times, but there was one, one time, I went out, and of course, of course I didn't take no, no mac or anything and I got down to the seafront and I stayed down at the seafront, and it started to rain and I thought, 'Well I'll wait till the rain clears over', and of course it didn't. 'Cause in the end I thought, I thought to myself, 'I better get home because I, I, I'm almost nearly a couple of hours behind time now.' And of course, course she said, 'You should, you should have come home much earlier.' 'Well' I said, 'I didn't know it was going to rain', cos the trouble is, I didn't, I didn't have any, she didn't give me any money to get on the bus or anything [laughing] so I had, I had to walk home. So I got ticked off about that, so... and, and I been to pictures once or twice on my own, down to the Duke of York's. We used to go into the Duke of York's, for, for about ... the Duke of York's, only the film used to be on for two to three hours, and they were quite good some of the westerns, and some of the ... murder ones a bit; I wasn't allowed to see murder ones but, but, but there was stories about murder but you didn't see them and, because the 'A' ones you wasn't allowed to get in, but ...but there was, they did, did some story ones about murders but you didn't see 'em and... but you saw the westerns and, and all that, and I saw *Gone With The Wind* with Clark Gable and all that, and that was very interesting, but it was only 9p to get into the Duke of York's round the side, but that's if you went in the afternoon. And, and, cos then I moved house, then I, then Mrs Wood was taken bad so I moved there, there, when I was about, I think I must have been about fourteen, fourteen, getting on for fourteen, and moved from there to St Martin's Place in Lewes Road: Mrs White. When I moved in, when I moved in with Mrs White, we, we, we went to... when I moved in with Mrs White, I still went out and I did, went out to places and went out

for the day but I had to let her know where I'm going, and all that and I went to the pictures once or twice. I went to the Gaiety and all that, and all that but I still didn't see no television 'cause she, because she only had, I don't think she had television, no she didn't, she didn't have no television at the time still... so, so, so we went, made our own amusement, go going down to the seafront and all that; and that, and I did one or two daytrips and all that, and this, and while I was with Mrs White, that's where I met, met the, the Spastics Society people when we had to go down for the last time, I think it was 1951 or 52 to the, to the council, to the Junior Court place, to see some of these people to ... about, about how the home was and how you're getting on and all that, and all that sort of thing, and that, and that's, and that's where I was told I couldn't do nothing because, because I was too badly handicapped and all that... and she did say something, 'That that you're very badly handicapped and all that, and you won't be able to do anything and that's what it did, it upset me. So so when we did that. coming back home, within the week or two, week or so, we had a letter from somebody and it was somebody what was on the Council, saying 'Would you like to come to, on a day's outing with the Spastics Society, Brighton, and Hove Spastics Society, for a day, and I said, and I told Mrs White 'Yes' and so she got in touch with them again and that's why I went my first outing: and I think we went to went to Windsor, on a coach, to Windsor, and that was quite nice, that was really good, and that was a big experience because I'd never been outside Brighton, for a very long, long time. That was my first outing and I thoroughly enjoyed it and that's where I went every year after that, for quite a number of years...and, trying to think now...it's [inaudible]

When you were on the Coronation street party, can you describe a bit what that was like?

Well the trouble was, I knew what it was, but the trouble is, because I'd, I was so young, and I hadn't met, met anybody else because I used to be kept indoors, even after the war for a while, like I told you, I think it was 1946 or something, before, or 1947 before, before she let me out, to go, to go on my own, and all that.

So you were 12 then in 1946? Is that right?

Yes something like that, yeah roundabout that age, yeah, and ... that's why I started to meet, talking to one or two young people and all that you know, but before that I didn't never, never talk to anybody young before. It was very, very hard, you know, it was... whether she, whether she thought I couldn't, wasn't able to do it or what, I don't know, or whether I was too young. I suppose maybe because I was too young, young and all that, but she never used to get people to come in, in to play with me at all...it was very very strange [both talking]

And did you did you have any friends from school?

Very few. Because the war was on and like I, like I said, oh, at the junior school very few, because I lost a lot of schooling during the war, and I did tell you this before: I lost a lot of schooling, and 'cause there was somebody who should have took me to school, which was a lot older than me: she must have been about twelve to fourteen, and she should've took me but when she, when she didn't, I think she played truant sometimes and quite a few times, she never went to school - I dunno whether it was because she wasn't well, or whether she, her Mum wouldn't, didn't let her go to school. But, the trouble is, there wasn't, during the war I don't think they had anybody to keep an eye on people going to school during the war like they did after the war, you know, somebody from the Council, somebody from the school, you know, and I think they, it was up to the parents, I think; whether they go, whether they go to school or not, so that's why I lost a lot of schooling. But, but when I went to a special school and that's where I met a lot of people and played with people at the special school, mostly boys at the school and that.

So what age was that you went there, was about...?

I think from, oh no, that was from eleven, so, so yes it was, it was, that was from, that was from almost twelve, eleven and a half: so that would have been around about 194... , yes it was 194.. just before 1946, after 1946 when I went to the special school,

but after I went to the special school, and that, that's where I met a lot of boys but as I said, when we had the party, I didn't know anybody, street party, I didn't know anybody: it was the, it was the first time, it was the first time I come in contact with people.

Yeah.

[inaudible]

Did you did you actually see the Coronation on television?

No, no.

No, when was the first time you saw television then?

I would say, I would say it probably was at Mrs White's, cos she didn't have it at first, but she had it before she, before I left and before she died, she had television. But she didn't allow us to watch it a lot, because she only had one...you see, and it, sometimes it didn't start till about, about four, four in the afternoon or five, when they had the children's programme: but in the evening we had to go up to bed and all that so we didn't see a great lot, no.

What do you remember of television?

Eh?

What do you remember of television that you did see?

Well, we saw, we saw the recording of the Wedding, and all that. You know, I think they went back once or twice over that, over the year. Then I moved from Mrs Allan because, because Mrs White was died, and I went to her funeral, and all that. Then, 'cause then her daughter looked after us for a while, until they find, find me a new

home. Then I went from, from St Martin's Place, to Moulsecombe, Southwell [?] Avenue, Moulsecombe, to Mrs Allan: person called Mrs Allan: and I was with Mrs Allan for about ten yea', about eight years, the same as I was with Mrs White, so I was with Mrs White for about eight years and I was with Mrs Allan for about nearly eight, eight years and then she died, because she come ill when she went on holiday or something, and that, and they thought she'd got a germ or something, a germ so she went, had to go to a special hospital, but when they operated on her they found that it wasn't a germ, she had something else, probably... wrong with her in her stomach, something like cancer I suppose, so she died and her daughter took , and her daughter took us on, and her daughter wasn't all that well and her daughter had to go to hospital and have a heart operation and then she died, as well so... And they had to find me another home. Then I moved, then I moved from there to... Peacehaven, to another Mrs Allan, and there was only me there for a while and and for quite a long time. Then she should have had another person, when that person never - I don't know what really [laughing] happened - never turned up, never, she never had this other person: and so, so I was the only person Mrs, Mrs, Mrs Allan had, the one at Peacehaven Promenade, South Promenade. And because, because I was living on the cliffs the authorities didn't like me living on the cliffs, so, so she was having the bungalow built: and it, and it was nearly a year or so or so before the bungalow was nearly finished. And in the end they moved me because she kept on saying, 'The bungalow's not ready yet,' and so the authorities said 'Tony can't, we can't keep Tony here much longer because you, you have said ...', she, I think something must have been said, that, that, she must have said this several times, that that the bungalow's nearly finished but course in the end The, The Guardianship Society along the Old Shoreham Road moved me again. They moved me to the York Road and I was only there temporary while they found me another place, and when I was in York Road, I was there for about six weeks, then they found me another place with Mrs Spencer, up Evelyn Terrace and she had, she had two or three places and it was quite a big family affair, you know, with lots of boys and all that. And that, and she used to look after me. She used to have a flat, used to have a flat down the road, hire two rooms next door to where she, where we were, and I was one of them, what slept next door, and go next door to sleep and come back in the house during the day to get

my food, and all that. Course I still went out and all that, and we saw television there, then we had our own television in our bedroom, and that was quite nice, because we could watch television for a little while in the evening and all that, then, and, and ...

So when was that, that you had your own television?

Oooh, well I've been independent, what, for about twenty years now isn't it? Because because before I became to be independent from Mrs, from Mrs Spencer, I, I went, I went to Hove, York Road, York Avenue in Hove where Mrs, Mrs Mrs Pat Knight and her husband, to be trained to be independent. I was told it would take me two years to train but it only took me nine months and, and the person what was training me, Pat Knight, she said, 'I'm going to tell the authorities that you're already to go and to be independent.' So she did and we, we after Christmas about twenty, about eighteen, nineteen years ago when I was fifty-one and a half, we, I came up to where I'm living now, to have a look at the flat, and this is where I've been here ever since. And course when I first came to the flat, we were going to move in the following week, but they couldn't, because it was very, very cold, and they've had some snow, and there's no water on 'cause the water got frozed, 'cause when I was in, when I first came to this flat, there was no double glazing, no central heating, and nothing: there was metal frames and it was very, very cold. You had to put the heating, heating on in here and they had a little electric heating in the bedroom and that's all, all there was, for quite a number of years. And course and course [laughing] the year, the year they, they did they were doing the, putting my, doing my kitchen first, they were going to do my, did my kitchen first – and when they started doing the kitchen, it got frozed up, and all that, and so I, so I had to be moved again for a few weeks. And while they were doing, while they moved me for a few weeks, thought they did the kitchen, the kitchen, they decided to put the central heating in 'cause they were only down the road, down in ...Beatty Avenue down the road, that's where they started from, about six months before. And so they decided to put my central heating in while I was, while I was away. And I came back and we had central heating and that helped a bit but, but it was still cold in certain parts because we had these metal windows and all that but, it did take the heat, but in the summer it didn't really matter in the summer.

But, but it was about three or four years before they put double glazing in, it must've been about six years before they put the double glazing in and all that. Then that did help, a bit, quite a bit, made all the, made lots of difference when they changed the windows, and all that... and 'cause now I've been, I've been alright, because, because we used to get frozed up because, where the water, water pipe is, runs, runs from the kitchen, there used to be a ventilator and, and the ventilator was open, but now it's shut, and so the cold air doesn't come out the pipes no more... And course, course, like I said, everything's changed and all that, and I've had the kitchen changed, again, had it modernised and I've had bedrooms done out, and I've had carpet put down and all that. So I've, that's why I say, I 'm thoroughly enjoying being independent and all that, and I do a bit of gardening in the front, and all that. And I've got lovely plants all the way round the room which I look after... and all that, and I've got television.

So was this the first place that you ...you had a television of your own?

Oh yeah, yeah it's my own television. It's only the, well, the third television I had. Well the first one I had, we bought for about five pound when I was up Mrs White, no no, not M - Pat Knight, sorry Pat Knight, the person what was training me: and it was only a small television that I had at first, then I bought my bigger one, because I had that for about nearly ten years course then that went and I had, had to get this one.; 'cause I've got one in the bedroom as well now so. Now we're thinking of having the box or something, having the extra channels sometime this year. Could be in, in months to come I think... And what else can I say?

So, so what about your gardening? You finally got to do some gardening in your own

Little patch.

Yeah what do what sort of things do you grow?

Well I, I used to grow wallflowers and daffodils and tulips. I've got the daffodils coming up now, with all this rain we've had, and it's only, what, the end of ... the end of January, the middle of January ...

Mm, mm.

... innit? And I put them in later this year, the same as I did the year before: I didn't put them in till November, because, because of the [inaudible] they come up too quick and course they, now now I looked at them this morning or and on Sunday Derek and they come up through the ground. You got to be very careful you don't get any sharp frost or somethink...

So when you think back to when you were told that you wouldn't be able to work in gardening and you, you gardened at Hamilton House...

[both talking]

Yes.

You gardened here.

Yes.

What what, how do you feel about that?

Well it makes you, it makes you look... it made me feel, look, terrible really because, because I knew I could do things if they let me have a go, but course, in the early days they wouldn't, you see; because of my disa... handicap and because the person who I lived with, I did mention, I don't know if I mentioned what, what she said, but I won't mention it again because it's not... I don't think she meant it, but she said, 'You're, you're very disabled and all that, and you can't do nothink.' But that's what she told me the last time I went down to the Town Hall, told these people at the court, you

know, so then that's where we got, got on to, found out about the Society, Spastics Society which is now Scope.

Yeah: and you were saying that, when you were with Mrs White she used to give you a shilling pocket money. Was it...

With Mrs Wood.

And how, how ... when did that increase? How long were you, you had a shilling pocket money for how long?

Ooh for years...I think, I think it was almost up to the, I think, it went on to the sixties, I think. It was quite a long time. It was right through the fifties, I know.

Right so you...

And it was going into the sixties, I was still with Mrs White.

So you were in your twenties and then thirties?

It was there, it was there, where it went from a shilling to five pound.

When, and when did ... [both talk together]

I think it was ten pound and then five pound. That's right.

So when did it go up to sort of five pounds?

Oh, I, I think it was in the ... early sixties, early sixties.

So you would have been in your early thirties then?

That's right. No I think it was before then, I think I as twenty... twenty, twenty-eight or twenty-nine.

But right up until then it was just a shilling?

Yes oh yes, it was quite a long time. Yes.

So what, what would you ... you say you went to the cinema: what else were you able to, to spend with your shilling?

Well I didn't go to the pictures, well we did go to the pictures with this shilling, but the trouble is I, as I say, some weeks I don't think Mrs Wood used to give it to me, that's why I went down to the cinema, but when I was with Mrs White, and it went up to five pounds that's when I went to the pictures a bit more, and I bought some sweets out of it and all that, you know: I had a bit more money to spend. But it did went up to a fiver and I'm not quite sure if it went up to ten pounds after five pounds, but, but now, now, they, I believe they get about twenty pounds a week something like that, for spending money now. You know those who, who can't manage money themselves, because when they go on holiday they get around about thirty pound for the five day holiday, or somethink to spend, do you know what I mean?

Uumm. But it, so it wasn't until you were in your twenties that you had a bit more money to spend and you could go to the cinema a bit more?

Yes it was late twenties, late twenties, it was late twenties.

Yeah, yeah, and....

It was all while I was with Mrs Wood, where this, this, this shilling pocket money, but when I went to Mrs White it was still a shilling, a shilling, but then it went up to five pounds, but then, then I think it went up to ten pounds, while I was with Mrs

White, because I got ten pounds when I was at Moulsecombe, Mrs, with Mrs Allan, you see.

Ah, and so did you, what sort of things did you used to spend your money on, apart from the cinema and sweets?

Spend my money on? Well I used to buy some, sometimes I used to buy some writing paper and all that, and I used to get on the bus and all that, I used to get on the buses and that as well. I used to go on the buses and that as well sometimes: and that. I used to make it do, do all week anyway... because, because I think it was right up to the 19, 1970's that things used to be quite, quite reasonable and cheap, you know. It was in the seventies when, when things started to go up and up and up, you know.

And did, did you manage to save any money at all?

Oh yeah, I did save some money yes.

Oh

Because the trouble ... well when I saved the money, I used to get this five pound most of the time, like I say, probably every week, but also she had other money, well, they had that, people, well, in the foster care home had other money, but also it used to be for clothing, but, but when I went with Mrs, to Mrs Spencer, I, I had it, I had it, she's told me I got a saving book for it. I didn't know I even had a saving book, a Post Office saving book, I didn't even know that. Didn't know I had one. But she said, 'You've got some money in it, so I've got...' so she said, 'I'm going to give you, the money is ten pound a week. I'm gonna give you five pounds still, but' she said 'the other five pounds is going to go in the, into your... savings,' and that's where it went you see.

So do you know how long you'd had the savings book?

I have no idea. Nobody told me. No, honestly nobody told me.

Mm. Mm. And what, and did you use your savings for anything? Were you saving up for anything particular, or....

No cos, cos I didn't know I had one until Mrs Spencer, when Mrs Spencer told me: she said, 'I'm gonna give you five pounds still, and the other ten, the other five pounds is going to go into your savings.' And I was told that some of that five pounds was for my clothing as well.

And do you know how much money was in the savings when you were told?

Well something like, over five hundred over six hundred pounds, something like that. That's because over the, over the number of years I think.

Yeah

Something like that; you know, it could be four hundred, but, you know, say four hundred to six hundred but, well I'm not quite sure.

Yeah.

But quite a bit, but, but when it was handed to me from Mrs Spencer I had over a thousand pounds in there, in there, and that so ...

And when you, when you had, when you realised you had a thousand pounds were you tempted to spend it, or...

No.

No.

No I wasn't. I thought, 'That's a, that's a bit of luck then, innit?'

[laughs]

Yeah, bit of luck. But also, when I was with Mrs Spencer, we did, we, in the later years, not at first, because I'd been with Mrs Spencer for about eight years, or might be ten years, cos each home I went to is between ten, eight and ten years, each, each of the three homes I went to, accept the one I went at Peacehaven, I was only there for about nine, nine and a half months; but, but, but Mrs Allan, well Mrs Allan and Mrs Spencer, and Mrs White, sorry Mrs White and, Mrs White and Mrs Allan and Mrs Spencer, I was more like twenty-eight years because, because it was nearly thirty years I'd been with the three; and all that: and, and that's what I did, but when I was with Mrs Spencer, at near the end, we went on some coach trips, on the seafront, for the afternoon. Didn't come back round about teatime. Then we did one or two day, day trips like that, and then we went, and then we went to Jersey. Mrs Spencer took some, took the ones what's able, to go to Jersey. But we went on Friday night, by coach, down to Weymouth and onto the ferry all night, then stayed in Jersey all day and came, then come back teatime from Jersey, home, and you'd get home late at night, from, from Weymouth: and that was interesting that was, cos we did that two or three times and we did, we did Newhaven to Dieppe once with her as well. But that was strange because, because, because we was, we were in Dieppe and we got into Dieppe and Mrs Spencer said, 'Wait, don't ... all wait until all the people get off.' Now I was looking over the railings, and this bloke was putting his fists up at, at me; I don't know he was putting his fists up at me. Mrs, Mrs Spencer said, 'Don't take no notice' she said, 'they don't like us'. So...I remember that; and I thoroughly enjoyed my, going round Dieppe for the day and all that but you had to be careful when you crossed the road. You might be crossing the road on the crossing, and you'd get halfway across and the lights changed and everybody started to move bbbrrmm bbbrrmm they started to go: it was very dangerous, because I, I remember standing in the middle of the island and the car passed me and I thought 'Gosh! That's dangerous' cos you couldn't get across the road so quick, because there was other people in front of yer. I thought, 'How do they allow that in that countries?'

Why was the, why was the chap shaking his fist at you?

Do not know, well Mrs Spencer thinks, she told us, you know, the [?] people, they don't respect us. She, she said to me, 'Don't take no notice of that' she said, cos she saw it, cos she's looked over, cos that's when she said, 'Don't go. We won't go yet until everybody gets off'. And course she, y'know, she looked over, and of course she saw this person putting his fists up... That's what she said, she said, 'The French, a lot of the French don't like us' cos he was an elderly bloke as well.

Uumm, I'm going to change the tape over this time because it's just about to finish.

[End of Tape 3 side B]

Tape 4 Side A [Track 7]

Yeah. So this is Tony Wilson, Tape 4. I was just going to say to you, looking back over your whole childhood...

Umh, umh.

How would you describe it over all: your childhood?

Very, very hard. Cos it did seem hard at times: specially when you, when you really didn't know much about life and, and where was you... I knew that I'd, I had a mum, but nobody knew where she was or what happened to her because there was a war on, nobody knew what happened. Nobody would tell me. And course I, and it looked if I, looked if I was the only child in the w', in the, from the family, on my own, and that, because the trouble is, things did get har', very hard, and cos, even when I was in hospital, up, just before the war finished when I had the, when I was nine, nine years of age, I went up to Stanmore Hospital: I'll tell you this again, cos I don't know whether I did mention this, I went up to Stanmore Hospital, in Stanmore in 1944, November, 1944, and I was up there for, till almost the end of February, 19...45, and it seemed very, very strange, when I was there, because when I first went there, there was only four of us in the ward, for the first three or four, the first three or four nights; nights, days I mean nights and days, because they'd just opened the hospital up again, because they closed the hospital down most of the war because of the Germans and the doodlebugs, but also and, I don't, I don't know if they opened the hospital before that, because before that, before they opened it up again for the children and the, and the, and the grownups, there, there was a big, big place it was, in the big fields, they had these wooden huts and that's where the army and the airforce and the navy, and the navy people were coming, to the hospitals, from the war, and that did see, that did, that was very strange, because we didn', I didn't know much about that [?] what was going on, you see and... as time went on, and winter went on, the wards got full up, and, and I think it was after Christmas or something when, in January after

Christmas, they took me to the swimming pool. I was alright for the first day, or the first two times, but the second time I got nervous. I think it's because I got nervous: I did mention this, I remember now, I did mention this in my early one, that that this young fellow got under the, in the middle of the, the swimming pool and laid down the bottom, and he did that for about three minutes, and the physio what was looking after me said, shouted at him to get up. She said, 'Don't do that!' she said, 'you lay down there and you...I, I have to get someone to dive in to get you out.' But he did get up and she did tell him off, and I think that's what frightened me, you know. He did that several times when I went, but I was only in there, only, only in the swimming pool for very short time and she only had me for about quarter of an hour, because she had lots of other people [laughs] to see, to see to cos she was on her own. Because then she had to get a nurse to, to wipe me down and take me back to the ward, back to the ward.

So there were, there were war wounded in the hospital were there?

Oh yeah, yes, there were soldiers. I don't know if I mentioned this, there were soldiers and airforce, and all that.

So did, what sort of sights did you see?

Well we didn't see, the trouble is we didn't many wards, army wards because they were wooden huts. Ours was a brick one. Whether they, whether they, the army was there, the army was there, I don't know. They had these wards and they, they said 'It's, it's safe to bring, bring people back,' cos, cos what I was told while I was up in the, up in Stanmore, that, that they closed the hospitals down when the war, after the war started, because of the bombs and the doodlebugs, and they sent people all over the country; people up to Scotland, while I was in the hospital there. Sent them all the way up to Scotland, to stay in hospital, while they were getting operations, and getting better, but, but in, but in, in 1943, ooh no, no 1944, that's right, 1944 when,

[background noise] November 1944, they started taking people back, and that's when I, when I went up there, there was only five of us in the ward. That's when we were told, we were told, because, because they closed the hospital down. Like I said, as the time went on, we knew about this, we heard about these, these army people up here as well. But we didn't know, didn't know until they put me outside once that these wooden huts, well, I could see these wooden huts in the, in a in a big field, and that's where the army were... and that's... [inaudible]. But the trouble was, when you had your operation, they had to take you from one hospital and take you to, to the middle building, and it used to be, used to, we were down in the cold weather and wrap you up and take you down to the operation theatre outside, into the narrow building. That was very strange... Yeah.

And were you scared, or...

No. I was too young. I was scared going down to the operation because I remember, when I had my tonsils out, I had the, the first gas thing, what they used to give you, like a frame and it had cotton wool, and they used to put it over your nose, and I remember that, but this, the next time I went, it was a rubber thing: a rubber thing, they put over your nose and I just went off... Umm.

That must have been very strange though.

It was, yeah. Mm. Mm.

Umm [both talking together]

Yeah. The other thing I'm - meant to ask you about. You were saying when you got your birth certificate...

Uum?

... that you realised you'd been celebrating the wrong birthday all of your life.

Yeah?

Can you tell me a little bit about what some of your birthdays were like, as a child?

Well they, like I said, you told me when I, about my first Christmas presents. I didn't get many, I didn't have many presents at all, not even birthday cards for a long time. I believe I only had one or two birthday cards from Mrs White. I didn't get none from Mrs Woods. I think Mrs White gave me, once or twice gave me a birthday card, but that's all.

So...

I might have had a present, but, but, but I don't remember. The only presents I, I bought on my birthday, is what I did with my pocket money.

So you had to buy your own birthday present?

Well I bought a present on my birthday. I think it was, I think it was a picture and you coloured it in, or something like that, or a bit of drawing paper. I did buy some drawing paper once, and I drew my own pictures you know but...

So you're saying your first Foster Mother didn't give you a birthday card?

No, no. Not during the war, no.

Um: and then Mrs White, sometimes, but not always?

Well I didn't think she did. She didn't do it at first, but she did it near the end, you know what I mean? Cos I was there for quite a number of years and she, near the end

I think she must have gave me some birth... I remember her giving me some birthday cards, but must have been near the end, but not at first...

So, you're saying you can remember, you can remember it being your birthday?

Oh yeah.

And not having a card?

Yeah, but I never, I never got, I never got any toys or anything, no...[pause]

So, so how did, how did how did that feel to have a, a birthday with no cards and no presents?

Well you, well you just, accept it, because I, I just accept it, because I didn't have any family or anything, you, you just, well you think, you thought 'Well, not everybody gets that: only people's got money gets, gets those sort of things, you know what I mean? That's what you thought... you know... cos I suppose, I suppose I wasn't the only ones what did, did get anything on my birthday: cos even today, even today in the poor world a lot 'em don't get nothing do they? [telephone rings] oh!

Want me to stop this?

[break in recording]

Sorry about that, but there's not a lot you can do.

Yeah [laughs] so... but how do you, how, I mean, what about other people in your home: did, did they have birthdays, that, you know...

Oh yeah, they had birthdays.

But were they ... what I'm saying is, were they, were they the same as yours, they didn't get any cards and presents or...

Well one or two got presents, and probably got a birthday card, but I didn't see 'em cos they, because they didn't ... they either had it in their bedroom, and all that, had their presents: I know one, one or two got birthday ca.. , birthday presents and birthday cards and all that but, but one or two, one or two of the others didn't either.

So, so I mean how did you feel about that, that some people got-

Well I thought, I thought, 'Well, I'm not the only one,' I thought to myself. 'I'm not the only one. There'll probably be more people, people than me w'out, out having birthday cards because, because even in those days, not everybody, not everybody had a birthday card, not in the poor people, not like they do today. But even today you might find a few people don't, don't get birthday cards because, because they don't ... they either they don't want it or they, they, they, they want the family to give them money or something, you know, or take them out for the day but ... but I never, never got either of those, anything like that, like... like taking you out for the day or something like that, you know.

So, so summing up, what do you think are the, the best things in your life?

Well the best thing in, in my life... in the early – well I'm just trying to think in the early days...was, was was when I first went on my first outing to Windsor with the Society which is called 'Scope' now, and that was my first ... good day, and all that ...and, and then, then, then when I become independent...become, when, when I was told, told I was gonna, like, to learn to be independent and I said 'yes' and that was ...that was a lot better, and when I become independent, it's even more, and even more, because what I had to do, I done lots and loads and loads of things. And loads of trips and loads of holidays and, and going out and all that...and even this year I've been to the pantomime, that's what, I've been to the pantomime, and this coming

Sunday I'm going to see the ice show, the, *Hollywood on Ice* it's called this year. I'm going down to see that at the Brighton Centre, this coming Sunday.

Uum. Oh right [both talk together]

Yeah

That'll be good.

Yeah

Ahh. And... talking about, you mentioned the Spastics Society a number of times and...

Yeah.

What did, how what how did you feel when, when...when it, they said they were going to change the name to 'Scope'? Did you, what was your, your feeling about that?

Well, I thought I thought it would be better really, because, because a lot of us, well me, I didn't really take notice of it really, because I just thought it was just a, something helping us, cos we are all spastic in a way, and, and because a lot of the people who really are spastics don't like, didn't like the name, so it didn't really, it didn't really bother me, changing it to 'Scope' at all. I think it was a good idea.

So you didn't like the name, 'Spastic'?

Well like I said earlier it didn't bother me, at all.

Right...

Because I was spastic, because I'm a spastic, and the g – because, because I haven't got any parents or anything, it didn't really bother me at the time: and cos, and cos is

lots, we were lots of, lots of us [others?] and all that, went on holidays and went, course went to Europe and almost across Europe, and nearly round the world, some of them do, don't they? Because that's where they wanted the name changed because they, they mixed with more people, because I - didn't mix, mix with a lot of people, at all, where, where a lot of the others did, and, and they could, they could 'gotiate [phonetic] and all that, and they met lots and lots of people, and a lot of them got married with people, single people; able-bodied people as well: so that's, that's what I think what's helped what helped to change the name, through those people which, which travelled the world and which, and all that sort of thing. Because in the early days, the early holidays, there, there, there was, they were holidays but they was holidays which I haven't, I don't know if I mentioned this, I went down to ... down to Westcliffe, and and that was in, that was in 19.. I think 1960 somethink, went down to Westcliffe, down near Southend, and that was a Spastic holiday home there: and I went there for a week, and I think I think the society, the society which was going, was, was, which helped to pay for the holiday, because I remember when we went to Westcliffe, we only paid £10 towards our holiday, so the other money must have come from the Society. And during each year, I think, this was not the first year, the fir.., the second year when I went on holiday down there in August for a week, I met Bob, Bob Monkhouse, cos he had one of his sons disabled, and, and that's where I met him and all that, but he, he didn't stay there, he only brought his son down, and then he had, then he had a home he.. a nurse, a home help to look after his son for a week: or perhaps a fortnight. Some of them stayed for a fortnight. So that was the first holiday, but then, then, then they, then we went to Clacton-on-Sea. But then that one was a bit dearer: that one was about forty pounds or fifty something a week, and and so we had to pay a bit more for that one, which the authorities paid, which the DHS used to pay half in those days, they did, they paid for it for quite some time and...of course and then they had another one, the one at Westcliffe, they had to close, because the regulations, the fire regulations: because, because you couldn't get in the front of the with the wheelchairs, you had to go up the side of the, of the building, and go in a lift down and it was ever so windy, when the wind blew, and they had to go in that way, so they closed that one down because the, it wasn't fireproof for the, for the chairs properly, cos of the, the lift was up the side and you had to go up the side and it

was very windy. So they closed that one down and opened another one in Bognor, and that one was quite nice. And of course they had another holiday which I never went, one up North, in Scarborough. Because these days they got, they ain't got any of them, and... cos cos the disableds go, go abroad a lot more now, don't they? Don't they, and all that; I think that's what's done it. Because in the winter time, to keep going they, they, they took in disabled pensioners, and all that didn't they? Pensioners what, which didn't have a holiday, had to have it in the winter. And course when it got s', when it got so dear DHS used to pay right up to, to over £200 a week. Well when it got to near enough three hundred, they stopped all that, and we had to pay for it, and of course I think that's where they lost the ... where they decided, lost a lot of money and they had to cl.., start closing the holidays down cos people were going abroad as well. I think that's what's happened you see. I do remember that, but but at first we, when we first went to the Society, we didn't have to pay any anything at all so I spose, I spose I paid £10 a week and the DHS paid the other bit, when we first went to Westcliffe, I remember that. I thought 'That's a cheap holiday!' at first. But you know I realised afterwards that, that, that somebody paid for the, the other bit, must, there'd have been about £20 a week or, something like that, or £30 a week... Because, because the trouble is, the Westcliffe one, you looked after yourself mostly and the family, it was a family hotel, that one was, which the Society opened up, and you met the families and all that, you see and, and there, there was staff there, there was staff giving you, bringing you meals and all that, and a cook and there was somebody in charge: but during the day, there wasn't anybody much there, only, only the per' – the one in charge and his helper, and when we used to go, when we used to out, we used to go round the bedrooms and tidy up the bedrooms that's all they did, but, but, but there was nobody there like, that they had down Clacton to take people, to take people to toilet and all that.

Unmh.

They had to be the families and all that, do it, know what I mean?

Unmh.

And that. You see that's why that one was [inaudible] but that went up so, ever so dear in the end. Ummm.

And, when, when you used to go out in these holiday resorts, what, what, what sort of reaction did you get from, from people?

Well, well lot. We got a lot of reaction. We used to go along the seafront with the people, and, we used to go to theatres, to shows and, and that, and that: not the one at Westcliffe cos, cos that was the family one at first, but when it got to Bognor, when it went to Bognor [sound of something being dropped] they, they, they, they opened it up for, you know, for everybody and that, that got a bit, bit special, because they had, they had staff there all, all the time, they had staff there all the time. And, the one at Clacton, they had staff there all the time but also they used to take you out, take you round Suffolk and Norfolk and Essex and all that. So I used to go along the seafront during the day when, when you had time as well. Umm.

Umm and were you generally welcomed where you, where you went?

Ooh yeah, you were welcome, yeah you were welcome. Yeah.

Umm. Umm

Yeah.

Okay so we talked about some of the sort of the best things in your life: what've been sort of the worst things?

...Well, the worst thing, it was during the war, where you, where you were, I was isolated, know what I mean? Though she had one or two other boys there, but they couldn't do nothing either, you know...And she had a blind person there and I spoke

to her a few times, but you couldn't speak to her all the time, because you didn't know what to say, cos you were so young and all that, but, you know, but it was very, very hard, that that was the only thing: that was my hardest time in my childhood, my childhood. It was very, very hard... and sometimes it seemed very, very sad you know. And Mick... also I always thought, I wish I could lead my life again, you know: start my life all over again, you know: that's how I feel sometimes; and not so much now, but in the early days.

What would you change?

Well. Well, well, the trouble is if I died, I would have to come back in the world and start all over again, [laughs] start it all over again: I would. Yeah, that's how I felt. Put it that way. Because so handicapped, you were paralysed all down one side as well, you see, and cos, cos there was nobody to, to help you much when you were a child, and course the foster homes I, I went to there weren't, there wa'n't young people. There were people in the mid ages and all that sort of thing, so I didn't have a young person really, was all [inaudible] what would've been better, most probably. Yeah.

And what else would you change?

Eh?

What else would you change?

Well, what else would I change? Like I said, I, the only thing I would change is, is if I did come back in the world is, is the being to be me again...and see what I could do in my life next time, you know. It was very, very hard, cos even when I was a teenager, you wasn't allowed to go out with girls. No: that's why I told you about, about when I went to to, to The Guardianship Society, which was called the Federation – the Avondale Centre, it's called the Avondale Centre now, along the Old Shoreham Road. We used to go to, the men and the boys, cos I used to be a boy and the men as well, cos some of them were men, had to, had to leave, immediately left Old Shoreham

Road by, at 12.o'clock. We had to be away from the Seven Dials by 1.o'clock, out the area. If, if, if we were caught with one of the girls we would get in serious trouble and we'd be put away. That's what they used to do in those days. Put people away or in institutions or something if, if you were caught. So you had to keep, so you had to behave, behave yourself in those days.

Right.

Otherwise you would be put away.

Did, did you know of people that had, that happened to?

Well I think one or two must've got, got, got put away, cos I never, never saw them saw them again, after a while. So...

What, what were you told, about girlfriends?

Well what I was told by the, by, who was it, I think it was Mrs, Mrs White at, at Southall Avenue, she, she said, 'You've got to be very, very careful' she said. 'If, if somebody from The Guardianship Society see you with a girl, they could, they could take you, take you in up the office, and, and hand you in, and all that, and you could be put away for it.

Put, put away where?

In, in an institution or a hospital, or hospital like Pouchlands I don't know if you've heard of Pouchlands Hospital? It's not there no more. That's up, right out in the country, up near Chailey.

And what, what ... [both talking together]

It's not there no more.

Oh right: and what kind of a place was that, do you know?

Well that's where, that's where people, people who were, didn't have any, any parents, or people what done wrong or something like that or, in their life but, in their life, because I was told when that, even, even, even when I was young, a lot of young people if they got pregnant and their parents, their par.. and they've got to found out by their parents, and the parents didn't like it, they'd go to the authorities, and the authorities used to put them in, in hospital: that's why there were so many institutions. You've heard of institutions, ain't yer?

Uh.

There was so many institutions, that's what I, that's what I was told. A lot of them got people put away because, because of that and they shouldn't of been there.

Mm.

You see? But now they've got all these group homes what they have for disabled people, now don't they, group homes and all that now, don't they?

Umm...

Yeah.

And so ...did, did you ever, did you ever have a girlfriend, when you were young?

Well on holi.. on holiday I did, yeah I did meet, meet at Clacton, I did meet Wendy, Wendy. I can't, can't think of her first name now. Wendy: I've got a photograph of her somewhere indoors here. And, because she, she died, about three or four, about three or four years after I knew her: and I didn't know that until I went on, to Clacton on holiday and they, I said, 'Where, where is she this year?' She said, 'She died' and

I said, 'Nobody told me. No, nobody contacted me and told me she died.' So I think she must've died with cancer because she smoked a lot. She smoked very heavy, you know; she was only in her fifties or fifty something, that's all.

And how old were you?

Thirty, weren't I?

Right, right.

It's over 30 years ago. And this is, this ring what I've got on my hand now, is over thirty years old, that is.

So is that the ring, that you...

She bought me yeah.

Yeah.

And, and I bought her one.

[pause]

And so, so did you just meet on holiday? Or did you...

Yeah, just met on holiday, that's all. Each year, you know... Yeah...

And where, where was she from?

Ooh, I can't remember now. It's down in, in, I believe it's in Worcestershire somewhere. In that area: Worcestershire. She had a little, bungalow. I think it was Worcestershire: something that begins with 'W' anyway.

Umm

It, it was quite a way, but, you know... cos, cos the trouble is, cos I was only a friend and I, and I spose they, they forgot to let me know, but, you know. Well, I suppose the people in Clacton did anyway: cos the people where she was wouldn't have known, you see, so... Cos she was mostly independent herself you see? But I should imagine she must've had cancer or something, I should imagine... and that cos her smoking and that, so... it's the only girl I've had.

And so, I mean, well, so how many times did you meet her in, in, in all?

Well every, every, every September, beginning of September, and I think it must've been about three to four years that's all.

And you, you didn't didn't go to her place?

Ooh no, no, no. No, never went to her place, no. Because I don't think, I don't think Mrs, I don't think Mrs White, no, Mrs Spencer would've allowed it, Mrs Spencer, that's right, it would've been at Mrs Spencer by then, I don't think she would've allowed it cos, because she didn't, she didn't even want me to become independent really, and [inaud] 'He's gotta be, he's gotta be trained to do something,' you know: you know, to do things, you know, and course in the end they had, they had to tell her, she thought I was going to come back at one stage: well I would've done if I

didn't, if I didn't of got on so well, but when they told her I think she must've had a shock, that he's, he's going to be independent ...

Mm.

... cos at, at first they, they wouldn't tell her. They'd only tell [?] her 'He's going to go and, learn to do something, to be, to learn to do things' and that, and, but she had

an idea but she couldn't do nothing much about it but, they did tell her in the end, and they, they, she said, they did tell her that he might be coming back, but in the end they told her he, he, I wasn't, so, I don't know how she felt about that but ...

You never saw her afterwards?

Umm yeah I did. I did go up ...once or twice to see her. She asked me how I was getting on. I said 'I'm getting on alright, you know, alright.' Yeah I did yeah.

Umm and how did she react?

Well she said, she said, she did say 'Well, well, I'm glad you are getting on alright' and all that but she didn't say 'I didn't think you would' and all that, but that's what I was told you know, they had, they had to, they had to keep it a bit, down a bit, just in case, just in case, you know, if they'd told her, 'He's was going to be, go out and, you know, ...' she would only have come, she would have had a row and couldn't, say 'He wouldn't' but they did, did, did say something that 'He's going, he's going there to learn to, to learn do somethink, learn to do the houseworking or somethink,' but, but she must have had an idea but, but they didn't, they said she, they did tell her 'She, he might be coming back after a while, but, but cause in the end I didn't, did I?

Well you proved quite a few people wrong didn't you?

Yeah [both talk together]

- one way or another

Yeah, yeah, yeah I did, did prove a lot of people yeah. Yeah.

And sorry I didn't quite catch your, your, your girlfriend's name, what was it?

Urm? We..., Wend, Wendy something. Wendy. Sorry Wendy. I can't think of her, her her, surname.

Oh, yeah okay.

It's Wendy. That's right Wendy. I'm trying to think of her surname, I can't.

Umm [both talk together] so what sort of-

Get down in the study or something.

Yeah what sort of things you, you'd do with Wendy on holiday when you met her?

Well, we, we went out, along the seafront. Course we out, out on a minibus and all that, you know, and that. And that... course we went, went down to the pub, in the evening as well, cos that was just down the road on the seafront, and that. Like I say, it was only, it was only three to four years, and that was that.

So you, I mean, meeting once a year you must've, must've really looked forward to Septembers.

Indeed, I did and because, as I say, the last time I went down there. That's the last time I, I went to Clacton because, because after that they said Clacton was closing down, you see so...

So you, did you send each other cards or anything like that?

Christmas cards yeah - ...

[End of tape 4, side A]

Tape 4 Side B [Track 8]

So how did, how did it feel when you, when you turned up at Clacton, and were told that Wendy, Wendy was dead? I mean how...

Well it, it was a shock to me because, because, cos she, I said, 'When did she die?' 'Well' she said, I think she, I think she died round about November, I think they said, or somethink, early, it was early, late in the year, the year before, or early the year that I was going on holiday, but I can't remember. It was quite some months after I knew, over six months after I knew about it.

Umm.

And that, and I said, 'Where', when I got there I said, 'where is she, where is she?' [rustling noise] Wendy, where is Wendy?' and then they, they said, 'She's died' you know. You know, and I thought, 'Ohh' I thought, 'That's strange, nobody told me', but then, there you are.

And there, there were no signs of it the year before?

No, no, no...

Ummh.

And course the trouble is, I did, I did go, I think, try to once on holiday at Christmas time with her, but the last Christmas I didn't, you see. The last, the last Christ..., you know the last year, when Clacton' when Clacton was closing down the year before, the last Christmas I didn't, you see, and because it was a year before, I was looking forward to seeing her again, and course I didn't, you see.

Umm

You see.

So what, what was Christmas like at Clacton?

Oh very good: we had good parties, good dancing, and all that and, and I think they went along the pub and all that as well, and, we had quite good Christmases there, yes.

So how many people would go?

Well I can't, I can't say how many, how many hold people it would hold, it was full up anyway... It was full up, and all that. But, but it, but it was very, very cold up there: ooh it was. I remember going up there and, and, of course the trouble is, when I went up two or three times on, Christmas time, I went on, I went up on the train on my own, where, where before they used to take me up on the minibus. But at Christmas time I had to do it on my own, and I did it alright... And, then they, then they would meet me up, either meet up the station, or once, the last time I went up there Christmas time, I had to get, I went there myself, all the way from the station to the, to the Bedford 'otel. But, but it's, but I enjoyed it but, but I remember one year when I think it did get some snow up in Clacton and, and all that, and all that, but I managed it alright. And it's very strange to what it was in the summer, because Christmas time, though most of the hotels were probably full up, like the Bedford one, and there was, there was Butlins down the road, but you never used to see many people on the seafront, and round the, and round the amusement places because it was so cold, I suppose.

Mm.

Very strange [both talk together]

Yes

It felt very strange.

Mm.

Yeah I think it was, as I said, I think it was about three times I think I did it, or twice. I know I did it twice. But course time, except the time went so quick and of course there was no ... no, I just remembered when you ... when you talked, asked me about Wendy, you see, so... [pause] Yeah, they were good old days really, when I did meet her but, that's, that's, that's the only person I've had in my life, girl: and course she was older than me as well. Course she would be, be in her nineties now, if she was alive yeah...

Umm. [pause]

And thinking, thinking now about, about your life now...

[inaudible] Kettle on now?

Yeah.

Well I think that, I think it's alright now, because I because I, I don't expect it did to improve too much now, because of my age. If I was younger, say about thirty to forty, I'd probably be doing a lot more things, and probably have a girlfriend. Because I'm seventy now, it doesn't bother me so much: having a girlfriend, or, and that, and cos I'm, cos I think it's getting a bit, a bit late to do lots of other, other things, you know, going, getting around, and ...

Mm.

... doing things, you know, more myself, you know. Because of my age, I just like to take things a bit steady now...

Mmm.

and all that.

I mean, how, how do you think ageing's affect you, affected your cerebral palsy?

Well not too bad at the moment. I'm very, very lucky in a way because I'm not in no pain and I'm come - I am seventy now: and course most people don't think I'm seventy. Not even with my voice, you see so...So, so, so I'm, I'm very very lucky that I can still get around without a walking stick. But, but I'm feeling that I'm, I have to be very, very careful when I'm, when I'm walking around now, because strange things do happen, like it did, like it did last week. Very strange things happening.

What, can you, can you tell what happened last week?

Well what happened last week I got off got off the bus at Preston Circus, along the Preston Road, and I've stepped onto the pavement, and when I got my other leg down, I just went down: and, and that, and that should never happen: but somebody helped, somebody helped me up, but when I turned around to get up, I saw the, a big, a big

dent in the pavement, and I think that's where I [sound of hand slapping] put my foot, you know; I think that's where I went down, because I, because as you, as you get off the bus, you're gonna walk straight forward ain't you? And I think that's how I went down without notice because, because when I got, when you get off the bus you, you think it's alright, but but it, but most of the times it is, but this time it wasn't: there was a dent in the in the pavement, like that sink.

Mm.

I mean, like that...Umm, and that's why, that's why you have to be very, very careful, you know, cos, cos I've, I've heard other people say they're getting off buses or, or walking along the pavement and getting thereselves in pavement, 'cause I've, 'cause

I've done that outside this, outside my house, up the top of my steps, until they did the, did that next door's fencing and, and the pavement, did: before that, it did, it was very dangerous, and then, of course sometimes, when you, when I went out, you just forgot to remember it's there, you see, cos, cos most of the time you should walk all normally shouldn't you, when you get along the pavement, but you have to be very careful. That's one thing, you've got to be very careful, when you get a certain age.

Umm. So getting [Tony Wilson coughs] getting round round and about Brighton, how how is that generally for you?

Well not too bad, but, not too bad, because I'm, I'm mostly, when I, when I, I go on the buses when, if I've got nothing too big to do shopping or anything, but if I, I have to go down the town and do shopping, specially on a Friday or a Saturday, I always get a taxi back home: even on a Sunday. I might go down the bus on a Sunday and come back on a taxi, because the buses are, are so long in between: and of course I do get disability allowance for that, for my leg, and that's why I spend my money on as well. Disability: for taxis and all that: and that.

And how, how do you manage on, on your allowances and things?

Well I do manage. If I didn't have Disability Allowance, I wouldn't have, I wouldn't be able to, to go on holiday so much: perhaps one holiday a year, or just five days or, or three days. But, but as I get Disa... Disability Allowance as well, I, I do spend it a little bit on going on holiday as well, and that does help. And also I, I do get a little bit extra food and all that. Like a little bit of drink, I have a little bit of drink when I fancy it, and all that sort of thing: like wine, or, or shandy and all that. And I get a little bit extra sometimes, to eat, you know, but, but if it, if it wasn't for the Disability Allowance, I, I'd be very, very careful how, how I spend the money.

Umm.

I would.

I mean do you, do you think, being disabled costs more to live? Does it cost more to live than it...

Well it, it does if you have, if you don't get the Disability Allowance, because you... because, because, if I didn't have Disability Allowance and I am, am a pensioner, I would have to be very, very careful, because I would be travelling on the buses more, 'stead of in the taxis. I know the buses are cheaper now, because they are cheaper than what they were before they, well they, they did all this card business like, getting the getting the bus pass and getting the, going half fare and all that, but, but in the last five years, they've, they've made a lot of special arrangements and all that, like, it used to be, it used to be two, two pound forty, if you didn't have a card, for anybody in town to travel all up and down on the bus all, all day on, with a card, you know, just a, just a scratch card, or you'd go to the, get on the bus and ask, ask the driver for a saver. But the other week, it went up a bit, and it's now, now it's, now it's two pounds sixty for the, for a day, but which is not bad, but, but for people with a card, the card half-price you go for two pound: it used to be two pound twenty-five, but now it's two pound thirty, which, which has only gone up 5p for us, and 5p for the, for the day return and you can do it so many times as you like, on the bus. So it's not too bad.

Mm.

Like I said, I do get Disability Allowance for the taxi fares and that...

So. Maybe as a sort of last thing that we could talk about, today, would be, could you describe, sort of, a typical day for you? What you, what you do?

A typical day. Well, well any, well most days're [laughs] a bit are a little bit difficult, sometimes. What can I say? Well sometimes you, you do things, and you ... you go, you, you do, you do one or two things and then you got to do something or go back to something and you got to think, you got to think, what, what...what, what ... you're do- doing you see. One, and sometimes it can be very difficult: you, you, you, you,

you go out, and you go down town, and you go and do your shopping and you come back and you forgot somethink. Now I find that's very difficult [laughs] sometimes.

But, can you maybe describe what your routine's like?

Well I have got a routine: you see, like today, I, I had, I had my home help give me a shower, then I did my washing, and sometimes I go out, on a Wednesday afternoon, or sometimes I stay indoors. Then Fridays I, I got the home help coming in again, then I go shopping, then I do my ironing. Then Saturdays I, I mostly stay in on Saturdays: I do go out sometimes on a Saturday, then, then Sundays, I always get out on a Sunday, go down to The Golden Girl in Manchester Street: I've been doing this for a long time now, buying, buying my meal down there for one day: and then I, and then I either go, stay out for a while, which I do, then come home. I either go on the bus or taxi, but sometimes I get mostly taxis because the buses are every hour, or due an hour. Then, because I get this Disability Allowance I do that, and then... then: what was I going to say? Then on the ... other days I go to the day centre: Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, I go to the Day Centres and I find that very, helps me a lot.

What sorts of things do you do there?

Well I do... we have a, we have a usual, a usual committee meeting and we do, we do art, and we do, we, sometimes I do, go to the writing class, which would, which I am, at the writing class on Monday afternoons because we're doing a, trying to do, a, a newsletter, which, which they're trying ... they done one newsletter last year, to see how it goes, but, but, but Michael wants some more newsletters done, so we're doing one now and we might be doing, coming out every three months if it, if it goes off alright. So we're doing a newsletter, and we, and we do, I have done pottery and now we're doing, at the moment, on Tuesday morning, on Tuesday mornings, we do history about Brighton. Somebody comes from the Brighton College, and we're learning, doing learning a bit more about the history of Brighton, at the moment. And in and in the after, and in the afternoon we do, do drama, all sorts of games and drama games and all sorts. That's on Tuesday afternoons, and on Thursday mornings we do

cooking, and Thursday afternoons we do, do art. That's what I'm doing at the moment, cos I only go three days a week, Monday Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Aaand how do you get there?

I get, I go by, I go by taxi, and I, and they bring me home.

Oh right [both talk together]

Yeah [pause]

And what sorts of things do you do when you stay in: what sorts of things do you do at home?

Well I tidy out, tidy my place up, and, and tidy my place up, and do all my chores, and, and if I've got time I go out. If I don't want to go out I sit, I sit and watch television and do a bit of reading sometime, sometimes do a bit of reading. Watch television in the evening.

Umm...And what kind of things do you like to read?

Well anything in the paper, or, or sort of ... and most of the things I, I have read since I've been here is been about the gardening and all that, you know: and sometimes I go through the, through the ... the train, I've got two or three train magazines, which I'm very fond of, going on trains. I go on the Bluebell Railway once a year with my keyworker. He takes me on there, cos the only, the only way I can get there is by car, so he takes me up there and we go on the train, once a year, Bluebell Railway.

Uumm.

[pause]

Don't think there's anything else I can say or...

Shall we stop there then?

Yeah.

Okay.

Yes stop there. Yes, thanks very, very much.

[End of recording.]