



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

Dr Lin Berwick MBE  
Interviewed by Philip Mann

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## IMPORTANT

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## Interview Summary Sheet

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<b>Interviewee's forename:</b>	Lin	<b>Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Occupation:</b>	Psychotherapeutic counsellor, a lecturer and writer on disability matters	<b>Date and place of birth:</b>	1950
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**Tape 1 Side A [Track 1]**

*So it's Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> November, and I'm talking to Dr Lin Berwick, M.B.E., and Lin, perhaps I can begin right at the very beginning, first of all, and ask you when and where you were born?*

I was born on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1950, at St Andrews Hospital, Bow, London, so I'm a cockney in the true sense of the word: born within the sound of Bow Bells. I was three months premature and I weighed just two pounds at birth, and when I was born, the doctors believed me to be still-born, and they put me on one side and just attended to my mother, and suddenly she said, 'I can hear my baby crying', and they said 'Don't be ridiculous: your baby's dead', and she said 'She's not! I can hear her crying,' and they went to where they'd put me, on this trolley thing, and found that I was actually breathing, and just making the tiniest of squeaks, and all hell was let loose, and I was rushed to an incubator, and they didn't know then in 1950 that, if they turned the taps to the oxygen up fairly full, to get the baby a nice colour and to get them breathing well, that they could burn the eyes and damage the brain, and that is in fact what they did, causing me to have cerebral palsy, and partial sight. And I stayed in hospital for three months, until I weighed just five pounds: and I was taken to my then home at 13 Alton Street [Lansbury Estate], Poplar in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and it was the home of my grandmother; my parents just had a couple of rooms there. We just had the old-fashioned back-yard, a courtyard, mostly paviour, and coal bunker outside and really ... outside toilet ... really difficult living conditions: not the sort of place that you would want to bring a disabled person up in, and my early years were incredibly hard because, in the first part, my mother noticed that I wasn't responding in the same way that her other children had done: wasn't doing the usual sort of milestones, and she got very worried, and kept taking me backwards and forwards to the doctor. And the doctor said that she was an over-anxious mother. She'd got to realise that she'd got a premature baby and that I'd got to make that time up, and I'd got very weak lungs and was generally a fairly poorly child, really. I had pneumonia twice in the first couple of years of my life because my lungs were very under-developed, and mum was taking me backwards and forwards to the doctor, and the

doctor was trying to give her reassurance, but at eighteen months old [in 1952], mum got her way and I was taken to see a neurologist, who held me upside down by my feet ... I was stark-naked at the time ... held me upside down by my feet, watched me scream, and the way that my body moved, and said, 'This child is spastic. Take her home, forget about her: she'll never be any good. You're wasting my time, your time, and everybody else's.'

*[A short interruption because there's some background noise from 'Harvey', the dog]*

My mother took me to see a neurologist who, after seeing me undress, held me upside down by my feet, watched the body movement when I screamed and said, 'This child is spastic. Take her home, forget about her, she'll never be any good. You're wasting my time, your time, and everybody else's.' My mother was absolutely gutted by this experience, and she cried all the way home, from Carshalton to Poplar, and, as she puts it, she was extremely tearful and frightened, and then her tears turned to anger, and she said, 'How dare this man say that you're no good, and that you are to be taken home and forgotten about? We're going to try and help you to make your way in the world', and, basically, that's what she did.

I had two other brothers, both older than me, both able-bodied, and in a sense they were my salvation because they gave me a normal approach to life. I was never allowed to get away with anything on the basis of disability, and we used to play and romp around together, and ... it wasn't easy for them, because once we started the physio regime of every day until the age of four, going from the East End of London to Shadwell where, basically, they were giving me gentle massage and heat treatment, because I had so much spasm, and I'd scream a hell of a lot, and Mum always says that visitors to our house didn't stay for very long because I did nothing but scream the whole time, and the only time I stopped screaming was when Mum was carrying me on her hip, and so I used to be carried by her while she was cooking the dinner, and moving around the house. I think I had enormous frustration, and I can remember, even at three or four, having quite a lot of pain from spasm in the muscles, and at four, I started general physio, with a marvellous woman called Nancie Finnie. She turned

out to be world-renowned in the field of cerebral palsy treatment, and she'd moved from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children in Hackney to the Bobath Centre. It was then in Marylebone Road, and then it moved to Hampstead. And Bertie Bobath was a pioneer in treating somebody with cerebral palsy. Her method of treatment was not dissimilar to that of the Peto method. Her attitude was about planting normal brain function: movements, actions, social behaviour: making a child do certain things over and over, and over again, until one day, the brain got the idea that this was something it wanted, you know, it had to do, and then was able to take on the function.

*All the time, Lin, your parents, then, were adapting to this new circumstance: what, for instance was – you talked about living with your grandparents – what was your parents' work: what was your father's work?*

My dad was a carpenter and worked on various buildings, and my mother was a machinist. She got money together...first of all, she started doing, once we moved into our council home in Poplar and they left my grandparents' home, and we moved to Grundy Street in Poplar, she took a job making children's night clothes, pyjamas and nightdresses, and it was a pittance of money: I mean, slave labour, and we were really poor, and yet my mum was absolutely wonderful, because as children, we never realised we were poor. We had a very lovely home and good clothing, good food, and Dad worked hard, and we got a car, and he also got a caravan, and we had a caravan near, at a place called Seasalter in Whitstable: and they used to get us children down by the sea nearly every weekend. Their idea was for me, that I got some sea air into my lungs, and made my lungs stronger, and crawled around ... you know, once I'd learnt to crawl ... on the grass on the big camp field, and got plenty of exercise, and, you know, I think that probably was my salvation, but, you know, my mum tells the story of how she would have to work and make a set of children's clothes, like a shirt and a pair of trousers on Thursday, and sell it at the school on Friday, to get dinner for Friday, until Dad got his wages: so, you know, it was really, really tough in those early years.

*Mm.*

And Mum was giving me exercises every day. I didn't sit up until I was three years old, and I didn't speak until I was nearly four, so child development was very slow. I count myself as incredibly lucky that, as somebody with cerebral palsy, I have normal speech. This is quite rare, and I have used it to good effect over the years, and I think I'm a good communicator. I learnt to crawl at the age of five, and this was my mobility around the house, and outside. I used to crawl across pavements, roads, concrete paths: you name it, nothing stopped me. I had knees like elephant skin, and the palms of my hands were really tough, where I just crawled around on the ground; and some parents might have been really embarrassed by that, but my parents' attitude is "While she's moving, she's getting strength in her legs", and I think that they were right, really, but, crawling around as I did was a very expensive business, because I used to go through a pair of leather shoes every three weeks, and even though I had steel toe caps, I'd still go through those as well, and I used to go through a pair of jeans that my mum had...Mum used to buy a pair of trousers or jeans that were far too long, and then cut the bottoms of the trousers off use the material from the trousers to make patches in the jeans, and we'd have thicker material parts at the knee area, or leather pieces, and I would obviously go through those as well, because crawling on concrete, it didn't take very long to make knees of trousers absolutely threadbare, so I was [laughing] a very expensive child to keep, and Mum struggled to buy me a pair of shoes every three weeks: but we got there.

*What's coming through is the strength of character, the determination that your parents had, that you should have opportunity then to grow up in an everyday family situation.*

*[Knock at door. Ralph outside: "It's only me, dear."*

Wait for the other door to go.]

*What's coming through, Lin, is the determination of your parents, the character: their strength of character: the determination that you should have opportunity then to grow*

*up in an everyday family situation, and should have the opportunity to develop and to grow up.*

Well, yeah, I mean the East End grit was there, and I think they instilled it into me. I think this is why I've had this sort of determination all my life and my parents' kind of war-cry was 'Yes, that's OK, but you can do better'. I know it was the thing that drove me on, but it's also the thing that, in later life, I found very hard, because they never found it easy to acknowledge my achievements, because, in their opinion I could still do more, and more, you know, and I think I've spent the whole of my life trying to please them, really, [laughs] but obviously it's been part of their ploy because I've actually done quite well.

*And did you have much contact with other relatives? With your grandparents?*

No, no, we've had over the years, and it's still the same now, we have virtually no support from family. I think most of my parents' family felt very awkward that there was a disabled child; there was a certain amount of social embarrassment. We didn't get invited to many family functions, and there was quite a lot of isolation really, which is very, very sad, and I know from my own early childhood, like my brothers had loads of friends, but the attitude of people down our street that had children of similar age was, 'You don't want to go and play with her. She will hold you back. You go off and play with your able-bodied friends', which was a great pity really, because, you know, I didn't really see myself as different from other children. I knew I couldn't get around the same, but, you know, I still had the ability to play and make friends and enjoy life, but somehow people thought that the restrictions that I had would rub off on their children, and, you know, that wasn't good.

*And did you become aware of this at an early stage or...*

Yes, yeah, because I saw my brothers with heaps of friends that they would, you know, run around with, and, you know, go off to play, and, you know, they'd have lots of school friends and things, and I had virtually nobody, and it was quite tough. But I,

when I learnt to ride a tricycle at the age of seven, that was my.... that was the way I sort of improved things, 'cause once I had wheels, I could move around and, you know, I could be much more mobile.

[Phone rings.]

*Oh, there's the phone, Lin. [Break] So here you were, Lin, living with your family: if we turn then to the thoughts of early schooling. What schooling options were presented to you?*

Well, I realise now that education for me in the fifties and sixties was more occupation of the mind than actual learning. I went to a school for physically-handicapped children in the East End of London, called 'Bromley Hall', and I used to go every morning on the school bus, and it was called 'a special school', and the only thing that was really special about it was the fact that it didn't have any stairs. In fact, my great grandmother used to go to the school, when it was a school for girls, about a hundred years earlier, and there was, in the school records, there was bits about the school carriages bringing, you know, the children in and, sort of icy weather, so in a way there was a funny family link, which is quite nice. We had children that had all kinds of problems. There was a lot of physical disability, a lot of children with polio, some with cerebral palsy, not that many: a lot of children with heart and asthma problems, and many children with levels of social deprivation. Some children were very poorly dressed and had problems with personal hygiene, and children were abused; all that kind of thing, so it was a very mixed bag. And we had teachers who were very kindly and others who were extremely fierce, and there wasn't much understanding of the fact that I had very poor sight. The oxygen had totally shattered the vision in my left eye, and left me with an eye condition called 'Retrolental Fibroplasia' which is a burning of the tissues at the back of the eye, due to oxygen, and the way it was described to me, it was like looking at a mirror with the back scraped off; you could sort of see right through. And so I had vision from the area of 10 o'clock to 4 o'clock, so I always kind of looked at people sideways on: it probably gave me a slightly shifty appearance, but it was because of my poor vision. It was quite amazing, though, what I managed to

achieve, given the poor sight, because there wasn't the sort of amplification aids and that sort of thing, and some teachers were very, very resentful, that they used to have to write things for me in big print, because I couldn't see it, and then, wonder of wonders, we got a really good magnifying glass attached to my desk, which helped, and then I had these special glasses made called Keeler Aids. They were very ugly and they were really two sets of magnifiers set into a pair of glasses. One was like a long tube and the other was like a very, very thick, heavy lens, like a pudding basin turned on its side, and these glasses cost something like £500, and in the fifties and early sixties, that was a hell of a lot of money, so they were treated like gold dust, and I was only able to put them on for certain lessons. [Laughs.]

*So it was a school, then, for children through to sixteen, or...?*

Yeah, through to sixteen.

*And so what sort of numbers of children were there in total?*

Um, probably around about 250, 300 children, and there'd be twenty-five, thirty to a class.

*What are your memories of a typical sort of day?*

Well, the major thing for me about school then was that I wasn't there a great deal, because I was having physio up in Hampstead three times a week, and horse riding once a week, so I used to get to school at 12 o'clock, and then, just in time to go to dinner, and then it was play time, so school started at 1.15 and finished at half past three so, you know, my school years were very, very depleted, due to treatment and hospitalisation, because I lost seven months of schooling when I had surgery on my legs.

*We'll come back to that time in a while, if we may, but would you, how would you describe the priorities then of the teachers: what was their main emphasis?*

Their priority was to teach you to read and write, and do some maths. And then there was typing, which I absolutely hated, because I couldn't type the Pitman way because I didn't have the use in my hands, and so typing lessons were a nightmare because the teacher would get very angry with me, and also be very annoyed because I couldn't see the typescript of the sheets that you had to practise with, and she'd have to come and read it to me, and sort of huff and puff because I was different from the other children in the class. I used to love hymn singing on a Wednesday morning, where I could really kind of, let go and, you know, come into my own: anything to do with music, I was there. Needlework again was a nightmare, due to vision and dexterity, and artwork was a nightmare because I couldn't draw [laughs]: hopeless at drawing. Didn't mind painting and colouring, that sort of thing, but drawing: forget it. So my great love was anything with music, and anything with words. I loved English lessons and Scripture.

*I'll just turn the tape over if we may. Just bear with me, because it's going to stop in a moment. Bear with me.*

**[End of Tape 1, Side 1]**

**Tape 1, Side B [Track 2]**

*Yes, OK. This is Side B of the interview with Dr Lin Berwick, MBE, and it's the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, and, Lin, you're talking about your early school experience. Your favourite subjects were emerging. How, though, did you get on with the other children at the school?*

...On the whole I got on reasonably well. I had one special friend. It was very difficult because a lot of these kids were what I call 'cor blimey cockneys' and they regarded me as posh. I'm not posh at all, you know, and I can swear and speak in cockney as good as the next one, but because my mother was always very strict about how we spoke and how we behaved with adults and teachers, you know, and I treated them very respectfully, and the other kids thought I was, you know, somehow different, so that was, you know, quite hard: and the headmistress, who didn't particularly like me, when they used to bring visitors round the school, she would come over to me with the school inspectors, people like that, and say, 'This child speaks two languages.' 'Oh yes? And what are they? How wonderful!' 'English and Cockney.' Because I could turn on the cockney, the same as any other kid, in the playground, and when I was talking to the teachers and visitors to the school I would speak correctly. So in a way, when I started to get a love of classical music, well that really [laughing] separated me from the other kids, 'cause I was definitely trying to be posh and, you know, set myself, you know, apart from them.

*When we talk about the school, can you, in your mind's eye as it were, imagine yourself then back there now?*

Yes. It was a very old building and it still had the brown glazed tiles and just single light bulbs, which were very dull: I think they must have been about forty watt bulbs or whatever. Classroom doors were a bit like, like I suppose you'd see a Georgian window today, with just little panels of glass in. Not terribly warm: big old-fashioned oil radiators, ...and the thing I hated most was coming back to school from the physio and being given the obligatory third of a pint, you know, the little bottles of milk, which I wasn't a great lover of milk, but they always stood the crate of milk next to the

radiator so it was warm, and I just could not get this stuff down, because I hated the smell of the milk, you know. And, of an afternoon when we were very small we used to go the rest room and lie on these sort of folding camp beds, and you'd have, you know, just a pillow and a blanket, and you had to lay there for a half an hour and rest, and then you had your lunch, or you had lunch first and then you had this rest period: but in the end, instead of going to the rest room, I used to lie on a blanket behind the piano in the main hall, because they wanted me to stretch out and get my quadriceps straighter, and I used to do jigsaw puzzles, or use building bricks or anything that made me use my hands, and I used to sort of stretch out and lie around on this blanket, and periodically, somebody would come down: the headmistress and the nursing sister used to have their lunch on a platform, so they could overlook the kiddies in the school hall, who were having their dinner, and so they'd walk off this platform and come to me [laughing] behind the piano on the floor and see how I was getting on from time to time. That's a memory I'd forgotten until now, but it's, yeah, it's quite a strong one really, and obviously that was strengthening my back, and I think the thing I remember most vividly is that no aspect of my life was ever done without it being for a purpose, so even play was turned into therapy; and things like using a knife and fork and eating, the posture had to be right, and mum and dad would never leave me alone: it was, you know, "Don't hold that fork like that. Don't hold that knife like that. Sit up straight", etc, etc, and I really resented, as a child, their constant nagging, and going on and on and on about things, but, obviously, in later life I can see that they were only doing it for my good, and the real purpose behind it, because they made me much more socially acceptable.

*And at the school, you talked about going away for physiotherapy outside of the school: that continued then, did it, through all your schooling?*

Yeah. I was with the Bobath Centre until the age of seventeen, and I only stopped then because I'd lost my sight and was going then to a school for the blind, and then going... which was residential, ... and then going to the Bobath Clinic at school holidays and things.

*And how do you feel, looking back on your school years? Do you ... how do you regard those years?*

Well, the early years at the school for physically-handicapped were very tough. When I went blind, the kids at the school were really nasty and I went through some horrible jeering and bullying, and people laughing at me because I walked into things. You know, I went to walk through a door that had glass panels and, because I could see the light through I thought the door was open, and of course it wasn't, and I sort of smashed my face, and then I walked into a brick wall and things like that, and hit my face again and I had tripod sticks poked into, and walking sticks poked into my face and handfuls of mud rubbed into my face, and kids saying "Can you see that, then, Berwick?", and it was horrendous at a time when you're really frightened, because you've now suddenly got a new disability which you don't know how to handle. I had two teachers at that school who were my saving grace: Alfreda Elderfield. She was a special teacher that they had brought in to deal with the most profoundly disabled, or the most difficult, for one reason or another, and I was put in this class and there was eight of us. Four of them didn't have very good mental ability, and four of us were OK mentally, but two of them had 'Duchennes Muscular Dystrophy', so they would have died in their teens, and, you know, there was me, and this lady was very, very kind and she wrote books and things out in big handwriting: she helped me a lot with maths. She played a piano accordion and she set up a small music group, percussion and instruments, and she got me playing the glockenspiel, and she discovered that I was quite a good musician, and that music was my salvation, because I shone from the other children: and I was then asked to play at school concerts, all kinds of things, so suddenly I was in the good books of the Head, which was a nice change, because she really didn't like me, I don't think.

*So you found a particular channel, through music?*

Yes, and when I lost my sight, I mean, that was my saving grace. Without music, I think I'd have gone under, because it helped me to keep my memory and develop it, and it gave me a sense of inner peace from the tension and fear, and the other thing

was Scripture and my Bible, and my Christian faith, which was really important to me, and that was how I got in with the kids in the neighbourhood, because we'd sit round and they'd say, 'What did you do at the weekend?', and I said, 'Oh, I went to church.' 'Oh, you went to church, did you? Oh, trust you to be different from other people. Well, what did you learn at this church then?' 'Oh, I learned about the story of the Good Samaritan, and the woman at the well at Samaria and all these kind of things: the healing miracles of Jesus.' 'Well, tell us what you learnt, then,' and what happened was I quickly discovered that these kids loved a story, and before long I had about twenty-five children sitting on the ground in front of me, and I would talk to them about the stories in the Bible, and I was obviously quite a good communicator, because they really listened, and the first couple of weeks they jeered, 'Oh, you know, been to church again': then they said, 'Go on, tell us another story! What did you learn this week?' and the whole atmosphere just changed, and it was fantastic; and that was how I got my friends from the neighbourhood: they'd come and hear Bible stories.

[Laughs]

*And were you then at this time, Lin, developing do you think then, for the first time then a sense of yourself then as a person?*

Well, I knew that I was a good communicator, and in a way, even in my very small childish way, I was spreading the Gospel to kids who probably would never have heard it, and if they did, they would have just, you know, their families would have jeered, and sort of thirty odd years later, when I had the call to preach, it made me feel that, in a way what happened in those early years, from say about the age of eight or nine, to being... what would I be.... thirty-one when I had the call to preach, that I was being kind of modelled, moulded to do this work, and not to be fearful of a group of people in front of me, and, you know, I mean obviously when you preach, and I've preached in some fairly big churches, I've never ... I've been afraid of communicating God's word, but I've never been afraid of the mass of people in front of me, and the bigger the mass, the happier I was.

*At school, Lin, why do you think there was this, on occasion, this atmosphere of bullying that you were referring to?*

I think it was a totally new-found situation. At one point, I had my own individual teacher for the blind, while they were trying to get me educated as a blind person, and so I was taken into a room by myself and I had one-to-one tuition, and mostly it was learning Braille and coping with that, but also in recreational periods I did things like basket weaving, and made lovely tea trays and stuff like that, and the kids would say, 'Why is it she can do that kind of work and we're not allowed to do it?', you know, because it was a totally different form of artwork that, you know, they were told, 'No, this was special because of my blindness', you know, and it wouldn't be something that could happen in the school as a whole, so in a way I was set apart as somehow different, and also that I was getting favouritism and, [slight laugh] that doesn't go down well with a group of kids, and it was very, very hard.

*And how were you taken to school, and indeed to physiotherapy?*

I went to school on the obligatory green school bus, with a school attender, picked up at my home at around about 8.30, quarter to nine, dropped off half past three, quarter to four, and when it was hospital days, I had a hospital car service and my mum, we would leave Poplar at half past eight and we'd get to Hampstead for something like 10.30, have half an hour at the Bobath Centre and then hopefully back at Poplar for 12 o'clock. Traffic on the roads were not nearly as bad as it is now, but it was still a hell of a chunk. My dad used to come home for his lunch at one, and I've known Mum have to cook a dinner, 'cause he always had a hot meal, I've known her cook a dinner on number ten, because, on the gas, because, you know, 'Dad's got to have his dinner on time', and he being very angry: 'You tell those doctors that you've got a husband coming home from work and you've got to be here!', you know, "who wants his dinner", and sometimes it would all be very fraught, and the dinner would go up in the air, and Mum would be upset and... you know, quite tough really, quite tough.

*And he was working locally mainly?*

Yeah, well sometimes doing driving work and working away: when I say 'away', I mean like North London and things like that, but home every night, yeah.

*And your mother, being with you then on a daily basis, at the Bobath Centre in particular: and what kind of a difference were your visits to the Bobath Centre making, do you feel?*

Better mobility... helping me to become more confident and more socially adjusted. It was, I think, small things... an example: there was, like, teaching social skills like washing and so on. Now, when I went to wash my face, I would take my face to the face cloth, rather than the face cloth to my face, and they'd sort of stop me and say 'No', you know, "you've got to bring your hands up to your face to wash", and you'd do it again and again, until it clicked and I was able to do this, and I had quite a lot of nightmares because Dr Bobath always had trainee physios and there'd be like thirteen of them come round, and they'd sit in on a session, and some of those sessions would be, like, using a knife and fork properly, and so they'd have some food on a plate: it might be bananas or a piece of fruit or something that you had to cut and eat it, like you would eat potatoes and meat and things, and I'd have to cut this food up and put it on the knife and fork, and I used to have nightmares that all these people were watching, and thinking, 'Oh, do I have to?', you know, 'Do I have to put up with all this?' I hated it, you know, I hated being on view, like a monkey in a zoo.

*And tell me more about your memories of Doctor Bobath then.*

A very nice lady, actually.... She was, I believe, Austrian, so she spoke with a very thick accent, and she was called 'Bertie Bobath'. Everyone knew her as 'Bertie', but I don't quite know... probably her name was Roberta, I should think., but she was known as 'Bertie Bobath' Her husband, Kenneth, was a neurologist and they used to work together in this team and so he would be assessing kind of brain responses and she would be doing kind of physio-type things. She was very nice, a very kindly lady: quite strong, physically. Very, very determined, but I used to work predominately

with Nancie Finnie, who was my hero, and she wrote a lot of books on cerebral palsy, and her classic book is called *Handling the Cerebral Palsied Child at Home*, by Nancie R. Finnie, and she was somebody I really looked up to. I think she came from a very privileged background. Her father was someone very big in the City, and her partner was the Chairman of 'Sunpat Sweets', so we got all these lovely goodies from time to time, and I was one of her favourite children, so I used to get spoilt rotten [laughing] at Christmas time and birthdays, and all these lovely presents used to arrive from Harrods, and places like that, you know, which was completely out of our league, you know, but it was wonderful to be spoilt like that.

*And what sort of numbers of children were attending the Bobath Centre?*

Well, difficult to know because I didn't really see them en masse, and I think there was quite a lot because there was ... it was half an hour appointments, and my parents used to have to pay 10/6 [ten shillings and sixpence] a week towards the cost. I don't know who met the rest, but anyway, Mum and Dad really struggled to find ten shillings and sixpence a session... but they made this contribution to the cost. I don't know whether we got any other from the local authority, but, er...

*This was.....*

...or whether we went wholly private, I don't know.

*This was per week, or per session?*

Per session.

*Per session. So a day?*

Yes, and 10/6 then, in the fifties, was a lot of money: you know, if you think that somebody was earning, I don't know, thirteen, fourteen quid a week, you know, and sort of £1.50 or whatever was going on treatment, you know, it's quite a lot.

*Mm. Do you feel that there were stresses and strains in your family, then?*

Oh, terrible. Terrible, because I took up so much time, and so my parents' relationship obviously suffered, and I realise now that it suffered much more on a sexual level, because for a long time I had my bed in their room, because they used to have to help turn me over and sometimes I'd get very fretful in the night, so, you know, my bed was next to their bed, so obviously there wasn't a great deal of intimacy between them when I was around, because I could hear everything that was going on, so obviously whatever they did had to be well and truly kept under wraps, so to speak, and I realise now, as an adult, how tough that must have been, but at the time, you don't realise it, do you? And Mum was still machining, to make ends meet. She had now moved to making men's shirts and she got, I think it was something like eleven pence halfpenny to put a dozen cuffs, you know, cuffs on a dozen shirts, and she got something like 1/6d [one shilling and sixpence] a dozen for putting collars and cuffs on, and to set a collar in a shirt is quite difficult to do, so our life was surrounded by dozens and dozens of half-finished shirts, all stuffed into sacks, and then they'd be picked up and taken away, and then she'd have another load, and so you always had this kind of smell of the fabric and, you know, kind of resin stuff coming out of the fabric. It probably wasn't good for your health, overall, and this big industrial machine, that sounded like a carthorse, going for something like eight, ten hours a day. Between cleaning the house, doing the shopping, taking the kids to school, taking me to physio, I truly don't know how Mum did it. I really don't know.

*And, what....*

And no help from anybody.

*I was going to say that here you were then without p'raps much wider family contact and no apparent from social services, as they would now be described.*

We had, the occasional visit from the Child Welfare Officer... but other than that, no. And Mum had no real support of who she could talk to, you know, when things were tough: she just had to get on with it.

*And do you feel the whole burden of all this then fell upon mainly your mother?*

Yeah, she coped with the day-to-day stresses. My dad was no good on that side, but if I wanted a set of parallel bars made, to help me with walking, or, one time they wanted me to sort of get the posture of my feet better, so he made like pedals that you could push up and down. He made a small staircase for me to practise going up and downstairs, and that sort of things. So, with his hands, if he could do anything practical, he was there.

[End of tape 1 Side B]

**Tape 2 Side A [Track 3]**

*This is Side A of Tape 2 and it's the 8<sup>th</sup> November, talking to Dr Lin Berwick MBE, and, Lin, what physical difference, what kind of difference, do you think going to the Bobath Centre made then to your cerebral palsy?*

I think they helped to make me a more rounded person: I was much more socially-adjusted. They gave me the best kind of mobility they could, given my physical circumstances. They gave me confidence in speaking to other people, because I was always speaking to their trainee therapist: so, you know, talking to groups of professionals was not a difficult thing to me, because it was just second nature, so from that point of view, they stood me in good stead for future life.

*And at one point, then, came the suggestion that you should consider, or that your parents should consider, then, having a particular operation?*

Yes, this was a hamstring transplant of both legs, and it was a pioneering op. at the time. I had it done at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children in Hackney Road, and it was a devastating time, because I'd never been away from home, never been separated from Mum, and I went into a situation where I was away from home for eleven weeks and four days. I ticked every day off on the calendar, I think.

*What age were you, Lin, at that stage?*

I had my twelfth birthday whilst I was in hospital, so I was eleven.

*And the procedure then involved, did it, what, being in plaster, having your legs in plaster?*

It involved the most incredibly painful operation on both legs. Three trips down to an operating theatre, with a nasty anaesthetic, because, you know, it was really the old ether in those days, and being as sick as a dog when you came back. Being in plaster

from toes to thighs for six months, and sleeping with a plank of wood between your knees, to keep them apart, and something like three months on from the operation, or two months on from the op., splitting the plaster down the side, so it had become a splint, wrapping them very tightly with bandages and then trying to bend the knees after surgery, and I can remember the first time they bent them, they gave me a rubber ring to bite on, and, 'phaw, well, I think I passed out actually [laughs], it was so bad. I know I remember hitting the physio [laughs], really thumped her one, and my mum wasn't allowed in to the physio department because they knew it was going to be too distressing, and I would scream the place down, which I did.

*The idea of the operation, then, being to straighten the legs in the process?*

Yeah, because when I, before I had the operation, when I stood up, I was on my toes; heels off the floor, bent knees, very bent knees, but I had a beautifully straight back. After the operation, I could straighten my knees, but the spasm, the cerebral palsy spasm, went into the hips, so I ended up with a very bent back, but at least I could stand, at least I could walk ... and obviously, coming into puberty, with menstruation, and all of that, it was far better to be standing, rather than be crawling around, you know, coping with bleeding. I can remember my, the day I took my first steps: I took four, and all my family were there: I was using tripod sticks, and we just kind of hugged each other and fell into a heap of tears, because, you know, it had been a giant leap for mankind: for me, four steps was, just meant so much. I'd been through so much agonising pain and trauma, at being separated from Mum that I had a nervous breakdown, and was very ill for something like two and a half years, drugged up to the eyeballs on tranquilisers, having come out of hospital, losing something like two and a half stone in weight, looking as though I'd come out of Belsen [Concentration Camp]: couldn't eat, didn't want Mum to leave me for a single second. Somebody just walking across the floor, I'd be in agony, and we didn't realise, I didn't find out the reason until 1978. I had this operation in 1962, but in 1978, I had a big problem with my legs and I had to have another operation, called a 'bilateral lumbar sympathectomy' and at that examination for that particular op., they discovered that, when they did the surgery in 1962, they partially cut the pulse in my legs, and so

what I'd got was all this dead tissue, that had been dying off in my back for a good long time, and affecting the blood flow and circulation to my legs, so when they got into my back, they just had to keep cutting, getting rid of all this dead tissue, and I was very, very lucky that I was here, but hence the reason for the incredible pain when I had when I had it done: I mean, I just screamed, and screamed, and screamed. I have never experienced pain like it: well I say that, my back pain was mega after I had the 'lumbar sympathectomy' because my back went into total spasm, from the c.p. [cerebral palsy], and the trauma of the surgery, and that was nightmare, but, for a little child, to go through what I went through, just this agonising tearing, when you try to stand up; and what they did was shorten the hamstrings and put, attach the hamstrings to the front of my knees, so you can imagine, it was pretty traumatic stuff: but it did get me on my feet, it did get me walking, so I guess, from that point of view, I'm very lucky.

*How, then, up to the age of twelve or so, before the operation, you were able to...*

...crawl everywhere.

*(Do you know what I haven't done, is put my microphone back on. I'll put it back on now.) So, yes, up to the age of the operation, up until the age of twelve or so, you were then crawling, were you?*

Yeah, and, obviously, coming into puberty, and all that that implies, you know, it's not nice to be crawling around on hands and knees, you know, when you're growing.

*Is your impression that at the time, that this sort of procedure, then, was relatively new?*

It was very new. I was one of the pioneering people for that particular op.

*And, it's obviously still very strong memories for you.*

Oh, yeah, terrible. 'Specially when you've got a little boy in the bed opposite, when they come and put the red blankets on you, to wheel you to the operating theatre, and the little boy says, 'Well, I'll say a prayer for you now, because we probably won't see you again!' [Laughs heartily] And I thought, 'You little sod! I'm terrified enough as it is: I don't need that sort of comment.'

*Hm. And also this psychological effect on you as well, Lin, the .....*

..Oh, totally traumatised, by the pain, the disgusting food, and we had an outbreak of dysentery on the ward, and I can remember, you know, I wasn't allowed to sit up and move around, and they used to literally put pads underneath me, to go to the toilet, you know, and I held myself from two in the morning till seven o'clock, and I was crying, trying to not wet myself, and in the end, I just couldn't, and I got a slap on my bottom for wetting the bed, and I said, 'Well, you know, what do you think I am? I'm not a tank: I can't hold onto it for five hours, you know, it's just ridiculous', but, you know, when you've got plaster up to your thighs when you're going to the toilet and you've got to get clean, and they just used to leave me dirty, because I was heavy, and my mother would come in and see the state I was in, and turn to and wash me all, and, you know, get me sorted, and I can remember my mother being absolutely furious one day because I wasn't clean, and she went and complained and they said, 'You've got to realise that Lin is heavy with all this plaster', and Mum said, 'Well, I can do it on my own, and you, you, you and you, come round this bed, and I'll show you how you do it', which she did. I tell you what, I was never dirty again. [Laughs] When my mum gets angry, my mum gets angry.

*And do you think that, apart from the procedure itself being relatively new then, that the support staff, the nurses and others, hadn't then had much experience of this sort of circumstance, your sort of circumstance either?*

No I don't, you know. I don't think they did. I mean, the other kiddies in the ward, there weren't many physically disabled children: there were things like, you know, road traffic accidents and broken arms, and things like that. What they couldn't cope

with was the psychological trauma, and I was going down really fast, and, in retrospect, I think it was all to do with the anaesthetic: too much on the brain with the cerebral palsy at the time: too heavy an anaesthetic and the brain just couldn't cope with it, and I was completely traumatised: couldn't eat. I didn't want to be with anyone, other than Mum: all I kept saying was, 'I want to go home', and, in the end, they sent me home. I wasn't really ready, but it was either, 'Send her home, or she might be dead', you know, and when I got home, I then just had a total breakdown, and I was ill for a very long time.

*[Interviewer coughs] Excuse me.*

I had nine months off school, [laughs], no, seven months off school. Um.

*Was there any degree, or what degree of follow-up or support did you have?*

Well, lots of physio. [Slight laugh] Lots of very painful physio, that just went on and on and on, and I mean, the thing is, at the end of the day, I was walking, so that was good, but it took over a year to get to that stage.

*And so, fairly intensive physiotherapy, following the operation?*

Oh yeah. Yeah, every day. Every day.

*To build up the muscles again.*

Yeah. Really, you know, totally knackered. [Laughs]. Completely dead. Oh dear, not good.

*And, obviously, the decision to have the operation in the first place was with the best of motives....*

Yeah, I mean at the end of the day, it was discussed with my parents, but my parents let me make the decision, and what I actually said to them was, 'cause originally they talked about me going to Scotland for this operation, and I would really be away from Mum and Dad and everybody, and then they discovered that there was this surgeon in Hackney, doing the op., so obviously we elected for that because it was close to home: perhaps if we'd gone to Scotland, it wouldn't have been quite so barbaric: maybe they'd have done a better job. I don't know: who knows, at the end of the day?

*I suppose there must have only been a handful of surgeons, do you suppose, who had experience of this procedure?*

Yeah, and even today, there are not that many surgeons who have a great deal of experience of cerebral palsy. I have found that recently, to my cost, and it's, you know, they know all about muscles, but they don't know about muscles in conjunction with c.p. [cerebral palsy] spasm, I'm afraid.

*And you can still, as you were saying, remember then the first steps that you took?*

Oh yeah. Fantastic! You know, I was really going to go places, and do something with my life, and of course I did, because one year after that I went blind, [laughing] so it was a bit traumatic, shall we say?

*And one consequence, I suppose, of the operation and this time itself was that you suspect that you became ever more aware of your own circumstance, and, really, how would you summarise your feelings at this time: did you feel angry?*

No, I didn't feel angry. I was terrified, absolutely terrified. I still get the feeling today: when I go to an operating theatre, that walk down the corridor feels like the loneliest walk in the world, and I mean I've been in operating theatres something like fifteen or sixteen times now, and it still takes me back to being that child, you know, and [laughs] also what we've discovered since: I get a terrible reaction to 'lignocaine',

which is in pre-meds, and, you know, I just thought that my racing heart and very dry mouth and feeling absolutely God-awful was fear, but of course it wasn't: it was being allergic to lignocaine, [laughs] so, yeah, I don't have pre-meds. any more, and I'm much better, not having any pre-meds.

*Gosh. And there was never any thought of further procedure at all?*

Not in terms of the legs, no. No. You see, where they cut the pulse, they then gave me terrible circulation, and where my legs were always lovely and warm, they were suddenly freezing cold, and then I got sort of chilblains up to me knees every winter, and ulcerated leg and ... horrible mess until I had the 'lumber sympathectomy'.

*[Coughs] Excuse me. All of this then obviously must have had an interrupting effect, if nothing else, on your school circumstance.*

Yes, I didn't go to school for seven months, and then of course, I was, you know, back at the hospital three and four times a week anyway so, by the time I left school at sixteen, I had a mental age of nine, because I'd lost so much schooling.

*And there was no suggestion, was there, of taking, or having more schooling at that stage?*

No. No, I think there was too much going on to, you know, to sort of cram anything, you know: you see, what people don't realise is that when you have the physio. and you have the transporting backwards and forwards every day, after you've had someone, you know, pull and push you around, and pummel you, and twist you every which way in a physio. session, you feel half-dead: I mean, you're probably better for it, but for a couple of days you feel sort of pretty knackered, and then, two days on [laughing] you're got it again, you know: and my parents used to give me two and a half hours of physio. every day, so my whole life was a regime of physio., school, eating, you know, not much else really: there wasn't much time for 'fun': I didn't, I mean, I had a, I didn't have a happy childhood: I had a loving one, but it wasn't a

happy childhood: I wasn't allowed, really, to be a child, you know, because you had to have an adult approach to the things that were happening to you, and be stoic and brave, and you didn't feel very brave: in fact you felt extremely frightened, and, although it was something I never voiced, I never ever thought I'd reach the age of twenty-one, because I thought, 'I'm going to hospital so much, I must be really ill', you know. Nobody explained to me that I wasn't ill: this was just to help me with muscles, you know.

*And you had your two brothers.....*

Yeah, they got left out of the picture quite a lot. I think their childhood suffered, 'cause Mum was never there. You know, she was always taking me to hospital, so she couldn't split herself up in bits, so I've got one brother who's got a great big chip on his shoulder, and thinks the world owes him a living, and the other brother who's perfectly OK about it, and tells my older brother to 'get his nappies off his backside.'  
[Laughs]

**[End of tape 2 Side A]**

**[Tape 2 Side B is blank]**

**Tape 3 Side A [Track 4]**

*OK., this is Tape Four [sic] then, of the interview with Dr Lin Berwick, MBE, and it's the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2004, and, Lin, I think, last time we were concluding with the end of your school years: what then happened?*

Well, it was quite a difficult transition, because, when I was fourteen, to the end of 1964, I'd gone up to Moorfields, for my usual check. [Sound of bell in background. Break.]

*Well, we'll start again, shall we, if you like? It's 11<sup>th</sup> November 2004, and I'm in conversation with Dr Lin Berwick, MBE, and, Lin, we were last time, then, concluding your school years: what age were you now, and what happened next, I wonder?*

Well, at the age of fourteen, I'd gone to Moorfields Eye Hospital, for my regular checks, and the doctor seemed to play the ophthalmic torch in my eyes for a very long while, and he turned to my mother and he said, 'Your little girl is very brave', and my mother said, 'Yes, she is a fighter', and he said, 'And she's going to need a whole lot more of it, too', but he didn't give us any explanation of that remark, and I came out of there and I said, 'Gosh, it seems as though I can still see the light of the torch in my eyes,' and Mum said, 'Well, you know, p'raps you're going to get a migraine, or whatever', and the next day I had a terrible headache, migraine, so I stayed home from school, resting, lying on the settee, and suddenly I had this shape appear in the bottom right-hand corner of my eye, and it was all the world as though you'd got a penny, and it was a perfectly rounded shape, and held it against my eye, and there was this sort of darkish patch, and everything else was sort of blurry and sparkly, and I struggled up the stairs, where my mum was working on a sewing machine, and I said to her, you know, I'd got this strange shape and a headache, and she said, 'Well, it's obviously a bad migraine. Put some dark glasses on and take some tablets, and see how you go.' The next day, I woke up, and I just let out a scream, because, as I looked out the window, the sky was bright yellow, and when I looked down at the

pavements, they were dark green, and it was just a horrible experience, and I told my parents what was happening, and they said, 'Well, let's take you to Moorfields', and I said, 'No, I was only there two days ago: what do I want to go back there for? I'm sure it's a migraine: let's see what happens'. And two or three days went by, and every morning, my parents would say, you know, 'What are the symptoms? What is it like now?' and I'd say, 'Oh' you know, 'it's getting less', which it was, and after a week, it was all back to normal, seeing colours and things the same. And I went into school, and I struggled with the school work and, after a few weeks, as I looked down at the paper, the paper was going a terrible blur, and I couldn't see the lines on the paper, and I couldn't read what was on the blackboard, and so I was asking people to tell me what it said, and that was not uncommon, because I often said, 'Look, I can't quite see that: can, you know, can somebody tell me?', and I'd always been very neat at handwriting, and so on: of course now the handwriting was going all over the place, because it was all blurry. The teacher came to me one day, and she said, 'Look, compared with work that you did three months ago, this work is terrible: it's all untidy, it's off the lines, are you, sort of developing a sort of 'don't care' attitude towards work? What's going on?' 'Nothing', says I, and she said, 'Are things all right at home?' 'Yeah, they're fine.' 'How's your mum's back?' 'Oh, she's OK' 'Well, OK, pull your socks up and do some decent work', and my heart was pounding. I sort of wanted to say, 'Help!', but when you're really frightened, somehow, the words don't come: they sort of stick in your throat: and every lesson was a nightmare. The only time I relaxed was hymn-singing. Typing, needlework, all of those things, you know, ah, I dreaded them, and as time went on, I could see the print less and less, and I used to read the newspaper every day, and mum would pass me the newspaper, and I would sort of think, 'God! How am I going to get round this?', and she'd pass it to me and I'd say, 'Oh, I don't want to read that', and chuck it to one side, and she'd say, 'Well, you've changed!', and I thought, 'Well, I'm fed up hearing about Vietnam, and everything else', and, anyway, this sort of deception went on for six months, and I had gut ache like you wouldn't believe: I had constant stomach ache, where I was just wound up like a clock spring: and school work was terrible, it was getting worse. I was going more and more into my shell and, when I reached fifteen, which was March 1965, this was like five months after the original

incident, we had to have a medical, under the terms of the London County Council Education Department, and part of that medical was an eye test, and I kicked up a terrible fuss. 'I'm not having any of your bloody eye test! I go to Moorfields. I'm not having an eye test here', etc, etc. 'Leave me alone!' And I knew that, if I had an eye test, they'd find out. I wanted people to find out, but I was terrified, absolutely terrified: and the sister at the school sent a letter home to my mother, saying, could she explain why I was in such a state of anxiety, because normally, I took medicals in my stride, and my mother gave me the letter and asked me to read it, and I took it from her, and said, 'Oh, you don't want to take any notice of that stupid woman', and chucked the letter to one side, and she picked the letter up and said, 'Do as you're told! Read it!', and, of course, I had to admit that I couldn't see the print, because my mother had deliberately given me the letter upside-down: but I didn't know that.

*And prior to this visual impairment developing, then: had you had significant problems prior to that?*

No, no, I mean, you know, I'd coped in school quite well: was doing very well in the top class of the school. I liked the teacher, and took great pride in my work. My biggest problem was the typing, because I couldn't do the typing because I didn't have the dexterity in my fingers, and also I couldn't see the tiny typescript, you know, on the pieces of paper, but, of course, every lesson had become a nightmare, and it was really difficult, and, of course, there was much soul-searching and lots of tears, and my mother immediately picked up the telephone and made an emergency appointment for Moorfields and we were, I was rushed in and they gave me an examination under anaesthetic, and they told my parents that there was nothing that could be done: and at that time, the Duke of Windsor was in the hospital, having a detached retina operation, by this very eminent surgeon called Hudson, and so they asked if Mr Hudson could see me, and he very kindly agreed, so I went down to the operating theatre again, and I had further examinations under anaesthetic, and it was discovered that the retina had become so fragmented, that there wasn't anything that could be done, and I can remember coming round from the anaesthetic, and a doctor standing at the foot of my bed. I had a God-awful headache, eyes that looked like fish

bowls, where they'd had drops in and instruments, and God knows what, and the doctor said, 'Well, you'll be blind within three months, so you might as well get used to it', and he didn't have a very good bedside manner, and I just said, 'Oh, OK' I was too weak and fed-up to care, really, and the next day, I went home: and all the time, you're sort of checking your surroundings: what you can see and what you can't see. My oldest brother, he couldn't handle it at all, he just said, you know, 'cause my mum was very tearful, very upset, and he just said, 'Well, sod this, I'm not sticking around: I'm going out with me mates.' My younger brother sat with me a long time, and he was testing me to see what I could see, making the handwriting larger and larger, and he was absolutely horrified that, you know, this thing had happened, and he was very kind, and he was very supportive to my mum and dad. Within three or four days, I went back to my school for physically-handicapped people, and it was nightmare, because this was when the kids thought it was really funny to put chairs in my path so I tripped over them, and tell me that doors were open, when in fact they were closed, because they were glass doors, and, any, obviously, any bright light on a surface was nightmare: and all the kids had gone out to a playground one lunchtime, and the teacher was in there, and she said, 'Well, what are you going to do, Lin, now that you're blind?', and I said, 'I'm not blind. I can see you. I can see the blackboard, the chairs, the tables. They're blurry, but I can see them', and she said, 'Yes, OK, but for all practical purposes, you will be blind, and you've got to make some sort of decision about what you do with your life', and I was quite aggressive, and really uptight: 'Don't want to talk about it', and she said, 'Well, what about learning Braille?', and I said, 'I'm not goin' to learn Braille. Braille is for blind people, and I'm not blind.' But all that day, I thought of her words, 'for all practical purposes, you will be blind', and I thought, 'Well, if I'm to make anything of my life, I've got to grasp the nettle, and I've got to do the things that blind people do, and, obviously, the first step is to learn Braille, and become a registered blind person.'

*This must have been a tremendous shock to you, to your family, to have this news.*

Well, I think what was so hard is that, it was only a year previous to this that I'd learnt to walk: so I learnt to walk at thirteen, take my first steps, great victory, and then, by

fourteen, or fifteen, by fifteen, I'm totally blind, and I'm terrified to move, and I'm trying to learn my way round the house, and do things, and I realise now that my parents were absolutely devastated, as was I. My mother, I can remember my mother being very upset one day because, when you've got detachments, things that are white and very bright are horrendous, and kitchens and bathrooms are probably the worst places, and I can remember coming into my kitchen, and everything was blurry, and it was a bright, sunny day, and it was nightmare, and I can remember sitting with my back to the window, absolutely shaking, and my mother just not knowing how to cope with this, and she went upstairs, shut herself in the room. My father came home, and I heard her screaming and crying, and she said, 'I could cope with her physical disability, but I can't cope with the blindness', and she was really sobbing, and I thought, 'I've got to do something about this. I've got to get a grip of myself, and I've got to get my life together', and I remember that she came down the stairs and went straight out, and didn't say 'goodbye', didn't speak to me at all, and I discovered later that she'd gone to our local GP, and told him that she wouldn't be able to cope: she wanted out, she'd had enough. She'd coped for all them years with the c.p., and taking me backwards and forwards to hospitals, but now, this was something that she just couldn't handle, and he was a very astute, clever man, because what he said to her was, 'Stop thinking that you can't cope with it: actually get involved. When she starts to learn Braille, help her with it. Any other new task as a blind person, help her with it', and my mother threw herself into this, and when I started the Braille classes, she was there, with the social worker, watching what was going on, trying to help me, and, although she never actually learnt the Braille, she helped me write down the letters that I discovered, formed 'em into words, read it back to me, because I was so slow, and generally helped me with mobility, and social skills: but my father never got involved at all. He just watched, and was very, very critical of every mistake that I made, so, consequently, mealtimes were a nightmare. Blind people eat their food by the face of a clock. So, for example, you say, 'Meat at half-past, potatoes at quarter two, broccoli at twelve o'clock, and peas going off at twenty-five past', and this system works incredibly well, and you can go out to a restaurant, and somebody can discreetly say to you, 'You know, you're knocking some food off the edge of your plate', and you can, you know, 'at twenty two', or something like that, and you can

just take your fork, or knife, and knock it back on, and no-one's any the wiser: but if I so much as knocked a pea on the table, my father would go absolutely ballistic, and he'd say things like, 'You're sixteen years of age, and you still haven't learnt to eat properly' [phone rings]

*Why do you think he had this particular reaction?*

I think he just couldn't handle watching my struggle, and, you know, any mistakes that I made were (a), a nightmare, and (b), an embarrassment, and (c), because, like he's always done, because, whatever my achievements have been, he's never been satisfied by them, so it's always, 'You can do better than that', and he wanted me to cope, socially, so any mistakes that I made was a complete disaster, but it got to the point where I was terrified to eat in front of him, and every mealtime was becoming horrendous, and I'd end up in tears, 'cause, the more I worried about it, the more I knocked things off my plate, and that caused, you know, more tension, and in the end Mum said, 'I'm really pissed off with this: I'm going to stop this once and for all', and my Dad had got his dinner, and she said, 'Right! I'm not having any more of this!' She put a blindfold on him, restricted one hand, because I'd got limited movement in one hand, and said, 'Right! Now you eat your dinner!' Of course, he made a complete mess of it. He'd got food on the table, he'd got gravy on his shirt, he didn't know where anything was on his plate, and she took the blindfold off and showed him what a mess he'd made of his plate, and said, 'Now, if you think you can do better, be my guest!' I tell you what, we never had any more arguments about knocking food off a plate. And this was the wonderful thing about my mother, once she pitched herself in to something, she was like a tigress, and she fought your corner, you know, and worked with you. I mastered Braille, I'd got a home tutor, who used to give me private lessons at the school. I had a, you know, teacher for the blind, and as I said, I think, in the earlier tape, this caused quite a problem, because I was getting individual attention and the other kids didn't like this, so I was 'teacher's pet', and we did Braille work, and basketry, and English, and all those kind of things: and I was coming up to sixteen, which was the school leaving age, and I had no sense of what was going to happen in my future life, and I wanted education as a blind person, and so the head

mistress at the school had worked in the field of partially-sighted children, and this was what we couldn't understand, that she had the ability to give me so much help, but chose not to, and she said, 'Oh, I'll get her into Linden Lodge', which was a school in London, for visually-impaired people: well, it was sort of in the Wimbledon area, and I'd have been a day boarder, so that really helped, and my parents were quite keen on that, and they discussed uniforms and all kinds of things, and in July, at the end of the summer term, I went home, said my 'goodbyes': in the September, got ready for school, waited for the school bus, and it went straight past the door. I thought, 'Well, that's strange!', so my mother rang the school, and she said, 'Well, you know, 'you forgot to pick Lin up today', and the head said, 'Oh no, we haven't! Linda left school in July' and my mother said, 'Well, thanks for telling us! What's goin' to happen now? And when is she going to this school called 'Linden Lodge'?', and she said, 'Oh, she isn't. They decided that, due to her physical disability, they wouldn't take her', so I was left, totally on the scrap heap, and my mother was absolutely furious. I say, she was like a tigress, really, and she said, you know, 'I'm not having that!', and she got in touch with our local MP, who came round to see us, and took all the details, and Mum was having various battles with education departments, and eventually, the MP and the education department talked about this school called 'Dorton House School for the Blind', at Seal, Sevenoaks, Kent, and the headmaster had agreed to give me an interview, so we sent down to Seal, which was about sixty miles from our home. It seemed miles away, and I would be a residential boarder, if I went there, from Sunday to Friday, because they didn't want the business of putting me in the bath, and doing hair washing, because I couldn't do those things for myself. I used to have sort of strip washes every day, 'cause I couldn't get in the bath. There were no things like hoists, and things like that. Anyway, I went to this place, and it was beautiful. It was out in the middle of nowhere. A big country lane, it was about ... two miles long, called 'Seal Drive', before you even got to the school, and I had this real feeling of trepidation, as we pulled up at the school, and there was a flight of steps to negotiate into the building, and a massive, great reception area: big old building with very tall ceilings, and ...[End of Tape 3 Side A]

### **Tape 3 Side B [Track 5]**

...Ok..

Yeah, I had a real sense of trepidation, as I pulled up at the school, and went into this big hall, and then, reception area, and then I was taken round to the headmaster's office, and we sat there, talking. There was Mr Bolton, who was the headmaster, and Miss Joan Brown, who was the deputy head, and looked after the girls, and we talked about all the various issues, and my sight problems, and how I would manage if I came to the school, and it's funny, because I was having a conversation with Robert Bolton a few weeks ago: I was asked to go back and give the prizes at the school, which is quite an accolade, but he said to me: he said that he gave me a choice of whether I came there for a six-week trial, or not, and he said he'd never done that to any other student at the school, and I asked him why, and he said it was because he knew, that, due to the problems of access, and attitude of the other blind children, 'cause I was the very first physically-disabled person they had in their school, that it was going to be really hard and tough for me. Anyway, I said that I wanted to be given a chance, and so I went to the school, in the September of.... no, actually, October of 1966.

*And at this stage, had you retained any sight at all?*

It was gone: all I had was light and dark perception: everything else had just gone, and that was a terrifying time, because you sort of constantly test yourself: you'd get up in the morning and you'd look around, and think: hang on, I can't see what I could see yesterday, and that sickening, gut-churning was there in the pit of your stomach, but, when I got to Dorton, it was like a breath of fresh air, because they weren't just occupying the mind: they were educating, and, obviously, my sight problem wasn't a problem to them, because they were dealing with it all the time, and, whenever I tried to walk around, do things, my mother would grab hold of me and support me as I walked, and Mr Bolton said, 'Let go, mother', and he stepped forward, and he walked to the opposite side of the room, turned round, and he said, 'Right Linda, follow my

voice. Follow my voice', and I just walked towards him as he spoke, and he walked round the desk, and I followed him, and he walked out of the door, and I followed him, and he walked into the hallway, and to the staircase, and I just followed him, and this was a sort of revelation in a way, because, all right, I was walking on two sticks, but, I was moving freely, and I hadn't done that since I went blind, because my mother stuck to me like glue, in case I fell over, and so this was great: and the other thing that struck me was the laughter in the school, and, more importantly, the musicianship. There was at one point, a child playing the big church organ in the hall, and then, a bit later on, I could hear a lesson going on, and it was the choir, and the music-making was just wonderful: I mean, they were practising things from Handel's *Messiah*, and I thought, 'I want to be part of this', and so I went there on 16<sup>th</sup> October, on a Sunday night, in 1965 [1966?], and I was bloody terrified, but I knew I had to grasp the nettle here, and, you know, make the best of it, and my first introduction to the other kids was being taken into the dining room. There was something like two hundred kids, sitting down to afternoon tea, and the noise just hit me like a thunderbolt, and I thought, 'I've got to get out of here! I can't stand this', and there was all this clattering of knives and forks, and people talking, and you couldn't hear yourself think, and you're shouting above the row, and I thought, 'Oh God, is this what it's going to be like?', and I was so frightened, I just wanted to run, but of course, I didn't know where I was going, or what I was doing, 'cause the surroundings were totally strange. And then, after I'd got through tea, I was taken up into the dormitory, and my bedroom was on the top floor, which was forty stairs up, and it took me twenty minutes to get up the staircase, by which time, I was completely knackered. I used to go up with a teacher, and they had a rule that, if you were going up the stairs, you went up on the right-hand side of the stairs, and if you were coming down the stairs, you went on the left, so that you didn't clash, because the staircase was about ... thirty foot wide, a massive staircase, and I used to have to come down these stairs at a most precarious angle, putting the tripods two treads in front of my body, and leaning forward, and then coming down with my feet, and holding onto the banister rail.

*It was a circular stairway, was it?*

No, just a very wide .... you know like these big staircases that you see in stately homes, where they have these big balls, and, you know, kind of, you know, like a New Year's Eve ball, you know, in these wonderful oak-panelled rooms, you know,

*Mm*

well that's what it was like: a massively wide staircase, and the balustrade was so wide, I couldn't put my hand round it, I could only put my hand on the flat of it, do you know what I mean?, so wide, and I used to have go up and down this staircase three times a day: I'd come down it in the morning, up at one o'clock for relaxation and shoe cleaning parade: down again for two o'clock, up again before evening meal, which was sort of quarter to five, down for the evening meal and prep., which finished at half past seven, and then you had recreation time from half past seven 'til quarter past eight, and lights were.... and then you'd have to go up again, get ready for bed, and everything else, and lights were out by something like half past nine. And I was in a dormitory of ten, and those kids didn't understand why I had to have so much help, and they thought that, because the teachers were helping me up and down the stairs, and chatting to me as we went up, that I was getting terribly close to the teachers, 'cause they would chat away to me, and then, of course, what made it even worse, was when the teachers had to lift my legs into bed and help me with these sort of bandages, 'cause I had these nasty chilblains on the back of my legs, due to the fact that the pulse was cut during that operation, but we didn't know that: so the kids thought that I was getting a lot of favouritism, and because of that, they gave me a lot of stick, and I was bullied by certain of these people in the dormitory, but the staff knew about it, and they didn't take any nonsense, and we got over that: and what was my salvation at this school was the English lessons, the Religious Knowledge, and the music. I'd already started to learn to play the flute, in an orchestra for physically disabled people, called the Wingfield Music Trust, and I had a young woman, who was a student then; this is 1964, I started learning the flute: she was a student at the Guildhall School of Music, and so I'd learnt all the preliminary basic keys, and so, when I went to Dorton, I was introduced to Michael Campbell, the male music master,

but he was also an absolutely brilliant flautist, and he did a lot of work on the BBC, Radio 3, and so on, and he said, 'I think you can be put in for your Grade 3 Flute Exam, with the Royal Academy of Music', and this was the first examination that I'd ever taken in my life, and it was the first time that anyone ever really believed that I'd got any ability at all, and I took this exam, and I passed it with Merit, and that, to me, was the first step of realising that I'd got a brain, and it was absolutely fantastic.

*You must have had a whole whirlwind of emotions at this time.*

Oh yeah: discovery, tension, fear, freedom, exploration. I don't think, if I'd stayed at home I would have developed in the way that I had, and therefore I think, although there's an awful lot spoken about, in terms of mainstream education, I think it is when you get into a new-found situation, as I was, I think it's absolutely essential to go into the blind world for a time, and learn how to adjust yourself to being a blind person: then, when you've mastered the day-to-day living skills, and things like Braille, and so on, then talk about 'mainstream education in a general school', but until then, forget it.

*And was any explanation offered as to why you may have developed your blindness?*

I think that Moorfields had said to my family that I probably would be blind in my teens, but, you know, it's not something you ever really want to believe, when your child seems to be doing quite well, but, sadly, there was obviously a lot of weakness in the eyes, and I got a detached retina, and because I kept it to myself for so long, it fragmented, there was no hope. The only thing that I deeply regret is that that doctor should have taken further steps that afternoon: had he done so, my life might have been very different.

*This was on the initial consultation, the first ....*

Yeah, when he said that, you know, 'Your girl is very brave, she's a fighter', he must have seen something that afternoon, and didn't...

[Bell rings. Break]

*...just release that. So you were at school, Lin, you were developing your musical facilities, abilities, with the flute, and the whole atmosphere then, was one that you were responding to.*

Yes, it was really marvellous, and they were very pleased with my progress. I mean obviously, I was only reading Braille at sixteen words a minute, which is painfully slow. Other people in the class was reading it eighty words a minute, 120, 150 words a minute, and so I was sort of at the back of the class, and I don't know what I would have done without talking book machines and tape recorders, that enabled me to catch up, but of course, this had to be done in my own time, during school breaks, lunch break, and after prep. every night, and, whereas before, I sort of felt that education was just to occupy my mind, here, I was really learning, and they decided that they'd put me in the GCSE class, GCE class, rather, and I thought, 'Well', you know, 'this is going to be completely beyond me', but I loved it: I mean, I was doing English Literature and at that time we were doing fifty-six Rudyard Kipling poems, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, and ... I can't remember what the other thing ..... oh, and *Macbeth*, so really I was getting my first experience of really wonderful literature, and revelling in things like Shakespeare, and, whereas, in my school in the East End, if I'd have sat down and read Shakespeare, they'd have thought I'd gone completely mad: and I worked and worked; you know, this was mind-blowing, and I managed to pass three GCE 'O levels, in English Language, English Literature, and Religious Knowledge, and, for the first time in my life, I'd realised that I'd got a brain, and that I didn't have to apologise for being in this world. I was me: what you see was what you got, and, as I said, actually, although going blind was a terribly traumatic time in my life, it was actually the best thing that ever happened, 'cause, had I stayed in that East End school and, you know, just drifted, aged sixteen, I don't know what I would have done: I would have probably just been sitting at home, drawing security benefits, and seeing out my days terribly bored, but as it was, they had made me realise that I had the ability to learn, and that I could stretch my brain, and it was just, it was just

wonderful, and I wasn't going to stop there. I left school in the July, 1968, and then I tried to get some training, to go out into the big, wide world, and get a job. Well, it's hard enough for people with disabilities to get gainful employment, but, when you've got multiple disability, well then you're regarded as a non-starter.

*Sorry, look, can I just move the wire, just in front of the table-top, because it's...*

Sorry.

*..OK, there you go. [Sound of moving wire]*

And so I looked at the possibilities of what was open to me as a form of employment, and in 1969 ...

[Sound of dog yelping. Break]

*OK., because somebody's arrived, I think, but there we go....yeah, we'll go from the ...*

In 1969, there weren't many aspects of gainful employment for visually-impaired people. It was, by and large, shorthand and audio-typing, light assembly work, light engineering, and telephony. After I left Dorton and went to a place called Hethersett, which is a Royal National Institute for the Blind [RNIB, now Royal National Institute of the Blind] vocational training centre, and the idea was that I would go there and learn domestic skills, such as washing, ironing, all that kind of thing; cooking, and also work out dexterity of hands, and whether I could switchboards and so on. Well, the kids that went to this vocational training centre were completely mad: they were young teenagers, predominantly, or people in their twenties and thirties: they'd got a freedom away from home and school, and they were grabbing it with both hands. Quite often they were coming in drunk, and what have you, but when they came down the staircase, they'd get [dog yelping] to the last five treads, and they'd jump over the banisters and just drop, or come down the stairs on the banister rails, and I was terrified that, here I was, on tripod sticks, and I was just going to get knocked over by

these people who were just running and dashing around, some of them with guide dogs, and if I happened to be in the middle, on a pair of tripods, I didn't stand a chance: so it was pretty hairy, and very soon, I discovered that the domestic science room was down a spiral staircase, and the teacher said, 'Bloody hell, I'm not helping you down there. I've got a bad back', so I never did see a washing machine, or do the ironing, or anything like that, all the time I was there, but they did at least work out the type of switchboard that they thought I'd be able to manage. [Dog barks] Then I got referred to the RNIB [dog barks more insistently] Oh, I'm sorry about this.

*No, no, don't worry.*

I'm sorry. [Break]

*OK., so what happened then, Lin, after Hethersett?*

After Hethersett, I then applied for the RNIB commercial training college at Pembridge Place. This was in London, and I'd decided that the best of the options was to become a telephonist, because I'd got a good speaking voice, and I might as well use it, and another battle then [dog barks again] Switch off, it's just...Harvey. [Break]

*So you were concentrating on telephony, as a particular skill, a particular route.*

Yes, and I tried to get training at the RNIB college, and the tutor there said she was paid to teach visually-impaired people, not spastics, and it caused quite a furore, and in the end, we had to get the MP involved again, and I didn't get in the college until January 1969, the tutor having left, because of the principle, and I was told that I had to complete my training in three months, whereas other people did it in six months to a year, and again I worked like stink, and I passed my telephony training with distinction. Part of that training was that you had to be able to memorise 500 STD codes [Standard Telephone Dialling], and another test was, you'd be put in a telephone booth, with headphones, and you'd be given six London telephone numbers, and then the tutor would say, 'What was the third one I gave you?', or,

‘What was the first?’, or ‘What was the fifth?’, and [voices in background] if you couldn’t remember those six numbers in random order ....

*[Speaking at same time] Sorry, Lin, we’re getting ....*

those numbers in the correct order, you were out.

*Hello, there! Hi! [Referring to the arrival of Ralph in the room]*

Hi.

*So, go back to the booth bit again, if you like.*

Yes, we were placed in a telephone booth, with a pair of headphones on, and you were given six London telephone numbers by the tutor, and he or she would say, ‘Right, what was the third one I gave you? What was the fifth? What was the first?’, and if you couldn’t remember those numbers, you failed the test: similarly, if you couldn’t remember 500 STD codes, you failed the training. Luckily for me, I passed with Distinction: but again, instead of being given more help because of additional handicap, I was actually given less. Every obstacle was put in my way, and I left the RNIB training college. Oh, my mother had to come to the college, to be there to help me get up and down the stairs, to go to the toilet, and all that kind of thing, because they weren’t prepared to give me the assistance I needed, to get around the building, so again, all obstacles were put in my way, which seemed grossly unfair: and I left the RNIB college, and I got in touch with the RNIB Technical Officer, Training Officer, who helped you find a job, a placement, and also the Disablement Resettlement Officer, from the Department of Employment, and every job he told me about was on a switchboard that I couldn’t operate, and I got really annoyed by this, so in the end, I got people to look in the paper, and eventually I came across this job in the City of London: ‘Telephonist required for the Commonwealth Trading Bank of Australia’, and I rang up. It was on the switchboard that I could operate. I rang up, and I told the accountant that I was visually-impaired, and he invited me for interview. I went up there with me shorthand Braille note-taking machine, for writing down the telephone

numbers, and I was showing him files of work that I'd done and completed, so we were sort of armed with great big books and bits of machinery, and I remember, when I got to the bank, it was one of these banks with these horrible revolving doors, which wasn't easy, going through on a pair of tripods: [laughs], but, anyway, eventually, found my way into the bank, and made my way to the accountant's office, and when he opened the door he, said, 'Oh, I know they told me you were disabled', he said, 'but I didn't realise you were that disabled, but you might as well come in and sit down anyway', and I thought, 'God, this is a really good start to your first job interview!' But I thought, 'Well, I'm here. I've got one chance, so I might as well really go for it', and he took my mother around the bank, showed her some of the obstacles, and we came back into the office and we started to talk about the work, and he proceeded to ask my mother every single question about my training.

**[End of tape 3 side B]**

**Tape 4 Side A [Track 6]**

*Go from, 'showed his mother round the bank', if you like.*

Yes.

*I should say, I see this is Tape 4 of the interview with Dr Lin Berwick, MBE, and...*

I thought it's five, isn't it?

*One, two, ... we did one, two..... Well, it's actually the third, the fourth physical tape, I think, possibly the fifth side, I think, yeah, side five....*

Oh.

*So you were being shown round the bank, then, were you?*

Yes, and the accountant was asking my mother every single question about my training as a telephonist, and I was feeling extremely angry, and getting a bit red in the face, and my mother was kicking me under the table, much as to say, 'Keep quiet!', but after a while, she got a bit fed up with this, and she said, 'Look, I didn't train as a telephonist: why don't you ask my daughter?', and he turned to me, and he said, 'Well, I'm sorry, but I thought, being spastic, you would have had a speech impediment', and I said, 'Well sir, I'd hardly be applying for the post of senior telephonist, if I couldn't speak,' and he put his hands on his head and he said, 'Oh bloody hell! Let's begin this interview all over again, shall we?', and I have to say, to his enormous credit, that's what we actually did, and from then on, he spoke directly to me, and asked me various questions. At the end of the interview, he said, 'Well, perhaps you'd like to go into the switchboard room, and sit, and see what the calls are like?', and I did that, and there was a girl in there, who obviously did the switchboard, but had not had any serious training, and she had the sort of attitude that switchboard work was beneath her, really, and when she answered the phone, she was saying, 'Yeah, hang on a minute: who d'you want?', kind of thing, and, of course, then she

said to me, 'Would you like to try?', and I said, 'Well, you'll have to tell me where the lights are flashing, 'cause obviously this board hasn't been adapted for a blind person to use yet', so, you know, she would say, 'Light flashing on line four', or whatever, and I'd go in and answer the calls, sort of say, 'Commonwealth Trading Bank, good morning. How can I help you?', and deal with it, and she'd tell me the extension buttons. What I didn't know is that Mr Chandler had crept into the switchboard box, and was sitting behind me, listening, and, after a while, he let me know he was there, and I thought, 'Oh crikey!', and I went back with him to his office, and he said, 'Look, I'd love to give you the job, but I'm worried about how you're going to cope with the physical location around the bank', because it was a huge building, and there were steps, and lifts, and swing doors, and all kinds of things, and I said to him, 'Look, let's put it this way: I tell you what, I'll work here for a month, without any salary. If, at the end of that month, you like me, you keep me on: if I haven't met your expectations, and I haven't done well, then you say, 'Thank you very much: goodbye'. I will have had work experience and you won't have paid me any salary.' Well, I don't think he's ever had anyone going into his office, saying they're prepared to work for nothing, because the next day, he rang up and he said, 'I'm goin' to give you a chance. You've got guts, and you deserve a chance, so I'm going to give you a month's trial', and that was quite a commitment on their part, because they had to alter the switchboard, and pay quite a lot of money for those adaptations to be done. That was in the July, and I started at the Commonwealth Bank on 17<sup>th</sup> August, and in that three weeks, three, four weeks, I got them to send me a printed sheet of all the members of staff of the bank, and another sheet of all the departments, together with their extension numbers, so that, by the time that I started work, on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1970, even though I knew absolutely nothing about banking, I had memorised all the people's names, and whether they were heads of departments, or whatever, and all the department names within the bank, so I was able to put a lot of telephone extensions to departments, and names to people, and where they worked, and I'd got it off pat, going over, and over, and over it, for three weeks, and so, when I took the job on, Mr Chandler and everybody was so astounded that I'd got this lot off pat, that, within three days, they gave me the job, and I stayed there for thirteen and a half years, I trained some sixty people to be switchboard operators, and they worked

out that, when I left the bank in 1983, that I'd answered one and a half million phone calls.

*How did you [coughs], excuse me, how did you feel when you began work? What were your feelings?*

Ah, it was marvellous, wasn't it, because I was earning sixteen pounds a week, which, in 1970 was good money then, and, it's funny, I thought neighbours and friends would be really chuffed, and, when they heard that I'd got this job in the City, some were so astounded, and I was actually earning more money than they were, and they couldn't believe it: but I remember, I was on emergency tax at the time, and my take-home pay was twelve pounds and thirty-five p., and I used to go to the teller on a Friday, and I used to get my wages out, and I'd take out twelve crisp one pound notes, and put them in my pocket, and I felt like a king, you know, and my friends that I'd made said, 'Well, why don't you take out the other 35p?', [decimalisation was in 1971] and I said, 'No, because I'm going to leave that in there, and in a few months time, I'm going to use it to open up a proper bank account', which I did, and I made sure I didn't keep my money at the Commonwealth Bank: [laughs] I put it in another bank, and that was the start of me, saving my money, and being in control of money, and being in control of my own destiny, and making decisions, which was great, and for the first few weeks, I was completely on my own at the bank, and I liked that, but Mr Chandler was worried about the responsibility it would put on other members of staff [dog barking in distance]: taking me to lunch, guiding me to the toilet, and so on, and so, ....oh

[More insistent barking. Break in recording]

**[End of tape 4 Side A]**

**[Tape 4 Side B blank]**

**Tape 5 Side A [Track 7]**

*OK., so I'll just test that: one, two, three, four five. Yep, that's working OK, and today is...*

One, two, three, four, five.

*That's fine. Thank you, Lin. Yeah, it's 14<sup>th</sup> February, and I'm talking to Dr Lin Berwick, MBE, and, Lin, we, last time we got as far, I think, as, around about 1970 or so, when you were just beginning your time at The Commonwealth Bank, and your boss was, I think, Mr Chandler, and he was wanting really, to make access to the building easier for you, or around the building.*

Yes, he, he was very concerned how I would manage, particularly during lunch times, when there were something like 250 people around, and many of whom would be going to the staff canteen, and there'd be lots of hustle and bustle, and, obviously it was times like that, that were very difficult, because people don't realise the disorientation in public places for a blind person. The noise means that you, you just don't hear or cope with things in the same way, because there's a level of confusion, but Mr, Mr Chandler solved the problem most handsomely, because he suddenly had this brainwave of an idea, to offer my mother a job in the bank, to work in the post department, and she would be there, at the same lunch times, and also, when I wanted to go to the toilet, or if I had any illness, and she would know how to handle me better than most people. My mum was, at that time, working at home as a machinist, and it was basically slave labour, and he offered her a job for twenty-one pounds a week, which was more money than she'd ever dreamed of, [clears throat] so she jumped at the chance, and then, my father decided that he would leave his job as a builder, and take a job as a bank messenger, not in The Commonwealth Bank, but in The Clydesdale Bank, so that he could drive me, or drive all three of us into work. So, as Mr Chandler once said about me, 'When I joined the bank, it became a bit of a city take-over' [laughs] which was, you know, which was quite nice in a way.

*What, what kind of distance of journey, did you have to do in the morning?*

Well, I was, at that time, I was living in Tower Hamlets, and I was driving right into the centre of the City of London. Not terribly far, in terms of distance, probably ... probably about ten, twelve miles, but it, you know, it took quite a lot of time: and then, during my period at the bank, we didn't, did move to Hornchurch in Essex, which meant I had a 5.15 [am] start to my day: you know, getting up, because everything took so long, and we used to leave the house at 6.30 in the morning, and I'd be in at the bank by half past seven, quarter to eight. I wasn't actually supposed to start until 9, but because we were 12 in front of Australia, and a lot of our business with, was with Australian banks, obviously, because The Commonwealth Bank of Australia was, was as big as 'NatWest' [then called 'National Westminster'], 'Barclays', and 'Lloyds' and 'Midland' [now part of HSBC], all put together, so often the managers would be there, making telephone calls to Australia, and they'd, they'd say to me, at half past seven in the morning, you know, 'Could you get me Melbourne?' or 'Could you get me ... Queensland?' or [laughs] wherever, and there was one lovely moment when, they were trying to get The Commonwealth Bank in Kenya, and it was out in the middle of the Kenyan jungle, just really a, a hut with a tin roof, and I think I wore my fingers almost to the bone, for nearly a fortnight, dialling this telephone number in Kenya, and, in the end, [laughs] they had to send somebody out to the Kenyan jungle, to deal with the business at the bank, so ...

*Because at this time, I suppose, obviously, depending on where you're calling, there would be direct dialling, to some places, and other places, I suppose you'd have to go via an operator?*

Yeah, and via a land line. I remember one very amusing time, when I'd gone for a coffee break, and the relief telephonist was asked to get The Bank of Iraq, but she never said 'Which branch do you want, Sir?' [Laughs] She just rang The Bank of Iraq in Iraq, and you had to, you had to go via a land line, and a radio link, and, all of a sudden, you know, this call came in, and I put it through to the manager, and I said, 'Here's your Bank, your call to The Bank of Iraq in Iraq, Sir' and he said, 'You silly

woman, I wanted the London branch!' [Laughs] Which, of course, it wasn't anything to do with me, it was the relief operator, but, that was a hard-fought lesson.

*And how did you feel about, all this, all this, this time, Lin, with your, your parents: your mother working at the bank and your father nearby: how did you feel about all this work?*

It worked well, but the only thing it did do, is, is cramp my style. I wanted to be able to make my own friends in my own way, but of course, once people knew that Mum was there, you know, looking after me and getting my dinner, and that kind of thing, they didn't bother. I mean, sometimes, they'd come and sit with us, but a lot of the time, we sat by ourself, and that was a grave disappointment to me, because I wanted to get to know people and just have the sort of girly conversations that everybody has, or young people have: and the first six weeks were great, because I had this sort of freedom, and then it all went pear-shaped.

*Why, why do you think people, after that, then, at that time anyway, held back?*

Well, I think that they just thought, 'Well, you know, she's used, used to her mother, and mother can cope better than we can, so we don't have to offer.' The bank didn't make the situation easier because, if my mother was away sick, or anything like that, and members of staff helped me, and they were quite willing to do that, but, there was one incident where it was written on some... well, actually, it was written on Mum's report that 'she wouldn't be given promotion, because she, she helps here disabled daughter, who works in the bank,' and, you know, I mean, that was ridiculous: she should have been promoted in her own, in, you know, in her own right.

*And, and this was in the days, of course, before there would be any kind of...*

... discriminatory...

*Or, indeed, Access to Work legislation, I would imagine.*

Yeah, and I had, we used to have these annual reports made about us, which went to the head, head office in Sydney, and they wrote a report about me that was, that, that, one time, that I, I 'didn't communicate well with staff', and I was absolutely gob-smacked by this, because, obviously, [laughs] I was talking to the staff all day long, over the telephone lines, and, and, and I said to this chap, who was like my first line manager, 'What do you mean by this comment?' and he said, 'Well, when you walk round the bank, and people smile at you, you don't acknowledge them' [laughs] and I just laughed, and he said, you know, 'What's funny?' and I said, 'Well, you bloody fool, I wouldn't acknowledge them would I?' and he said, 'Why?' I said, 'Well, I'm totally blind! How do I know that somebody's smiling at me?'

*Had, had he not realised then, oh..?*

Well, he said, 'Oh, mm, yeah, I see what you mean, but you cope with your blindness so well, it hadn't occurred to me,' right, and of co... he was furious that I would not sign this report that made this comment about me not being, very communicative. I said, 'You change it and I'll sign, to say that I've seen the report' and I, you know, and I was really cross, that something like that should be written, and that somebody should be so darn insensitive, but, you know, I mean, that's the sort of thing that people did. And it was at this time, also, that my parents had the opportunity of buying our council house, in the east end of London. We'd lived in it, in rented accommodation, for something like thirty-one years, and they had the opportunity of buying it at very cheap rent, cheap mortgage, but nevertheless, the put down fee of £1,000 was just too much for Mum and Dad to handle, and pay the mortgage, so I went to Mr Chandler, and said, could I take out a bank loan for £500, so I could make a present to my parents, of half the deposit on the house? And, at that time, he investigated various options, and, in the seventies, if you were a disabled person, and you wanted a bank loan, or an insurance, or something like that, they loaded the premium so high, that it wasn't worth you taking out any kind of loan or anything, because you just couldn't meet the repayment. You could, but it wasn't worth your

doing so, and Mr Chandler investigated with several of the companies that the bank used, and he hit a stone wall, and he was so disgusted by their attitude, seeing as I was such a regular attender at the bank, that he loaned me the £500, out of his own money and I s... I saved up ... you did it on the same kind of standard loan terms that he would have done, had somebody taken a loan out at the bank, and I saved up and paid it back, ooh, something like a year faster than he expected me to, and I was able to go home and, with this £500, in an envelope, and make my mum and dad a, a present of this, and, and we bought our house in the East End. They put £500 down, I put 500, and they carried on with a small mortgage: a laughable sum of money, something like nine pounds fifty a week mortgage, but then, when people were only earning, sort of, twenty-five or so pounds a week, nine fifty was [laughs] quite a lot of money, but anyway, that was, it was a nice thing to be able to do.

*It must, it must have been a very, [clears throat] a very special moment, being able to do that.*

Yeah, I really felt, you know, that I'd arrived, really, [laughs] and sort of come of age, as it were, and, and then all the while that this was going on, my father was very involved with the work at the East London Spastic Society, as it was then called: he was the treasurer and secretary, at different times, of the charity, and we were trying to raise money for our, our own social centre in the east end of London, and Dad was instrumental with the building, be..., you know, because he was a builder, he was doing a lot of the building work, of the centre in his spare time, and, when we were having various meetings of The Spastics Society's local groups, I would speak out, and say that there wasn't enough being done for the older person with cerebral palsy, and, in the end, they got so fed up with me, they asked me if I would do something about it, and form a, a social club, which I did, and then it was called 'The East London Spastic and Handicapped Club' because, I said, 'I'm quite happy to form a club,' but I wanted it to include other people with disabilities, as well as the able-bodied, so that we really got this sense of integration, and they gave me a fifty pound grant to get established, but I very, very quickly realised that, unless we had regular transport, we were going to be scuppered, and my idea was to get as many social

events going as we could. So I used to beg, steal, steal and borrow anything that had four wheels and an engine, really, but I soon realised that the only way round this was to raise funds for a tailgate vehicle, that would take a, a wheelchair.

*Sorry, just, Lin, Ralph is just wanting ... Ralph, sorry, do you want to...?*

*[Ralph: off mic.] I was going to have a bath.*

*Oh sorry*

Sorry, Ralph.

*Ralph: Have a bath, and take the phone with me.*

Oh right.

*All right?*

OK. I thought you'd had your shower earlier. [Door closes] Obviously a problem with his knees.

*Oh dear. Oh dear, this weather, weather as well, doesn't help sometimes does it? The dampish weather?*

No.

*So you were trying to raise money, then, for, for an accessible, er vehicle...?*

Yeah, and we ... we got grants, from the Variety Club of Great Britain, and I also got local radio and newspapers, and all kinds of people involved: and one... and we got our first tailgate vehicle, thanks to The Rotary Club of Ilford, who did a lot of fundraising, and put a lot of money into it, and we got out first vehicle in 1972.

*So, so there you were, then, working at the bank, succeeding at the bank, and then...*

Getting...

*... becoming involved in this group as well, and, and rallying people, rallying publicity and so on. How did you feel, how did you feel about your life, then? Did you feel...?*

Well, it was, you know, it was taking, taking shape pretty well really, and we, we got a vehicle, but we hadn't always got drivers, so I thought, 'Right, we're gonna to need to get some drivers, who've also got first aid knowledge', and so I enlisted the help of the local police, and, by this time, I'd ... we'd, we'd got to about 19 ...74, something like that, and we'd now got a second tailgate vehicle. This one was largely due to a big donation from Capital Radio, with Terry [Tommy] Vance and Joan Shenton's *Swop Shop*. They raised quite a lot of money on air, towards this vehicle, so we now had two tailgates, and I needed a fleet of drivers: and so I enlisted the Hornchurch Police, and I had eleven policemen, who used to drive, and we used to take people out, every sing... single weekend, to something like a restaurant, a cinema, a concert, a trip by the seaside, anything that was interesting, and in 19...76, I think it was, maybe '78, we went to Biddeford in Devon, and I took twenty-seven people with disabilities [laughs] down ...

*Do you...*

... down there for a holiday.

*Do you suspect that it was often, perhaps, the first time people had had opportunity to...*

Some of them, yes, and we had three ambulances, and two cars, travelling from the east end of London, down to Dev... to Devon, in convoy, and that's how we travelled, during that fortnight, so that, you know, some people, if they wanted it, could have a

break from the tailgate vehicle, and go in a normal car, and so on: and we had first aid people, and nurses, and, as well as an awful lot of people with disabil... disabilities: and Mum and Dad came to help as well: obviously to help me, but to help other people, and it was a great time, and we were achieving a hell of a lot, and so this, this is really when my ... fairly high-profile life started to take off, in a way, but I'd always had this compassionate, charitable instinct, within me: to try and make the lives of people with disabilities much better, than they were to begin with.

*What do you think, particularly, drove that within you?*

I suppose because, I spent a lot of my life with my parents, and wanted freedom, and, you know, if you could go out for the day without them, I mean, that was great. Don't get me wrong, I, I loved them, but their support and ... possessiveness, really, could be suffocating, and I just wanted to be normal, as other people are: you know, they have a break from their parents, and they go home, tell their families what they've done and, hopefully, if your family's interested, you've got a nice balanced view of life, but when you're sheltered, because of disability, and you're cosseted and, you know, helped, it's very, very difficult. All of this was happening against the backdrop, drop really, of difficulties in my personal life. In 1976, I went to the bank one day, and I'd come out of the lift, and my mother had walked forward, to open the swing doors, and I'd followed her, as I always did, and all of a sudden, I slipped, because there was some tea, spilt on the floor, and I landed very heavily, and hit my head on a marble floor, and I remember lying there, and the room was going round a bit, and I just said to Mum, 'Oh, I've got a terrific pain go through my eyes,' and 'Don't move me.' Anyway, I, after a little while, got up, but the pain in my left eye, particularly, just got worse and worse, and so Mum and Dad took me to Moorfields, Eye Hospital, and, probably, due to the bang on the head, my glaucoma had just decided to erupt, and the eye burst, and had to be removed, and that was a very traumatic time, because it was like going blind a second time, because I could never say, 'Ah well, one day, due to medical science, I might get my sight back,' you know. It, it had to go, and then I was terribly worried about body image: how I would be perceived by others: whether people would reject me, if they knew I had artificial eyes, especially when you, you

can't look in a mirror and see them for yourself. It was quite a painful thing to have done, and I had a very unfortunate incident there: they were giving me a mixture of drugs called 'Fentazin' which is now off the market, and 'Stemetil', for attention, and sickness, and one night, a couple of days after the operation, I felt extremely odd, and suddenly I was aware of my tongue swelling, couldn't speak, I could hear what people were saying, but it was a, like as if they were a million miles away, and I couldn't answer them, and they all thought I was having an epileptic seizure or something, but I knew that it was something medical, going on, and there just happened to be a, a Chinese nurse on duty, who was watching what was happening to me, and read my medical chart. They got the doctors pretty damn quick, and they said, 'Oh, give her another shot of Fentazin': she's suffering from nervous tension,' and this Chinese said 'No', Chinese nurse said, 'No, don't do that: this is a result of 'Stemetol' and 'Fentazin' mixed, and I was now getting to the point where I was going to need a tracheotomy, because I just couldn't breath, and the doctor said, 'You don't know what you're talking about.' She said, 'Yes I do. You go and look at it in the, in the library,' so he sort of tore downstairs, and within minutes, he was back up, in the ward again, and he said, 'You're right,' and they gave me some sort of anti-inflammatory drug, and a big shot of Valium, into my side, and eventually, the swelling went down, but it took about four days for my speech to come back properly, and it was just horrendous, and my mother said, 'Well, you know: can anything go wrong with this now?' and they said, 'Well no, she hasn't got an eye there, so there's nothing to go wrong, as long as you keep it sort of clean, and so on,' so Mum said, 'Right, I'll take her home, and nurse her at home', which is what she did, and I remember the first time she took the bandages off, she promptly went upstairs and was, was sick, but after that, she got over her emotions and, once all the swelling and everything had gone down from the operation, they could then make a, a sort of temporary mould, before they gave me my first artificial eye: but it was quite terrifying, when they, they made them, but it was also quite funny, because they, they interview you, to see what sort of a personality you've got, and if you're the sort of person that smiles a lot, and has a joke, they give you very smiley eyes: if you're miserable, you get sort of sad eyes, and the chap said to me, 'Well now, you know, what, what colour do you want?' and I said, 'Well, I'll have a ... a different colour for every day, depending on my

outfit, and a bloodshot one, for when I have too much to drink,' and he just said, 'Sod off!' and, you know, we had a bit of a laugh about it. But it, it's fascinating when they make the eyes, and they take a great deal of trouble to make them look normal, and when I've got them in, they look perfect, and, you know, it doesn't feel strange, but, obviously, when I take them out, and the eyelid drops into the empty space, I sort of realise the irrevocable nature of what I've done, and what I agreed to, and that's fairly scary.

*So was it that you went, you still had one [talking together] real eye*

I had one of my own eyes, yeah, which was in a mess anyway, but, remarkably, within four weeks, I was back at the bank, with this not very looking, not very good-looking eye, in place, because it was only a temporary shell, while the swelling and everything went down, and people said to me, 'You're, you're bloody amazing, you are! You've just had your eye out, and you're laughing and joking and smiling,' and I said, 'Well, you didn't realise the sort of pain I was in, and to get rid of it, was, you know, quite helpful,' but, yeah, I, I mean, it was, a very traumatic time, and ... and then things just carried on with the work of the East London Spastic and Handicapped Club, which was, I couldn't stand the name, so we changed it, and it become, it became 'The Disabled Fellowship Club of East London', which I thought was much better, and then, of course, in 19 ..., in December, 1977, I had the surprise of my life when Eamonn Andrews walked into the bank, with his big red book, and said, 'Tonight, Lin Berwick, This is Your Life!', and, huh, I nearly died with shock.

*What we'll do, Lin, sorry, we're just coming to the end, and that's a fantastic point to*

[End of Tape 5 Side A]

**Tape 5 Side B [Track 8]**

*So this was 1977, Lin, and, just take us back then, you, it was an ordinary...*

It was an ordinary ... working day, as far as I was concerned, but of course, my parents had known about this for some time. I had, I'd been doing quite a bit of work with television, and of course, I was very good friends with Joan Shenton, who was married to Jack Crawshaw, who was the producer of *This is Your Life*, and, for a long time, [clears throat] she had wanted me to be a subject, but he felt that he couldn't do it, because he was a personal friend. While all these things were happening in my life, I was writing my first manuscript of, of, of my first book, which was called *Undefeated*, and this was taken, this was sent off to the BBC *Horizon* programme, and they read it, and felt they couldn't use it, but they sent it to ITV, *This is Your Life*, and said, 'We think this person might be a candidate for your programme', and, of course, once Jack Crawshaw got that, he felt he had a, a green light, regardless of him being a friend, to feature me on the programme. As far as I was concerned, it was an ordinary working day. A few weeks earlier, I'd gone out and I'd bought this lovely silver grey velvet jacket, and a red shirt, and a nice skirt, but it, you know, it was gonna to be my Christmas gear, you know. I had no idea that it was going to be seen by thirty million people, [laughs] and one day, I was called into the office at the bank, and Mr Woods, who was the manager, said, 'We want you to take part in an, a public relations exercise, between England and Australia, and the idea is that, we're gonna have a Christmas party that's gonna be filmed, and we want you to be on the switchboard, and wish all the staff in Sydney office a Happy Christmas, you know, from London,' and I said, 'Oh, what a bloody waste of money!' you know. 'Do I 'ave to do this?' kind of thing and he said, 'Well, yeah.' Anyway, on the morning, well the night before, Mum and Dad were supposed to be going to Dad's firm, for the annual Christmas do, but in fact, they were going up to Thames Television, to rehearse for *This is Your Life*: and what they used to do, what the researchers used to do, I was currently doing a radio programme, every Saturday morning, for Radio Moorfields, for Moorfields Eye Hospital, where I used to interview famous people, and get them to choose their favourite bits of music, a bit like *Desert Island Discs*, really, and so

they used to come, and sit outside my house, and wait for the taxi to come and take me to Moorfields, and then they'd be in, talking to my parents, and, of course, I didn't know any of this.

*Sorry, Lin, just, off. [Break in recording] So you were involved in a, in a show, then, for Radio Moorfields.*

Yeah.

*And the...*

[Talking together] And so the researchers used to sit outside my house, you see, wait for me to go off in the taxi, and Mum and Dad would, you know, have them in while I wasn't there, so, I never knew that any of this was taking place. I was completely green, and, anyway, on the morning of the event, I woke up with a stinking headache, because I had this glaucoma and it was affecting the other eye, very badly, and I said, 'Oh', you know, and Mum was washing my hair at quarter past five in the morning, and I said, 'Why are you washing my hair for at this time of day?' and she said, 'Well, if you're gonna be filmed', she said, 'you won't want your hair sticking up with the headphones on, and stuff like that', and I said, 'Oh, I can't, I can't cope with this', so she said, 'Right, if you're in that much pain with your head, go back to bed, and I'll tell Mr Wood you can't help him.' I thought, 'Oh, I can't do that,' so, anyway, I, she said, 'You know I've got a day off for Christmas shopping today', but of course, she was in fact going to the studio, so [laughs] I got to the bank, and I'm walking around the bank, and all of a sudden, my tripod stick decides to snap in half [laughs], suffering from metal fatigue, so I ring Mum up, and say, 'Help! Bring another pair of tripods, put them in a taxi, 'cause I can't move now', but I didn't know the, the person who brought them into the bank was [laughing] the chauffeur from Thames Television. Anyway, so, that afternoon there was a lot of activity going on. They were, at three o'clock, when the bank closed, they started to decorate the bank, and put a Christmas tree up, and there was all sorts of food and drink and everything, and I went for my usual toilet stop, at about half past three, quarter to four, and I was

accompanied this day by the manager's secretary, who said, 'Well, your mum's not here, so I'll go with you while you go to the loo.' I thought, 'Well, that's a bit odd!' You know, in all the years I've worked here, she'd never chatted and been friendly like this, you see, and, anyway, five o'clock when the bank closed, and I came off the switchboard, the manager put a chair in the midst of people, all at this party, and I sat down, and he, he said to me, 'Would you like a sherry or something?' and I said, 'Well, no,' I said, 'unfortunately, I can't, I can't drink, due to these drugs I was on for my eyes', and he said, 'Well, just hold the thing, you know, so it looks good for a party, you know,' and all of a sudden, the doors opened, and I heard the famous voice of Eamonn Andrews, greeting Mr Woods, and I thought he'd come to nab one of the Australian cricketers that banked with us, and of course, he walked over to me and said, 'It's my pleasure to be here, because, tonight, I can say to a very remarkable young lady, 'Lin Berwick, this is your life'' and well, you could have knocked me down with a feather, and me legs went to jelly, sort of thing, and suddenly my, my, my father was there, and he literally picked me up and carried me [laughs] outside, 'cause I think he knew, there was no way I was going to be able to stand up, and of course, there was, all these people had gathered, outside the bank, because they recognised Eamonn in, in, in the ca... in the Daimler, and I think they thought that they were going to see somebody famous, coming out, instead of which, they got me, you know. Anyway, my father put me in this Daimler, with Eamonn, and Jack Crawshaw, who, the producer of the programme, and Eamonn kept saying to me, 'How do you feel?' and I said, 'I feel sick,' and he was saying 'Do you want the windows, [laughs] windows down on the car?' you know. Anyway, we, we was whisked off, to, to Thames Television studios, and I was locked in this room, with only a Thames TV researcher, and, straight away, I said, 'Where's me mum?' and they said, 'I'm sorry, you can't see your mum. She's with all the other guests on the programme, and, you know, we don't want to spoil the element of surprise, you know. She's got to ... and I said, 'Look, if I don't see me mum, I'm not going on,' so they, they brought her and I said, 'You'd better give me a Valium,' because I couldn't stop shaking, you know, with the shock of it all, and, and then Eamonn said, he come, came into the dressing room and he said, 'You know, you will obviously go in on your wheelchair', and I said, 'No, I want to walk in,' so they mic-ed me up, and in

those days, you didn't have the little delicate microphone that we've got now, just clipped to my lapel, it was a, a belt that you wore, with two heavy batteries, and leads coming from it, and, and quite a big microphone that they shoved up me jacket, but anyway, you know, I went on set, it was like two hours, from the time they did the pick-up at the bank, to the time we actually went on set, and, once you're there, the programme runs as though you see it on the television, and it was just, well, it was just gob-smacking, because they, they brought a friend over from Australia that I'd never seen, somebody from Canada, and they got a, a priest friend of mine, who spoke to me from the Pakistani jungle, on the telephone. It was quite amazing, and we had a wonderful evening, with a fantastic champagne party afterwards, and I mean, what, you do anything with Thames Television, the booze flows like water, and you could be sloshed within half an hour, sort of thing.

*And this, then, in the days, then, of three television channels, and...*

Three television channels, yes.

*And an audience approaching thirty million, you were saying.*

Thirty million, because obviously, they did, sold it abroad as well, you know, and this is what got me, 'cause I said to Eamonn at the end of the programme ... what happens is, after, after the programme is, you know, run, you go and meet all your guests at this big party. In my case, there was something like 200, I think it was 256 guests, and these were all the people that they'd interviewed and, of course, all the friends from The Commonwealth Bank, who were at the so-called 'press relations' party were hand-picked by my mum, and there were fifty-two of them, and they were all piled into a fifty-two seater coach, and taken to the studios as well, so [laughs] they had a great night and, you know, they weren't expecting any of this, of course, 'cause it was total surprise, so they had a great night, and, you know, filled the audience, and it was all, pretty smashing stuff. Anyway, the manager said to me, the manager of the bank, said, 'Right, you can have tomorrow off,' and then, I remember, the next, the next

day, I went to the bank, and on the switchboard room door, they'd put [laughing] a big gold star, you know, which, which was quite funny.

*And how old would you be at this stage?*

I'd be twenty-seven, so to have that sort of tribute, at twenty-seven, for the work that I'd done for the disabled, and of course, they had ... my transport officer from the Disabled Fellowship Club was there, some of the Hornchurch policemen who drove the coaches, and, and then they had Muriel Braddick, MBE, 'cause I was the, the other thing I was doing was a, a public relations officer, for a tape recording society for the housebound, and I used to get recordings of famous people, and they'd go into people's, by the side of people when they in hospital beds, and so on, and they'd get a personal message from somebody famous, or, or pieces, special pieces of music that they wanted, or a special concert, or so on, and I would organise all this, you see, and the bank knew that often, I was making phone calls to do this work, you know, contacting people, and I'd asked their permission, and they were quite happy, because they thought that this was community service work, within the bank, and it gave them a very good image, and they got a lot of very good publicity out of it, and they got very good publicity, obviously, once I was on *This is Your Life*. It gave them a lot of street 'cred.', that they'd given a multiply-handicapped person a job, who was making such a success of it. So, and then that got into the bank magazine in Australia, and, you know, it was, oh, all pretty, pretty heady stuff, you know, which was great.

*And, and so, they, they recorded the entry of Eamonn Andrews, with the famous words...*

Yeah.

*And then they had that at the beginning of the programme. Was the, the, main part of the studio programme, though, was that live, then, or...*

No, it's all recorded, and actually, my one was shown, two weeks later. You know, the whole programme was shown, two weeks later.

*[Talking together] And so...*

And it was a very funny feeling, sitting there, watching it run again, and knowing that it was going to be seen by thirty million people.

*So there you were, then, what, at, at home, watching the programme?*

[Laughs] At home, watching it with everybody else, yeah. Had, you know, and, and of course, apart from the people who knew what had happened, the fact that you were featured on it had to be kept quiet until after the programme went out. You wasn't allowed to, you know, reveal it.

*How, how did you, how did you feel, sitting there, at home, [talking together] with the programme...*

[Laughing] Very, very strange, actually. It gave me a very, it gave me a very funny feeling, and, in fact, I've got a recording of it, now, and when I play that, and I hear the sound, and the kind of shock horror of me going, 'Oh no!' [laughs] sort of thing, you know, you know, it's, it's an amazing, you know, it is an amazing piece of television, you know, but what's fascinating is the, the very poor disability language that was used, you know, referring to people as 'spastics' and so on, at that time, and in 1977, it was quite acceptable: it was, you know, it was the done thing, to refer to someone with cerebral palsy as 'a spastic', and nobody, nobody thought that it was wrong, but of course, it was fundamentally wrong, and, and when you hear the recording now, and you, you know, those, that kind of disability language sticks out like a sore thumb, you know, and it's quite, quite remarkable, how, how things have changed.

*Could you have, could you have ever imagined, though, even just a few years earlier, that this would happen?*

No, not at all. I mean, you just don't think of yourself as receiving that kind of accolade, do you, really? I didn't, I didn't do this charity work for any other reason than I wanted to make a difference to people's lives, and of course, in retrospect, I'm still doing that, with all the other things that I'm involved in, and, you know, it's wonderful. It was, it was terrific, that the nation wanted to pay that kind of tribute, and it was a very great privilege, and something I will never forget.

*And you were working as well, at Radio Moorfields.*

Yeah.

*Tell me a bit more, a little bit more about that.*

Well, of course, with all this business of losing the eye and so on, I was going up to Moorfields quite a lot, before it had to go, and then I was an in-patient there, and, when you have an eye removed, you've got an almighty headache, but you've also got a lot of very tight bandage around your head, because, what they do is, they bandage your head very, very tightly, and they put this sort of plastic shield over the, where the eye would have been, and they bandage that, even more tightly, and it's got a lot of sticky ... plaster stuff on it, and the idea, and the reason being, that, if they can keep it very tight, they keep the bruising in. Otherwise, if they didn't, you'd have a face that looked like a hamster, and it would take weeks for the bruising of removing an eye to, to go down, so I had my head very heavily bandaged for three days, very tight, and I had an almighty headache, and I came to realise the importance of friendly voices, well-known voices particularly, like listening to a radio or something, and I had this idea of creating this programme, called 'Lin Berwick meets...'. What happened, well, what happened originally, was that, they knew that I'd done a lot of broadcasting, been on the telly quite a bit, and so on, different programmes, and they asked me, as a patient, if I would come down to the studio and talk a bit about my life, and also, because I'd coped with the removal of the eye quite well, they wanted me to say something positive, that might help other people, and so I, I did this programme, and chose some of my favourite classical music, and then they said, 'We really like the

sound of your voice. It's, it's ... good for people, you know, that had eye operations. It's a pleasant voice,' and would I like to do a programme? And there wasn't any payment involved: you just did it for the love of the work, and trying to help the patients, and also, I felt I wanted to give something back, because the hospital had helped me, and so I started this programme called 'Lin Berwick meets ...', in which I interviewed famous people, and got them to choose their music, and it, it was an hour long, and they liked the programme so much, that they, they asked me to make it a two-hour programme, with, with an interview in the middle somewhere, and they called it 'The L and H Hour', because I work[ed] with a, a chap called Hugh. I can't think of his other name now, and he, you know, he used to sort of do some of the chat with me, so that it wasn't one boring voice for two hours [laughs] sort of thing, and we had some great times. There was one time when I managed to get Ralph, Rolf Harris, to do a programme with me, and he got me playing the 'Diggerido' and he did interviews with, sorry, autographs for the patients, and they'd come down and get his autograph, and all that kind of thing, and we had this wonderful bit, where he was telling us about the story of the record, *Two Little Boys*, and he's got this Aboriginal gentleman, who's singing and talking the words of *Two Little Boys*, over the telephone line, to Rolf, from Australia, and what we managed to, was feed in exactly the music, so that you got the man's voice, and the music of *Two Little Boys*, playing in absolute sync. and I think that was a, a brilliant piece of radio broadcasting, and I'm really chuffed about that, 'cause it worked so well.

*And, and what day was the programme broadcast?*

It always went out on a Saturday morning, so, you know, I was doing that at the bank and then, taking a taxi to [laughs] Moorfields Eye Hospital every week, at my expense, and doing the programme, and then, very often, I was going up to the BBC and interviewing famous people, and in fact, I became such a regular person, that they used to let me park [laughs] in the Director General's car space, at the BBC, which I thought was pretty good, and they'd say, 'Who are you here today for, you know? Who are you nabbing today?' and , yeah, that was pretty good, and, I interviewed people like Richard Baker, Sue MacGregor, Desmond Wilcox, Valerie Singleton,

Edward Woodward, James Galway, Rosemary Anne Sisson, the creator of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, Googie Withers, the famous West End actress, [laughs] all sorts of people, and I'm, and I'm, oh, Esther Rantzen was another one; yeah, and I've, I've still got those tapes, so, yeah, that was quite good really.

*So you'd, you'd take a tape recorder with you, and then play the interview into the programme.*

Yeah, and edit it, and I was no good with a splicing machine, so it was literally, you know, do the best you could with the pause button [laughs] you know. Sort of cut that, you know, cut that out, and, you know, keep going, you know, so ... and it's amazing what you could do if you could fade in a bit of music, and then, find your next slot, you know, that you wanted to include, and, yeah, it was amateurish, but it was bloody good radio, you know.

*And when you were approaching prospective people to be interviewed, were you dealing then directly with the people, or with their, or with their agents?*

Sometimes I was dealing with their agents, and I used to do a lot through The Spotlight Theatrical Agency, you know, or *Stage*, or whatever, but obviously, if it was BBC people, I'd approach them directly, and, and that's how Sue Macgregor and, and I became great friends.

*And, and what was the reaction of people, when you approached them, with a view to, to doing this? How do you think their reaction reflected attitudes at the time towards disability, let's say?*

Well, I, I think when people knew that I was blind, and I used a wheelchair, and I walk with sticks, and I'd been a patient, in Moorfields, and I'd spoken about the need to have good quality voices, you know, when you've got your head bandaged up, and your head hurts, and you're frightened, because your vision has gone wonky, and I think there was a certain amount of curiosity. I know that Sue Macgregor said that,

that, when she got my phone call, and subsequently my letter, she was curious to meet me, and [laughs] so that's why she let the interview take place, but I got some really good stuff, and it was, it was great.

*Because at the time, I suspect that, in terms of involvement by people with disability in the media, and actual exposure, coverage of people, disabled people in the media, was very limited.*

Yeah, I did some television for the BBC: I, I was on the *One in Four* programme quite a few times, and I did *From the Edge*, [disability programmes] and different programmes like that, so I was getting to be a fairly well-known person with disability, and, and, you know, my view of all this is, 'I didn't ask for disability, but if I can make it work for me, why not, you know?' and I would, I would not 'make it work' for me on a personal level, but use it as a vehicle to help other people, and, and that's what I've done all my life, and it doesn't seem to have stood, stood me in bad stead, really.

*What we'll do now is just, is just coming towards the end of ...*

**[End of Tape 5 Side B]**

**Tape 6 Side A [Track 9]**

*OK. So here you were, then, Lin, meeting, almost on a, well on a weekly basis, if not a daily basis, then, famous people, if you like, household name...*

Mm mm.

*How did you feel, how did you feel about, about that?*

Well, I certainly I wasn't, you know, star-struck in that sense. To me, they were just ordinary people who had some pretty good opportunities in their lives, and some of them had silver spoon, if you, if you know what I mean, but they were fascinating to talk to, and, and essentially, I love people, and I s'pose essentially, I'm, I'm a nosy person [both laugh] you know. I, I want to know about people's lives: I find it fascinating. So, yeah, it was, you know, it was a great, a great thing to do really, and it just ... it's just an episode in my life of something very different, to do with communication, and also I think I was giving a message to other people with disabilities, that, just because you've got multiple handicap, it doesn't mean to say that your life has to stop, and I was pretty determined that mine wasn't going to stop.

*And in your early involvement in programmes that were covering the experience of disability then, what were some of the main messages that you were wanting to get across?*

Well, there was then, and there still is now, an awful lot of nonsense, talked about access, because I feel now, in particular, that, because 'community care', as it's become to be known, isn't really working, and it will never really work, until you get the infrastructure, of access right, e.g., access to buildings, public transport, and you put people on a level where they have sufficient money, to have a quality of life, which isn't based on your ability to pay, but rather, your need, then this whole thing about community care is a, is a complete and utter anathema, because, to me, community care isn't working because, you're swapping one sense of isolation for

another, and unless you get the infrastructure right, people with disabilities will never be fully integrated into society, and while there is a huge discrepancy of the amount of money, that people with disabilities have, and freedom of choice, then, there will never be equality, and so what I've, I've fought for all my life, is that, people with disabilities would be put on equal terms, and have equal respect, but, of course, even now, even though we're much more enlightened, all these years on, we've still got a long way to go.

*Through the seventies, especially, were you finding that that was the decade then, where disabled people were finding their voice, perhaps for the first time?*

Yes, I mean, I was a member of the Greater London Council's Disability Resource Team, and we used to have these meetings, and I was so frustrated by them, because there were some extremely militant people with disabilities there. There was also a couple of gay disability groups, and one of the gay lesbian groups was called 'Sisters Against Disability'. Now, I don't know if this group still exists, but, I mean, who the hell would be for disability? And, I mean, they would wear great big badges, which said, 'I'm proud to be disabled'. Well, I'm not proud to be disabled: I would much prefer to be able-bodied, and take my place in Society, along with everybody else, and they were so militant, that to be able-bodied was a dirty word, and, and I used to say to them, 'Look, if we don't work in partnership with able-bodied people, then we haven't got a life, because without them, a lot of, a lot of us are sunk. It's all very well being militant, but if you alienate the people that need to care for you, then it doesn't work very well, but if you work with respect and dignity, and partnership, then, you know, together you can go a long way.'

*And, and, whilst this side of things was all developing, whilst you were, you were finding different involvements in the disability field, meantime, then, your, your work continued at The Commonwealth Bank of Australia.*

Well, it did and it didn't, because, 1976, I'd worked at the bank for, for six years then, and I thought, 'I cannot spend the rest of my life, saying, 'Commonwealth Trading

Bank. Good morning.’ There’s got to be more to life than this,’ and, at that time, there was a radio programme on Radio 4, used to go out, every Wednesday morning, I think it was, and it was called *If you think you’ve got problems?*, and it was a programme about counselling, with Dr James Hemming and Dr Wendy Greengross, and they used to interview people who had counselling issues, and talk about their lives, and look at things from a counselling perspective, and I got hooked by this programme, because I’m a great Radio 4 addict anyway, and I thought, ‘I don’t know, this is something I could be doing, because the client would come to me; there wouldn’t be a mobility problem: why not?’ So I phoned the BBC, to get Wendy’s telephone number, and they said, ‘Ooh, very sorry, but we can’t disclose her private number,’ so I looked her up in the phone book, and sure enough, she was there. I thought I was ringing the surgery where she worked, but I was ringing her home, and Wendy, being Wendy, didn’t send me off with a flea in my ear, but listened to what I had to say, and she said, ‘Well, why don’t we meet and have some lunch?’ which we did, and I talked to her about the desire to do Psychology, and she said, ‘Well, let me try and find out some, where some courses are,’ and, eventually, after a great deal of problems, I got the interview at The Westminster Pastoral Foundation, in London, and they are, now, probably the leading counselling training organisation in this country, but, in 1976, and beyond, counselling wasn’t recognised as a therapy. It was recognised more as, something that the wealthy did to occupy their mind: you know, psycho-analysis, all that kind of thing: but anyway, I did a part-time course, in the evening, and I was learning about Freud and John Bowlby you know, child development-type stuff, which was mind-blowing, and then, I decided I’d like to do another part-time course, and then, in 1978, I went to the manager at the bank and said, ‘Please sir, can I have a year off?’ and he said, ‘What for?’ and I said, ‘I want to study Analytical Psychology,’ and he said, ‘It’s got nothing to do with banking,’ and I said, ‘I know, but I’d really like to take the chance,’ and they very kindly let me have a year off work, without pay. I took a Training Opportunity Scheme Grant, from the Department of Employment, and I took a sixty-nine pounds a week drop in my salary, to do this, and I went off for a year, and I studied things like Carl Rogers, Jung, Eric Fromm, Fritz Perls: all the great analysts, and we had ... various child development things, and Ontology [Ontology is a branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of

being; metaphysics is the theoretical philosophy of being and knowing], and we were doing things like, Karl Marx and all the great... thinkers of the day, you know, and, not of the day, but of the century.

*So how were you accessing the, accessing the material, then?*

Well, I was recording everything, and then, I was coming home, and spending the evening, putting all the lectures in Braille, and I worked my socks off, I really did: I'd never worked so hard in all my life, but I passed all the exams with flying colours, and then, it came to taking their caseload of clients.

*So how did you, how did you take the exams, then?*

Well, I had a scribe, and also they allowed me to put some of my answers in, onto tape, and, and they would type it up, but I had a scribe as well.

*So you dictated your answers to the...*

Yeah, and so I said, 'Where,' at the end of it all, I said, 'Where's my caseload?' and they said, 'Sorry, you're not going to get one,' and I said, 'Why not?' and they said, 'Well, we don't know how the clients will respond to you, when, seemingly, you have more problems than the clients. We don't know how the client will respond to a blind person,' and I was absolutely devastated, because I felt I had been taken down the 'Swanee'. I'd done three years of training, and, basically, come out with nothing, and so I said, 'Let me do an intake interview,' which is the hardest you can do, 'cause you don't know anything about the client, which is videoed, 'and then you make your mind.' So this was done, in front of the whole class, and I said to the Director of the organisation, 'Well, what did you think?' and he said, 'Well, it's one of the best in, intake interviews I have ever seen,' so I said, 'Well, are you going to change your mind, then?' 'No,' so I was totally discriminated against, and I was devastated. I could not stop crying, the whole weekend. I felt absolutely let down, and they said to me, 'You are going to come for the presentation certificates, aren't you?' and I said,

'No, I'm not: stick mine in the post. I won't be there, 'cause I've never felt so disillusioned in all my life,' and the Deputy Director was the Reverend Dr Denis Duncan, and he was a wonderful man, a very just man: he had an MA, a PhD, and a Bachelor of Divinity, and he was devastated by what they'd done to me, totally disagreed with them, and, rather than me be alienated, Denis has been my friend ever since, and we've known each other since 1976, and he's like my 'adopted dad', I always call him: although I've still got a father, Denis is the sort of person that you can go to, and discuss things, and he'll be with you, through thick and thin. He's now 84 years of age, we speak to each other, most days, and I love him to pieces, and, fortunately, it has not affected my relationship with him one iota. In fact, it just cemented, you know, the respect that we had for each other. At the time, I was in supervision with a lady called Gill Brearley, and she specialised in disability counselling, and I went to her one day, and she said, 'How do you feel, Lin?' and I said, 'I feel as if nobody's listening, nobody cares, and that I'm banging my head against a brick wall,' and she said, 'Yes, but won't it be wonderful, if, while you're banging your head against the wall, the bricks tumble off the top?' and you know, in reality, all these years on, I'm still counselling, and that's what's happened. I've broken down that barrier of prejudice, by and large, and I very rarely see people with disabilities: it's mostly able-bodied people, marital problems, and bereavement, and so on; but I did feel exceedingly let down.

*In that, in that way, you were the first person, then...*

I was the very first person that 'The Westminster and Pastoral Foundation' had taken on, with disabilities, and I was certainly the first blind person, and there was a lot of fear, you know: how were people going to respond to the blindness, because there was so much about 'you must maintain eye contact with the client' and in reality, when people are severely distressed, they don't want someone maintaining eye contact. They want to be able to look away, and, you know, compose their self. You don't need to be able to see, to know that someone is struggling. You know, they wriggle more in their chair, they turn their head, etc, etc. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to, to work that one out, so, you know, it was total discrimination. And then,

from there, I went to the 'Guild of Psychotherapy', ['Guild of Psychotherapists'] and, [laughs] at the time, you had to pay ten pounds, for the privilege of being interviewed by these people, and I got through two interviews, and the psychoanalyst said to me, 'If we reject your application, it won't be on the basis of your inability to do the work: rather your disability,' and there was no right of appeal, and of course, I was rejected. But that didn't stop me, I just kept on going, and I'm still doing counselling to this day, but it was a pretty hard lesson, to learn.

*Somebody following your path today, what do you think their, the reaction then, the reaction to them would be, today?*

Well, I don't think they'd get that reaction, because now you could chuck the DDA at 'em, 'cause it was blatant discrimination. They wouldn't be allowed to do it today, but there's no reason why they should, because I probably worked harder than any other student in that class room, because I was coming home, and listening to the whole day's work again, before I went to bed, and making Braille notes, so I sank it all in my brain like a sponge, and, you know, I absolutely loved it.

*And, and in the, the learning process, and studying process, there you were, I suspect, having to, to learn, to remember much more than somebody who could quickly refer to a ...*

And there wasn't a single psychology book for that course in Braille: nothing.

*Or tape.*

Which, really, says it all, doesn't it?

*Have, have you come across, at all, anybody else with a disability, pursuing the same field?*

In the intervening years, yes.

*And did you, what did you feel like? Did you feel yourself to be, let's say, a pioneer?*

Well, I think I was. I think I've always been a, a bit of a trailblazer: I mean, that's been my, the story of my life, really. Can we st..., can we try and stop?

*OK.*

**[Break in recording.]**

Is it, is it...

*See, we'll see how we get on with Harvey...Yes, so you were making progress, Lin, in the field of, of counselling, and, had, had qualified, indeed, in various aspects of that. Sorry, we've still got Harvey. [Break in recording.] So here you were, then, Lin, making progress in counselling: when, then did you leave the, the bank, finally?*

Well, can I just bring in some more things...

*Please do.*

... because they're quite important, I think. In 1978, that's one year on from all this, this happening, I had to have ... I'd, I'd got myself a boyfriend by now, it was the second boyfriend I'd had, and he was going to be a Church of England clergyman, and I had to go into hospital for a very serious operation, which was called a 'Bi-lateral Lumbar Sympathectomy', and this was to increase the circulation, in my legs, and, to do that, they had to cut, very deeply into my back, remove my lower bowel and intestine, cut the sympathetic nerve chain, which runs around my heart, to pump the blood very much faster, and put everything back, and I had this operation, and the pain of it was a nightmare, and, when I was in there, I was very ill: I was on the critical list for, for 11 days, and I had a near death experience, which was quite revealing, and altered my life tremendously, because I had this sense of being lifted

up, going through a wall, heading down a, a ... long corridor, towards a bright light, and I heard these female voices, which said, 'You are coming to us,' and a voice which, and a male voice, which said, 'Yes you are coming, but not yet. I have special work for you to do,' and I had a sense of being back in the room where I was. My mother and father was there. My mother was crying, and I could hear her say, 'She's dying', and then I had a sense of going back into my body, and being incredibly angry, because of the pain I was in. I didn't want, I didn't want that experience, so, as you can imagine, I was quite a sick person at the time.

*And when you had this ...as you describe it, near...*

Near death experience.

*Near death experience. Did you feel calm, or...*

I was totally calm, totally free. I didn't have a sense of any pain, until I started to come round again, but it was something that seemed to alter my life for ever, really, but, at that time, I was with John, who was going to be a Church of England clergyman. We'd met at church, and he was a, in, in retrospect, he was a strange lad, because we used to go out and do things, but he never introduced me to that many of his friends, and I should have read the signs, but, you know, you think you're in love, you're pleased, as a disabled person, that an able-bodied person is, is showering lots of attention on you, and can see through the outer casing, so to speak. Anyway, he was with me much of the time, when I was recovering from this illness, and one day, he came in, on the Sunday morning, when I was still on the critical list, and said, 'By the way, I want to end our engagement', and I said, 'Why, John?' and he said, 'Because I want to go out with me mates, I want to go drinking with me friends, and, from what I see here, the way you've been so ill in this hospital, you will take up too much of my time.' Well, I was pretty devastated, and the nurses were going and sitting on the bed, and they were crying, and the doctor on duty that day was my favourite doctor, he was Dr Dixie, and he kept saying, 'How do you feel? Do you want to see him?' and I said, 'Not particularly. All I want is me mum.' [laughs]

You know, in crisis, you want your mum, don't you? And he turned round and said, 'You haven't lost today: he has, because when I see the way you've coped with this operation, and you've held onto that bed and you've gripped it for all you were worth, because of the pain you were in,' he said, 'He's the one who's lost out, and not you', and I had a visitor from the local Methodist church, to where I live, and, because he'd found out that John had given me the elbow, and his, he was currently candidating for the theological college, and the Bishop refused his candidature, because, not because he split from me, but because he said, 'It didn't smack of pastoral care', and if that's the kind of thing he was going to do, as a minister, they didn't think he was suitable material. I don't really know what happened to John: I know, at one time, he was working on a building site. I don't know what happened after that: I think he turned to drink. Anyway, he was obviously not, not the right person for me, but I had a visit from the local Methodist minister, who'd heard what happened, and came to see me, to commiserate, 'cause he knew me quite well, and I said to him that I couldn't go back to the Anglican church, because John would be there, and he said, 'Well, come to us,' and that move really was a life-changing experience, because, in 1981, I had attended an evening service, and it wasn't a particularly remarkable one. At the end of it, like all good Methodist, there were people chatting, and I was just sitting there, and suddenly, I heard a voice in my left ear, that was very deep and echo-y, and it said, 'You have got to get off that pew, and you have got to go to the front of the church, and witness for me,' and I had no doubt at all that it was God, speaking very loud and clear, and I said, 'Me Lord? What do you want me for, with all the problems I'm going to cause, with study and access, and so on?' But I felt strangely elated, and I didn't say anything to anyone: I just kept it to myself, for three weeks, and the conviction that I had to preach God's Word never left me, so I went to my minister, who was a marvellous man, called [Rev.] Bryan Rippen. He later became Chairman of the District of, in Wakefield, in Yorkshire.

*Why don't we, I'm just going to...*

[End of Tape 6 Side A]

**Tape 6 Side B [Track 10]**

*O.K.*

He later became Chairman of the District in Wakefield, Yorkshire. He preached with a tremendous social conscience. I, I said in my book, 'Inner Vision', which I published in 1990, that he preached as though he had a 'Guardian' newspaper in one hand, and a Bible in the other, and that summed him up pretty well, but he, he was a wonderful man, and I went to him, and told him what happened, and he said, 'But, Lin, you're already doing God's work, by the work that you're doing for people with disabilities, and the club, that, you know, you were involved in, and so on, and your counselling. Go away and think about it, because you'll be committing yourself to a tremendous amount of work. Go away and think about it for a month,' which I, I did, and I prayed about it a lot, thought about it a lot, tried to put myself off from the idea, but I knew that I was being called, to communicate God's love from a wheelchair, and I felt that, using a wheelchair, and preaching from Braille books, would actually be probably as big a powerful witness, as anything I might actually say, because it was saying to the congregation, 'Look, you may have things happen in your life that are pretty dreadful, but, you know, you can win through.' After all, in, in the same year that I had my back operation, I also had my right eye removed. The glaucoma pressure had built up, to a tremendous amount, and that eye, also, exploded, and that was a very strange time, because, obviously, I'd had John situation, I'd had the back operation, and now, the removal of the eye that I'd once seen out of, so I really had to come to terms, perhaps, for the first time, that I was going to be totally blind, and I had now lost all hope of ever seeing again, and, believe you me, it was like going blind a second time. It was probably one of the hardest experiences of my life. But as with all things, there was compensation.

*Let's just ... [break in recording.] Make sure, yes. Because your, your faith, then, then, Lin, had been important to you, increasingly so, really from, from then, an early age?*

Yeah, very, from very early, yeah, from, well from, really, from the age of four.

*And there you were, as a young person, let's take it back a little while, talking to, and discussing with children, and...*

[laughs] In the playground, yeah.

*And here as an adult, then...*

Getting the call once again, to preach.

*And so how did you go about putting that...*

[talking together] So...

*... putting that into place?*

So I waited the month that he advised me to wait, and I went back to him, and I said, 'I know the path is gonna be difficult, and know we're gonna meet a lot of opposition, because I'm a blind person, preaching, and being in a wheelchair. It's going to make the Church's life quite difficult, in terms of access, but I feel this compulsion, to communicate God's Word' and he said, 'Well, if you still feel like that after a month, I think I'd better give you a note to preach, which is the first step, within Methodism, to taking study courses, and being accepted by the local Preachers' Meeting, and I went to one of these meetings, and the guy said, the Secretary of the meeting said, 'I think we're gonna have a problem with you.' I said, 'Oh yes! Why's that?' 'Well, due to your disability, I don't know how you'll cope with the public speaking,' so I said, 'Well, as someone who's done over 300 radio broadcasts, I don't think you're going to have a problem.' 'Oh,' and he said, 'And I don't know how you'll cope with the academic study.' I said, 'Well, I have 'O' levels, and I have the equivalent of a degree in Psychology.' He said, 'Oh, you can learn then!' and I thought, 'God, if this is the kind of prejudice I'm going to get, this is just amazing stuff,' and I said, 'Yes, I

can learn' and he said, 'And then we don't know how you'll cope with the access to the church buildings,' and I said, 'There, I'm prepared to admit you have a problem, but maybe together, we can work at it.' Anyway, the local Preachers' Meeting endorsed my note to preach, and I started what was to be an eight, no, a, a seven-year programme of study, and I took five exams in Old Testament, New Testament, Worship and Preaching Techniques, and Christian Doctrine, and I passed them all with 'B' and 'C' passes, and 'B+' passes, that were equal to candidating for the Methodist ministry.

*Again, how did you, did you, did you go about undertaking the study? How did you access the...*

Getting to, getting people to read the books onto tape, because they weren't in Braille, and tape-recording my answers, and getting someone to type them up, because, this was, again, before the days when it was common for blind people to have adapted computers.

*What period would this be, Lin? What sort of year?*

1981 to 1988: and I had to work like stink, and I was preaching, something like four or five times a quarter. When I was a preacher, on trial, I always went out with another preacher, and I usually did either the bible readings, or prayers, or whatever, or, sometimes, they'd let me do the sermon, and then, once I'd got a certain amount of the exams under my belt, I was all..., allied, [laughs] allowed to come off trial, and go preaching, and then, I became a fully accredited Methodist preacher in 1988, and I had more clergy in that congregation, I think, than, than anyone has ever had. [Clears throat.]

*So you'd be referring to, to Braille notes, would you, when, when preaching?*

Oh yes, I always wrote my sermons in Braille, and I had a Braille Bible, who was provided for me by the Wesley Church in Oxford, and it was 46 volumes, and it took

three [laughs] Post Office sacks, to deliver it. Just to tell you, give you some idea of how big it is, you know.

*And what sort of numbers of, sizes of congregation were you, were you preaching to, typically?*

Well, some were fairly good churches; a hundred plus, and then there were some other very tiny churches, where you may have only got, sort of, 20 people there, if you were lucky: and then, I was doing quite a lot of guest preaching in other places, counties, and I remember doing some preaching and lecturing work with Dr Duncan, which, in the morning I did lectures on sexuality: sorry, I did, I did lectures on bereavement, in the morning, and in the afternoon, I did lectures on sexuality and disability, and [laughs] I remember making a, a little quip, which said, 'It's the first time I've been asked to speak on sex after death.' [laughs] You know, which was, which was quite, quite funny, and, you know, got all the audience with me, I think.

*And, and when you were addressing audiences, or, or preaching to a congregation, what, what were your feelings? How did you feel about it?*

Well, if you'd have seen me in the vestry, before I went out, you would never have thought it was the same person. I'd done all my preparation, and, I mean, sometimes, I'd have the theme that I had to preach on, because we, we had a list, a Lectionary List, and the way it was done is, that it would take you through the Bible, within the course of a year, and, obviously, if you were unlucky, and you got something on, say, 'Revelations', or one of the minor prophets, you were in trouble to make a modern-day sermon out of that little lot, and I would sit in my office, for hours, and I'd keep reading the Bible, and reading William Barclay's Commentaries, and other books, relating to whatever subject I could get my hands on. By, I, by now, I was using one of these electronic scanners, to, to read with, and suddenly, I'd get an idea, and I'd say to Ralph, Ralph now being my husband, and that's another story, you know, 'Leave me to get on with it' and eventually, we'd have a sermon, but, yeah, in the gestation, it was very, very difficult.

*And, and did you feel that, in the work that you were doing, that, in addition to the message of the content, that you were also conveying other messages as well?*

I, I used to say that my sermon, and everything I did, relating to it was important, but, for me, one of the biggest parts of my ministry was greeting people at the door afterwards. I was always very, very conscious that, particularly some of the elderly people, it was perhaps the only physical contact they had with another human being, during the course of that week, and because I was in a wheelchair, they'd often come up to me and give me a hug and a cuddle, you know, because I was at, kind of, cuddle-able height, wasn't I? And some of these old ladies, I got very fond of, as we went round the circuit, and other people may have only just come into the church that morning. I can remember one man came up to me, and he was crying, and he said, 'I have a son with cp..., a grandson with cerebral palsy, and I've always been ashamed of him, because he didn't marry up to the expectations I had for my grandson, but after meeting you, and hearing you preach, I will never be ashamed of him again, whatever his disability is.' Now, obviously, if you've only just helped to change one person's life, one person's attitude, then, it, it's a tremendous thing, it's a tremendous privilege, and so I, I found those years of preaching a tremendous privilege, although a very great strain. In those, those years, between 1981 and 1988, I, we'd got to 1983, and my mother had reached the age of 60, and she had to retire from the bank, and she worked a deal, between the management and herself, about me, having a pension for the rest of my life, and leaving work, and suddenly, I was called into the Manager's office one day, and he said, 'Ooh, by the way, on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, when your mother reaches 60, you will leave the bank,' and I was absolutely furious, because I was only 33: I didn't want to retire, and 'Your mother and I have worked this out between us, and this is a good deal for you,' and, of course, I, I really was furious with my mother, and she said, you know, 'This is the best thing', and, so on, and I was absolutely livid, and I felt very let down, because I didn't want to be put on the scrapheap at 33, and I was also fed up with people making decisions about my life, that were fairly earth-shattering, around my, behind my back, and I thought I was quite capable of making my own decision, but I was stuck with this, and I was forced

to leave. Now, I would have, I mean, I might have taken it to a Tribunal for unfair dismissal, 'cause, in a way, it was unfair, but they were making a very good provision for me, because, at 33, they had given me a pension, as though I was 65, with a small lump sum, so I would have been very foolish to turn it down. I still carried on with the counselling, and then, one day, in June, 1985, a man came to see me, whose wife had died of cancer, six months earlier, and he wasn't coping, and it was recommended that Ralph came to see me, and we had 19 very difficult sessions, because she had died of cancer of the oesophagus, and she had had a very nasty death, due to smoking, and he was a lovely, caring man, and the only thing he thought about was his, was his children and his family, and we were coming towards the end of his sessions, and I frequently had to change his appointment, because I was off, doing charity work in some form or other, and he asked me how I got to these, this charity work, and I said, 'Well, with great difficulty, because, obviously, I don't drive, being blind, and so it's a problem' and he said, 'Well, look, if ever you need wheels, don't hesitate to ask me' and one day, after Ralph and I had finished counselling, I was asked if I'd go into a residential home, to teach a blind person Braille, and it was going to cost something like thirty pounds, in taxi fare. He couldn't afford it, and I didn't see why I should pay, because I was giving my time, so I thought, 'Ah, I know, I'll ask Ralph,' and he very kindly took me to and from the residential home each week, for about four and a half months, and he would say afterwards, 'Do you want to come for a drink?' 'Would you like to go for a meal?' and I thought, 'Hang on, my life is really taking off', and I can remember, the first time we went for a meal, I thought, 'Oh gosh, I wonder how this is going to go? What do I do, if I need the loo? How's he going to cope with giving me my food by the face of a clock, etc, etc,' but he took, took all these things like duck to water, it was never a problem to him, and we were going out, and it was Valentine's Day, and we decided to go to a concert, and, at the concert, they gave every one of the ladies a, a long-stemmed red rose. The next week, he and I went to a concert, and, sure enough, there was the long-stemmed red rose, wrapped in cellophane, and I thought, 'God, not only is he caring, he's a bit of an old romantic as well,' and my life took off: we were never in. We went to all sorts of places, and nothing ever stopped him. My mother was very anti. He could have been Prince Charles, it wouldn't matter: she would still have disliked him. They never really

made him welcome: they tolerated him, I think, would be the best way to describe it, and I can always remember, one Christmas time, it had been snowing, there was snow on the ground, it was very icy, and my mother said, 'She's not coming out today, it's too dangerous: she'll slip over' and he said, 'No problem,' and he proceeded to take this huge roll of carpet out of his boot. He put the car on one end, and he rolled the other end of the carpet [laughing] up the garden path. I stepped onto the carpet, walked along it to the car, got in the car, and then he rolled the carpet back up, and that's always made us laugh, and my mother was absolutely furious that, he wasn't going to be beaten by this. As our relationship progressed, he frequently asked my mum to help him understand the issues of disability, and she never did. Her answer was, 'Time enough when you're married,' and I can remember one day, it was my birthday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, I s'pose it would be about 19 ... 85 or '6, he came, with a card and a lovely bunch of roses, and he said to my mother, 'Where's Lin?' and he said, she said, 'Well actually, at the moment, she's sitting on the loo with her head over the hand basin, because she's got an infection in her eye socket, and I'm trying to deal with it,' and he rolled, he walked in behind her, into the bathroom, rolled up his sleeves and said, 'Show me what you do.' I was absolutely horrified, because there I was, sitting on the loo, with no eyes in: he'd never seen me without artificial eyes, thinking 'This is now, a really blown, a relationship. He'll never want to go out with me, looking like this.' Instead of which, he got hold of me, I, I was crying, because I was embarrassed, and he took hold of me, and he said, 'It's OK. I love you just as much without your eyes' and I knew that, if he could cope with that, he could cope with anything, and we used to go, because my mum was so difficult, and I think she was quite emotionally disturbed over the whole relationship, we used to go down to our friends in Dorset, and stay for weekends down there, and, one weekend, they said, 'Right, there's the keys to the house. There's your room. If you need any help, shout: if not, get on with it,' sort of thing, and Ralph did all the physical things that he had to do to help me, and of course, I didn't have things like a 'Clos-o-mat' [trade name] toilet, with an anal wash there, to help me, so he had to do very, personal tasks, and he did all those things, and I said to him, 'Now you know that if you get involved with me, what disability really means. It really can be the shitty end of things at times,' but, the very next day, he asked me to marry him, and we were married, something

like, 18 months after our engagement, at Harold Wood Methodist Church, in Essex, and we had our wedding reception at a sixteenth-century moat house in Brentwood, Essex, and it was a day in my life that I will never forget, and the start of a, a life where Ralph never saw me as a disabled person. He has just seen me as someone who, who needs help. We had a fantastic honeymoon in York, and our life really took off: quite literally, because Ralph took me to Israel, France, Ireland, Scotland, by plane, and when, I, my career changed direction yet again, and I started to study to become a homeopath and, five years later, I passed my first diplo... sorry, two years later, I passed my first diploma, and then he asked me what I would like to do, and then I jokingly said, 'I'd love to go on Concorde,' and, lo and behold, we had a champagne lunch, and a flight on Concorde, which I will never forget, as long as I live, and I'm so pleased that I did it. I only wish I'd bought some souvenirs that day, because they would have been worth quite a lot of money.

*You referred earlier, Lin, to a book ... tell you what, sorry...*

[End of Tape 6 Side B]

**Tape 7 Side A [Track 11]**

*OK. You referred earlier on, Lin, to your book, Inner Vision.*

Mm hm.

*What were the circumstances of, of getting that, well, completed and published, indeed?*

[Clears throat.] Well, Dr Denis Duncan, the man I spoke about earlier, was involved with a publishing house, and they commissioned me to write a book, about my life, and disability, but, looking at it from a Christian perspective, and so, the book was entitled *Inner Vision*, and it was published by Arthur James Limited, in 1990, so it's the second, the second book that I'd had published, and I don't, I don't think there's anything more thrilling than, to work on something for a year, and then, to see it in its finished book form, and, you know, have it in your hand. It's just amazing.

*And, what, what, for you, is the, is the core message of, of that book?*

The core message. Well ... that you have to keep your faith, through adversity, and, in what's happened to me in the last three years, I've found it very, very hard to keep my faith, because... I had an incident on a plane, which has dramatically changed my life, and I have, I have my own personal Calvary every single day, with acute pain, particularly when I get up in the mornings, and... I just feel quite numbed by the lack of support, that the Church has given. They preach about community outreach, and getting alongside people, and sharing in their suffering, but in reality, that doesn't seem to happen, and people with disabilities are great vehicles, for pious people to preach over, and pray over, when all we want is to be, included in general worship, and treated as an equal, human being. This injury, on the aeroplane, came out of work that Ralph and I did together, in our married life. We'd gone away on business trips and holidays, stayed in various hotels, and come back, feeling absolutely shattered, because the facilities were so bad, and on one such trip, I said to Ralph, 'This can't go

on. We've got to do something, to change these circumstances. It's no good, sitting in a corner, moaning about the situation, if you're not prepared, to do something to create change.' And I said to Ralph, 'When I die, I want any money I have, to be put into a trust fund, to adapt hotel bedrooms and the like, for people with disabilities,' and he said, 'Fine, I think that's a good idea. Let's talk to our solicitor,' and we went to see him, and he's a Ilford Rotarian, and he'd known me for a very long time, since I was 14, and here I was, well I'd be 39 at the time, and I told him about this charitable trust that I wanted to set up, and he said, 'Yes, I, I, I can do that for you, but come off it Berwick, why don't you do it in your life-time, when you can over-see the work, and use your expertise, and your double disability to good effect?' And we talked about it, and thought that that was a good idea, and we got a team of Christian friends together, each with their own particular gift. I remember that first evening, there was a person with secretarial skills, there was a social worker, there was a builder, an electrician, there was me, there was a representative of the Methodist Church: there was eight of us, sitting round a table, and we put £1,100 in a pot, to try and create a registered charity, and on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1989, the Lin Berwick Trust was, was born, and in April, 1990, we became a registered charity, and we started raising money. The idea was to find a building, and adapt it, but I quickly realised that, if we adapted a building, a, we'd have to have the money up front, to buy it, and b, we would just be in a compromise situation again. We could only adapt, as much as the building would allow, so we decided to scrap that idea, and purpose-build, and when we've got £27,000 in the bank, and Ralph and I had visited heaps of places like church, church women's meetings, and preaching, and any fundraising thing that we could do, and we got 27,000 in the bank, we went out looking, and we looked at 47 plots of land, well, our, members of our team did, and we got them down to three, and Ralph and I went to look at three of them, and the land cost £23,866, and the time we paid the legal charges, and Stamp Duty, and the all the rest of it, we had £40 left in the bank, and our then treasurer resigned, on the basis that he thought we were going, we were being irresponsible, but Denis Duncan, who I spoke of earlier, became our Vice President: I was President Founder, and he spoke about 'doing something beautiful and irresponsible for God', so we bought this piece of land, on which our, then treasurer called it 'a piddling little piece of land', which it wasn't, it was almost half

an acre, and we built the Lin Berwick Trust first holiday home, and it's got every conceivable disability amenity that you could imagine, like a toilet that washes and dries, a bath with its own built-in hoist, overhead hoist, wheelchair-accessible shower, beds that raise, tilt and tip, reclining armchairs, a talking microwave oven, smoke alarms for the deaf: we've tried to think of everything, and, since 1977, the cottage has been al, almost fully booked, or certainly fully booked, during the summer months, and, and the winter months we use, by and large, for maintenance.

*This is in Norfolk, is it?*

This is in East Harling, Norfolk, and it's a wonderful achievement, it's £170,000, we raised that money from scratch: nobody knew anything about us. They gave their money, not knowing whether we were genuine or not, and it was largely done, by me, going out, talking to people, communicating with them. Right from the time that I started this charity, I had an ambition, which was cottages, north, south, east, west, and one abroad, one day. Well, we've got one in East Anglia: we're now building our second property, on the Duke and Duchess of Hamilton's estate, in Dirleton, North Berwick, East Lothian: very appropriate, and we hope that that will be ready for the 2006 holiday season, and it's set in wonderful woodland, and it's got deer and all kinds of things nearby, it's fairly close to the sea, and a wonderful village, and it's just 30 miles from Edinburgh, and it's an al... almost half a million pound project, and I feel incredibly proud, of what we've started, round our kitchen table, 15 years ago, to what we've got now. For that work, I was given an Honorary Doctorate in Civil Law, by the University of East Anglia and Suffolk College, in 2002. I was one of the Women of the Year, in 2002. I didn't actually win: Paula Radcliffe won that day, but it was still very nice and, to be honoured, to attend the Woman of the Year Luncheon, and in 2003, I was made an MBE in Her Majesty's Birthday Honours. I was absolutely amazed, to get the letter from the Prime Minister, and I had a wonderful day, at Buckingham Palace. I'm deeply proud of my MBE, and all that it represents, because it says to me, and to people with disabilities in general, 'Don't let other people write you off, because you have a right to be in this world, and you have a right to take your place in Society, along with any other human being.'

*What was the award actually for, Lin? What was the citation?*

For services to the disabled, but it was, by and large, for my work with the Lin Berwick Trust: and a tremendous privilege, and now, I'm facing a very difficult court case, over my incident on an aeroplane, very poor manual handling, in fact, no, no manual handling, really. I don't know what my future holds: I think my future is gonna to be quite bleak, but, nevertheless, I now spend much of my working life, transcribing books into Braille, using a computer, and very large Braille printers, and I work for local authorities or anybody else, that wants the printed literature put into Braille, and, with each book that I do, I feel as if I'm sort of banging the hammer for justice and equality, because, with every book, we're putting visually-impaired people on a par with sighted people, and that, to me, is absolutely wonderful. I don't know what the future will hold for the Lin Berwick Trust, but we are already thinking about property number three, so we ain't dead yet!

*And you referred earlier to another strand of what you do; that of being a homeopath.*

Mm hm.

*What were the circumstances of that?*

The circumstances, really, was having, very bad reaction to conventional drugs. I have my own theory, and that is that I think, due to the damage to the brain, caused by cerebral palsy, that, when they test drugs on a normal brain, and then they give it to someone with cp, the reaction seems to be out of all proportion to, to what able-bodied people experience, and so I thought, 'Well, this is a, a science that has been going for more than 250 years: it's helped a tremendous amount of people, it treats people according to the Law of the Similium [similar]: treating like with like, and it also treats according to the law of the minimum dose, so the smallest, infinitesimal dose of anything is better than the sledgehammer principle of 'aliphatic medicine'. Now I'm not saying that people should stop conventional medicine, and use nothing but alternatives: of course not, but the alternative name for this type of therapy is 'complementary medicine' and that's what it should be: it should be complementing

conventional drugs, and, if a cure can be effected, by using homeopathy instead of antibiotics, or whatever, then, let's go for it. Let's treat our bodies with as much respect on the inside as we try to do on [laughs] the outside, and I'm a great believer of it, and Prince Charles is a, the President of the Society of Homeopaths, and all of the Royal Family use homeopathic medicine, and, I'm sure, if it was mumbo-jumbo, they wouldn't be using it, so, you know, and, and what I'd love to do, if ever I won, or came into a large sum of money, I would love to set up a foundation, that offers people with disabilities, the right to use alternative therapy, such as reflexology, acupuncture, aromatherapy, homeopathy, and other complementary medicines, and, who knows, I don't know what the future holds: as I say, on a personal level, I think it's going to be fairly bleak, but I'm gonna keep striving until I die, and then I hope, that on my tombstone it will say, 'At least she tried, while she was here.' [Sniffs. Laughs?]

*And is, what would you say is, is... the driving force that gets you up in the morning?*

Well, that driving force that gets me up in the morning, becoming ever more difficult, because the pain levels are disgusting, and I almost don't want to start the day, but I've always had a philosophy of, I live each day as though it were my last, and that's not out of any sense of morbidity, it is that I want to make a day count, I want to do something for somebody else, and I want to do something beautiful for God, and make a difference.

*How do you believe attitudes, generally, to disability may have changed over the years?*

They have changed, for the better. They've still got a long way to go, and I think if, certain groups of people with disabilities are not careful, they're going to use the Disability Discrimination Act like a bludgeoning hammer, and they're going to report people, and make things really difficult, so, instead of the DDA being a helpful guideline, and, and people working in partnership, it will alienate so many people, if it's not used wisely, though of course, what the DDA is trying to do, is right and

proper. The difficulty is, are phrases like 'reasonable adjustment': how do you define what is reasonable adjustment, under the Act? I don't know. The world is getting better, the world is getting less prejudicial, but, able-bodied and non able-bodied alike, we should look at the potential within every human being, not seeing the problems, but what they can do, rather than what they can't do, and we should be enablers, to help that person achieve as much as they possibly can. I was absolutely devastated in my life, when, in 1997, my darling husband, Ralph, was diagnosed with Parkinson's. We don't know what the future holds for him. He is becoming more disabled, and in the year 2002, he had two artificial knees, and he needs help and care, in his own right, but he's still providing, by and large, 24-7 care, for me. We have 24-7 support, from another source, when I can afford it, but this juxtaposition, between wanting to work, and needing care, is absolutely horrendous. It would be much, much simpler, if I sat in a corner, and I became a feeding and shitting machine, because that's what Society wants me to become, because they can tick their little boxes, and 'deal with me', in quotes. I had a social worker here, come to see me, one day, when Ralph was going into hospital, and they said, 'All we can do, we can pad up your bed, and you can deliberately wet yourself, and we'll clean you up in the morning,' and I said, 'If you force me into that position, I will take you to the Court of Human Rights,' and the social worker looked at me and he said, 'You would, wouldn't you?' and I said, 'Read my lips. I have never deliberately wet a bed, and I'm not going to start now,' and to force people into those kind of indignities, or catheterisation, because it's more cost-effective, 'cause they don't have to get up, get the person up in the night, leave alone whether they need catheterisation, and they need... the one thing they don't need, is a kidney infection, or a bladder infection, due to the catheter. So what about dignity and human rights there? I'm in a position now, where I am fighting, simply to survive, and I am working my butt off, to earn money, to pay for care, and keep my dignity, as someone who wants to work, has the intelligence to work, and the ability to work, and yet I'm being gradually forced more and more, into a corner, and Scope, sadly, thinks it's far more emotive to look after children, up to the age of 16, because they get more money. I have a message to Scope, which is, 'The care of people, in their forties, and beyond, when they are approaching middle age, and old age and infirmity, is far, far harder.' Thanks to medical science, and

medical help and support, people with cerebral palsy are living way beyond the original expectations. I was talking to my parents the other day, and my mother said, that I was expected to live, no longer than 40. Well, I'm very nearly 55: 55 on 18<sup>th</sup> March, and I hope, despite it all, I will be able to live for a few more years. I would like to get involved on a political level, and try and create change from within, because it's no good, just bemoaning our fate: we have to state to powers that be, such as Scope, that care in the community isn't working, and the cost of care is probably the most, biggest burden on the health service, and people with disabilities are an awfully good vehicle for care agencies and carers to make sums of monies on their backs that are ... just incredible. How do you get a figure of £1,200 a week, for helping someone to go to the loo, go out in a car, have a meal and wash and dress? That seems a phenomenal sum of money, and, you know, just adding noughts to a problem, and not dealing with it, is very wrong. The local communities have closed down many residential care establishments, some, for people with disabilities. Now, I'm not advocating, in general, that people with disabilities should go into a care home: of course I'm not. It's the one thing I would absolutely detest: just sitting, idly, looking out of a window, if I could, and waiting for the next toilet stop, or the next meal break, but at least, when people went into residential care, if it was a good place, they had companionship, they got taken out, and they got the kind of medical support they needed, but now, they're waiting for someone to come in and, and put them on the toilet, and wipe their bottom, and, if they're lucky, put, put to bed between seven o'clock and ten o'clock. I don't want that for me: when it's my time to go, I want to go with dignity and pride, of what, what I've been able to achieve, and Scope has got to take on board, that there are plenty of people, in middle age, who are struggling with joint deformity and arthritis, and pain and discomfortshire, and they would get a lot more street credibility, if they looked after those, as much as they looked after young children.

*Do you feel that the changes in the population, then, may, may have caught Scope  
...I'll turn*

[End of Tape 7 Side A]

**Tape 7 Side B [Track 12]**

*We have, now, as you were saying earlier, ever more numbers of people with cerebral palsy, in maturity, and into older age years; so you feel, do you, that there is, thus far then, an unmet recognition of that demographic change?*

There certainly is, because I certainly can't get any hope, help from Scope for all my weekly expenses. I've had no support on the employment side. I've done all mine by Manpower Services and Jobcentre Plus. I've never been able to go to Scope for any practical help. They don't even help provide someone to help me clean my house, so have I got to sit here, and live in a dirty hovel, just because I'm disabled, just because I can't afford care? Or I need a special bed, or a special pressure cushion, or whatever it might be, some of which is provided by the state, but not all of it.

*Scope is quite well known for being the first major disability organisation with ... I think Ralph's just coming back in. Sorry. With, Scope is quite well-known for being the first major disability organisation with membership representation. What are your general views on that trend, within organisations?*

I think it's right and proper that we have service user groups, if that's what you mean. I hate the term, but, all too often, I think that these groups are tokenism, and they're not putting people with disabilities higher up on the board. I would love, to be involved with Scope [sound of door closing] in a managerial level, but it will never happen, because I'm probably too out-spoken, and what Scope wants, is for people with cerebral palsy to be ... vehicles, by which they get money into their organisation, and Scope is one of the major charities in this compa... country, but it's also become a business now. It's not working in the way that it was nor... originally set up, and that's a great pity, because I do believe that it's lost a lot of its focus, and you don't just leave people with cp on the scrapheap, just because they're in their forties and fifties; they still have a right, to have a duty of care given to them. If they've been objects of fundraising in earlier life, they should be objects of fundraising, now.

*Scope is also aiming to be the, become one of the largest employers of people with disabilities, through a, a, a policy of, wherever possible, recruiting people with disabilities. What are your, what are your reflections on that?*

Well, if they meet that aim, then I'm very pleased for them, and I'm even more pleased for the people that are going to get jobs as a result, as long as they get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, and again, not giving them pittance of money, in sheltered workshops, where their output is often as good as anybody else: not, not all the time, I admit, but, in a lot of cases, and they're walking away, with less than a standard working wage. I hope that practice has changed, but by and large, I don't think it has: it's still going on.

*And, and today, if you were able to, if you were able to greet a young Lin Berwick, what do you think that the situation would be, today, for a, a young Lin Berwick, just setting out?*

I think I'd get plenty of help, up to the age of 16, as it stands, but beyond that, I think I'd be floundering, and if it wasn't for my own sheer determination, I'd have been pushed on the scrapheap, especially when I became visually-impaired, because The Spastics Society didn't want to know, and The Blind Society didn't want to know at the time, the RNIB, and The, and 'The Spastics Society', as it then was, were battling it out between them, and I was piggy in the middle. Well, fortunately, I've got belligerent parents, and I'm fairly belligerent myself, and we got movement, but if we'd have been the type who sort of sat in a corner and said, 'Oh well, they're saying they can't help us,' then that's exactly what would have happened, and that's where I think it's, it's so sad, so the message, that I want people to take away, is 'Fight for the fact that you're here. Be proud of yourself. Don't apologise for being who you are, and remember you have your rights, to be in this world, like any other person.'

*You referred earlier, Lin, to your, the fact that you've written several books. What was your first book, and what did that involve?*

My first book was called *Undefeated*. It was published by The Epworth Press, and neither of these books are in print now, but they are in The British Library [laughs], which is great.

*And Undefeated is a book, a biog..., a volume of autobiography, is it?*

Yes, it took me up to the age of 26.

*And, and in your work that you do, do, do you feel that you have, then, particular gifts which make it imperative to you, to, to do the work that you do?*

I feel very much a spokesman, or spokesperson, on behalf of those people who can't speak up for themselves. I mean, I am incredibly lucky, as somebody with CP [cerebral palsy], to have normal speech, and I have a good brain, and I can articulate, the views and the needs of other people with disabilities: I want to do that. I want my voice to be the medium by which I still carry on doing God's work, 'cause the body is going to let me down, but hopefully, the voice will still hold up.

*And, and what, do you believe, has been your greatest achievement?*

Well, apart from marrying Ralph, [laughs] because, without him, the work of the Lin Berwick Trust would never have happened. He's been, the man in the background, a tremendous supporter, the man who said, 'If you've got an idea, go for it.' He has never held me back, never said, 'This is a totally ridiculous idea: don't be stupid, you can't do it.' He has given me my head, and he's supported me, even if I made mistakes. You just need one person, to make a difference, and in the latter part of my life, the last 18 years, he's been that person, and despite his own problems, I think he can be justly proud of what he has done.

*One message which is coming through as well is that, in all that you've done, you've had to, to work tremendously hard, to overcome barriers, to assimilate information, to show the outside world what you are capable of...*

Mm hm.

*What, what's your reaction to that?*

Well, I was labelled as 'educationally-subnormal' at the age of five, and it took years to get rid of that label, and I'm saying to people, 'Don't write people with disabilities off: see them as people first, and people with disabilities, secondly, and be an enabler, and help them reach their potential, because you never know where that might lead,' and when I think, of my early beginnings, in the East End of London, from a very poor working-class background: we were a poor working-class family, with middle-class aspirations, and now I think I have a Doctorate, and an MBE, and when I was at Buckingham Palace, standing before the Prince of Wales, I thought, 'Look where I've come. Look how far I've come,' and to some people, an MBE mightn't, not mean very much, but, to me, apart from being a Member of the British Empire, it also means My Blooming Efforts, because it is. I've had to have a, a grit and tenacity, and determination, that I don't, I don't think I've met another person with the same, single-mindedness, that I get something in my head and I have to see it through, and I work and work and work at it, and so far, I've made a success of, virtually everything I've touched, and I hope I've touched a few lives, along the way, in a very positive sense.

*And, and meantime, in terms of the work that you're doing, the, the counselling, and the transcription work, then they remain...*

And homeopathy. [laughs]

*And indeed, homeopathy, they remain, then, the, the main strands of your, of your work, your work for income.*

For income, yes, but if there was anybody listening to these tapes, who thought, 'Here's a person I'd like on my team,' and, you know, felt that I could really do something useful, and positive, to make a difference. I mean, I would like it to be

paid work, because I don't think people with disabilities should be de... devalued and always be expected to do what they do, for love, because why should they? They're giving up their time and their energy, and OK, it's their choice, I know that, as is my choice to do this work for Scope, but I do think it's morally wrong, to assume, because a person has disability, that they have no right to financial remuneration, because not all people with disabilities are on benefits. I'm self-employed, and what time I give, means that I can't work for anything else, but again, that's my, my choice: life is not all about making money, but while you need care ...

[Phone rings. Break in recording].

*Right. Now Lin, in, in living your life, if you like, you've been, to a greater or lesser extent, in the, in the public eye...*

Mm hm.

*Lin, recently, part of that, was a film for, made for television: what were the circumstances of that, that film?*

It was part of the *Real Life* documentary series on ITV, and it was called, 'Lin and Ralph, a Love Story', and it was an hour-long documentary, and the purpose of the documentary was to show how, love can still flourish, through adversity, and it shows the pressures put onto both carers and client, alike, because nobody wants to put pressures on their carer, and dehumanise them just into someone who, who does things for you, and the film was very well-received, and there is also going to be a slightly longer version, because the TV version takes into account advertisements, so it cuts it down to 49 minutes and 30 seconds, but there is an hour-long version of 'Lin and Ralph, a Love Story', which is just coming out, now.

*And is this coming out on video, or, or DVD?*

Well, it's just been released by the film company, and I'm not quite sure what they're going to do with it, at the moment, but I know it's being sold to other countries with a

bit of luck, and it will just highlight a lot of the issues, and a lot of the pressure, and many people will also know me as the DN telephone counsellor.

*'DN': 'Disability Now', we should say.*

'Disability Now' telephone counsellor. I have run the line, single-handedly since 1986, and I think I've saved quite a few people from suicide in that time, certainly from despair, and although the counselling line runs from Monday evenings, from six p.m. to ten, and Thursday afternoons, from one p.m. to five, I'm afraid, when people are in trouble, they don't take any notice of time, and I get calls at midnight, three in the morning, all sorts of things, and I've never refused to take a call, no matter what I was doing, unless it was something like a hospital appointment that I was chasing up, or ... and I've always made myself available to, to others, and I hope that those who have used the line will think that I, I did a good job.

*And, in looking back on your life, Lin, if you were [laughs] writing, if you like, your, your obituary, if you like, what, what words would you describe, how would you describe yourself?*

'Her immo, her immobility was a special gift, because it gave her time, to stop, and get alongside others, and share in their pain, and feel their grief, and share in their successes.' Life is too busy, and sometimes we just need, to stop. Disability can often be the vehicle by which we do that.

*Yeah. OK then, well thank you, for, for taking the time to talk to us.*

My pleasure.

[End of Tape 7 Side B]