



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

Robin Good  
Interviewed by Phil Hills

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## Interview Summary Sheet

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<b>Interviewee's forename:</b>	Robin	<b>Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Occupation:</b>		<b>Date and place of birth:</b>	1938, Wembley
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**Track 1 [Tape 1 Side A]**

*Portreath, Robin.*

Yes.

*What time did you go?*

We go between quarter past and half past seven.

*And what did you have to eat?*

Prawn cocktail.

*Prawn cocktail.*

Oh yes, I started with soup.

*Soup?*

And sweet and coffee.

*Yeah. Right we'll try that a minute.*

We had a nice chat with our friends.

[Tape is interrupted by previous recording.]

*Right, this is Phil Hills interviewing Robin Good on November 9th 2004. Right Robin, I got here you were born on the 29th of May 1938.*

'38 yes, '38.

1938?

Yeah.

*And where were you born?*

In Wembley. Was Middlesex then, North London.

*And your parents?*

What?

*What were your parents called?*

Ronnie and Mary Good.

*And what were your earliest memories?*

Hmm?

*What's your earliest... can you remember that far back?*

I can remember having exercises given to me.

*And how old would you have been?*

And I can remember in the wartime they used to have exercises, you know. My mother used to do the exercise to the war to the radio in the... I used to hear this going on and one night, I don't know I may have been naughty in the night but I always joined her but just that previous night I'd been naughty or something and I heard them going on. But we used to... And then she would give me exercises, then I'd join my

father, watch him shave before breakfast. He was a fully employed musician then, in the BBC symphony orchestra.

*Really?*

Yes.

*What did he play?*

Violin.

*And how long was he in the orchestra?*

Well then he went freelance after it.

*Ah right. How long was he playing for the orchestra?*

I can't remember, I mean the thing is it may have been in the fifties he went freelance.

*So he's a full time musician?*

Yes.

*And was your mother interested in music?*

She loved it, but she couldn't, she played the piano a bit, she loved it. He used to tell us about it, my brother and me.

*So at home you had lots of records?*

Yes, oh yes. I didn't start to feel the love, it was when I went to boarding school I grew to love it more you know.

*At first you didn't...*

Well when I hadn't heard much, when we used to have social evening they used to play music to us, but my parents took us to children's concerts, you know, and they explain it to you.

*And the music concerts in concert halls in London?*

Yes.

*It's for children?*

For children [both talking together]. It is for children. Things like Peter and the Wolf which are easy to understand.

*Did you like that? Did that inspire you?*

Yes, yes.

*And did you have musicians come to your home?*

We had quartet evenings,

*Mm.*

and then when my mother bought a piano it added to our... it extended our musical evenings. We had piano quartets as well and it was through thinking of me, it'd be nice for me to learn. I did do a bit of piano playing at the school where I met Julie Andrews.

*Julie Andrews?*

Yes. They told me, after war.

*The Sound of Music?*

After the war was over we went to a school, they took boys up to eight you know and well I didn't go there till I we went on to the prep school and I was nearly 10 then. And, my mother saw about our education. When I was five I went to a school – Manor Road – until we were evacuated, in '44.

*Where were you evacuated?*

Wiltshire.

*Was that, er?*

By train.

*By train. Ummm. So you went with your mum?*

There wasn't any petrol about [both talking together].

*So you went with your mum?*

We all went together.

*How many? Was there sisters, brothers?*

Yeah. My brother.

*Tim?*



Yes. He was only a baby, he was born in the middle, he was born 1942.

*So he's younger than you?*

Yes. I always thought it was risky having another child after me, but then the specialist said it was best for me, a help to me, if I had a brother or something. There were difficulties, communications problem, so in August Tim was born the same day as Anne's birthday, August the seventh '42.

*So how did you find things once Tim had been born, in the family? How did you find things?*

We got on very well.

*You enjoyed having a baby brother?*

Yes. I used to tickle him, [they laugh] play with him.

*And did you help each other?*

Yes.

*Did you? So, what happened with your legs then?*

I had always had prob [problems]. I had exercises on [them?], I had to wear night splints when I was [a]

*Night splints?*

little boy. That gave me hell though, you know, to stretch my foot.

*Leg irons? You had to have cal [callipers]?*

Yes I had those.

*And night splits – they hurt, they rubbed on your leg and made them sore,*

No they stretched my tendon.

*cos they were stretching? [Both talking together.] And how long did you have to wear those?*

No, but this is what you wore at night in bed.

*Right.*

I used to have what they call a cradle to take the weight of the bedclothes off my leg.

*A cradle?*

Yes that is the shape the -

*So, what other things do you remember as a young child? You went to Wiltshire.*

I remember going to Manchester. My mother went to stay with my godfather and his wife, and took me at Manchester, by train.

*That's always stood out?*

Hm?

*Has that always stood out?*

Hmm?

*Going to Manchester?*

Yeah.

*As a journey.*

They had a son called Hugh. [Pause.]

*So going back to Lon –*

She - [both talking together]

*Sorry, go on.*

My Aunt Doreen, she knew how hard my mother worked on me. She was asking later on in, very much later on in my life, how my walking was and she said I had a bit of a limp and she said Mary, if it wasn't for her I might not have walked.

*At all. Right. But she really -*

But I think I would have, I mean, I had a dog called Burly, on wheels, my mother christened my toys and I used to push him around and we had a playpen so that I could pull myself up.

*Right. Burly was a -*

*Mmm?*

*he's quite a large dog was he?*

No, it was on wheels. [They laugh.]

*Just looking at -*

I had a teddy bear [both talking together]

*Yeah.*

I liked taking him to bed with me.

*Yeah, a nice big one. Do you remember the second world war at all?*

I remember the time, yes.

*Did it frighten you?*

A bit. [Pause.] We had an air raid shelter in the sitting room I think, the dining room.  
But in Beckenham I know...

*Hmm. Take -*

... I remember seeing these barrage balloons in the air. Have you heard of them?

*Mm.*

What did they do though? Do they attack?

*No, I'm not quite sure actually quite [laughs]... I know they had them. But I suppose they're security markers or something, I don't know.*

They're what?

*For security, I suppose. I dunno quite what they were for.*

Well I -

*Yeah.*

When we moved over to Beckenham we didn't stay there very long. In '44 we had to get out, the raids came to London and even Beckenham [coughs]. My father got us out in one day.

*It's quite some job then?*

Yeah and we were living in flats then and all the other members of the flats in the Knowle [ph], they came down with us. [Guttural sounds.]

*Do you want a handkerchief?*

Hmm?

*Do you want a handkerchief?*

Handkerchief?

*Hmm. Do you want a handkerchief?*

I'm all right.

*You're OK. Right.*

[Coughing.] What's the time now?

*Be about quarter to 10, I should think.*

What time I'm going?

*Hmm?*

What time I'm going?

*About eleven. D'you -*

Who's taking me? [both talk at once]

*Mike. So, anything else you remember about London? You moved to Beckenham.*

[Laboured breathing.] I remember, in Beckenham yes, I remember the first night in Beckenham.

*Was there something special about that?*

It's nice being in a new flat you know

*And quieter I s'pose*

Yeah

*Yeah. [Both talking together.] Was it a bit happier there?*

We liked Wembley though. But my father was too near his work mates [coughing]. A lot of musicians lived around Wembley.

*So you continued to go to concerts?*

Yeah.

*So when you went down to Wiltshire?*

Yeah.

*What did your father do down there, did he cont - ?*

He was in the airforce.

*Was in the - ?*

But he was grounded [coughs] he didn't pass the hearing test.

*Right. But did he manage to still do some music? Did he still practice?*

He kept the music up, yeah [coughs].

*And did you still have musical evenings at home?*

After the war, yes.

*Uh hmm. And when did you start going to school?*

Probably, I mean, before the war broke. My education was continued after war, from when I was seven and a half [spoken breathlessly].

*Now, I'm going to stop a minute. [Break in recording.] Yep, go on.*

We had, there was a big chest of drawers where we were staying in Wiltshire. I don't know how, somehow it fell on top of us.

*Oh my god [laughs].*

Our mother was saying, "children are quiet." A massive chest of drawers, you know, one of these big ones.

*Did it hurt you?*

I can't remember that much.

*Gosh.*

But Tim used to... We got ourselves up in the mud once in the woods. Another time we set a piece of paper alight, another one from me. And then there was... [laughs]

*You got up to all sorts of antics.*

Yes.

*And did you have friends?*

We had friends in the Knowle yes. Suzanne we had, an Irish, we had the O'Brien's, I was very fond of Jane, Tim and I, and then there were two boys, Myra and John and then Charles.

*So you knew quite a lot of children?*

Yes, yes we did. It was a big garden.

*And you all played together?*

Yes and I had a scooter, you know like children have to scoot up and down the... not like today's are, it was a bit heavier, they seem to be much lighter today.

*Yeah.*



[Pause.] I know before we moved to Beckenham, Tim had a car and I had a tricycle for quite a while, for five years and Tim was pushing me. [Break in recording.]

*Yep.*

And he was pushing me on the tricycle and the car was red, it had a red pedal car.

*And that's what you got about in around the garden and around the house. How old were you then?*

I was five when I had the bike up to five (a tricycle). From two till five, I s'pose.

*So who did you see the most of; your brother, your mother or your dad? Did you have a good relationship with your dad?*

How do [you] mean a - ?

*On an everyday level, who did you see the most? Your mum? Did you see everybody?*

I saw mum and my father, we used to come home, I saw quite a lot of him.

*In the evenings?*

Yes.

*And he would play with you?*

Mm.

*And?*

I remember going to Weston.

*Weston-Super-Mare?*

After the war ended.

*And what was the village like in Wiltshire?*

Huh?

*What was the village like in Wiltshire?*

It was Yatesbury [ph] and all the address was 14, Yatesbury, you know, it was one street.

*Was it friendly?*

Yes, oh I s'pose so. I don't know. We always went back years afterwards to see our wartime friends. Broke the journey to come.

*Did it have shops?*

Hmm?

*Did it have shops?*

Yes.

*Did you get to know people in the shops?*

Not really.

*Milkman?*

Don't remember a milkman.

*Postman?*

We would have had cartoned milk I think. I don't remember a postman till long time afterwards.

*And did you have plenty of food on the table?*

Well it was wartime – there wasn't much food about then. I remember the cereals we had, fruit grain in a tin, and a yellow packet of cereals, and a light bloater paste for tea and shepherds pie on the main meal.

*Was that your favourite?*

Yes.

*Were you comfortable? Did you have a comfortable bed?*

I can't remember that, I mean [laughter] I think it was.

*But you went to some places like Weston-Super-Mare?*

Yes. We slept in a bunk bed once [coughing].

*Have far did your father have to go for services?*

He didn't have far to go.

*Camp was quite near. Did he take you to the camp?*

We went for Christmas parties and they made a wooden train for me and a bear for Tim. He screamed – he wanted the train.

*Oh.*

I s'pect we shared afterwards though..

[Laughs.] *Yeah.*

He was mad on trains in those days.

*Like boys were.*

Yes [clears throat].

*Have you still got it?*

No.

*Oh, got lost did it?*

I don't know what happened to our toys. My mother gave me a pale blue desk the Christmas we went down there, [coughs] where we stayed. But one day the Strattons [ph] had two adolescent girls and another one was born, Philippa, very much later who became my mother's godchild [coughs] but the older girls helped me with my lessons [coughs and takes a drink].

*Did you go to a school there?*

No I didn't.

*But how long were you there?*

We were in Wiltshire for a year till the end of the war. I remember VE Day [Victory in Europe Day]. [Breathless.]

*Was that a big celebration?*

Mm. Yes.

*And did the whole village come out?*

We were in Beckenham then.

*Oh right. So this is going back again, right?*

We were back home. I know when I lost something one day (my mother said) and I used to pretend the crochet needle was a violin bow and later on I had violin lessons and this crochet needle was missing, my father found a wide needle, it wouldn't do. It had to be, my mother came in with the right one [coughs].

*How did the violin lessons go, did you learn to play?*

I was getting along quite nicely until it was difficult for me [coughs].

*Physically?*

Yeah.

*But would you have liked to have been a musician? Would you have liked to have been able to play in - ?*

[Coughs.] Yeah [coughs repeatedly].

*So, you went back to London after Wiltshire, did you?*

Yes. We lived near to London till we came down to Cornwall. [Coughs again.]

*What year did you come down to Cornwall?*

1971 I went to Clacton. You see I had a fortnight; I stayed at friends in Hampshire.

*Hold it Robin we're making a big gap here. After the war, you went back to London?*

Yeah.

*Right. Where did you go to London, after the war?*

We stayed in London for 28 years [coughs].

*Where did you live?*

[Coughs] Beckenham, until - [Coughs.]

*And you had your own house?*

Yes. After our great aunts died, we had a family home in the Isle of Wight and it would have been ours but we needed some money for a house, you see.

*Uh hmm.*

We were living in flats until '53.

*So did you used to go down to the Isle of Wight?*

We had a nice holiday there yes, in '48 when I was 10 and Tim was six. And I remember the coloured sands, you could get a tube of coloured sands.

*Oh the Arum sands, isn't it?*

That's right

*Yes, something like that yeah.* [Both talking together.]

And I remember the trams there; the green trams.

*And who actually lived there, in the house?*

Pardon?

*It was a family home you said?*

No we had aunts down there

*Aunts?*

Yes we did visit them. Aunty Lou and Aunty Dick I don't know whether they were expecting a boy at the time they still called it... We didn't know them very well but my Aunt Sheila used to go down a lot.

*And you went down in the summer?*

Summertime yes.

*And you looked forward to that?*

I enjoyed it. Course before that we had a holiday in the Isle, Sandown, nearby. That was '46.

*And were they hot? Do you remember?*

They were nice hot long [summers]. Yes the weather was [nice], fortnight at a stretch you know, you got nice weather.

*And how were you getting about at this time?*

Not very well. I could...

*Were you walking a bit?*

I was walking, yes. I could walk then.

*But did you need some support?*

I was played in the garden. I didn't have a frame then.

*So you were able to walk around?*

Yeah.

*And did you have friends in the Isle of Wight? Did you make friends down there? A child? Other children?*

One or two children, yes. [Coughs.]

*And back in London you continued going to school in London?*

At the Prep school.



*It was a Prep school?*

Clare [ph] House. Well it's for boys, preparing them for public school, but I couldn't have done that.

*Clare House?*

Yes, boys' school.

*Were teachers good?*

Yes.

*Did you get bullied?*

Yes I did. I mentioned that when I did it, when we did our reminiscence course. I told them I was bullied, they said I'd been to various schools where I did experience bullying.

*How did the bullying take place?*

How?

*What happened?*

I was attacked.

*What, in the playground?*

Can't remem [remember], might have been [coughs].

*Teased? Taunted?*

I know they used to say to me, taunting a chant, 'Robin Bad was so sad when he saw his dad' [clears throat] and then they asked me why [coughs].

*But were they good -*

You know the - [Both talk together.]

Pardon?

*Go on.*

When my mother was expecting Tim I was frightened by a great aunt's maid and apparently she frightened me when she gave me a hair wash, cos when I came home I was terrified [clears throat] and she used to wear false teeth and then frighten me with them. [Interviewer laughs.] [Coughs.]

*So what did you do at school?*

[Coughs.]

*Have a bit more water. [Break in recording.] Your mother's sister?*

She was one of six [clears throat] – four sisters and one brother [coughs]. It was Aunty Sheila I knew the most.

*Aunt Sheila?*

Yeah.

*And she lived in London?*

Yes, she had a good job in London. She had a flat. [Breathless.]

*Not far from you?*

What?

*She had a flat not far from you?*

I think she lived Wembley Park. Yes she did. [Breathing noisily.]

*And mum used to take you over?*

Sheila used to come and [take?] us... She was clever.

*[Rustle of papers.] Did you have a car at that time?*

Yes we had a car, petrol. What was it? Income tax was one and six or something.  
Eleven pounds my father was earning then.

*Uh hmm.*

And you could run a car like that [clears throat]. They found it hard [coughs] though.  
We had a Woolsey Wasp.

*A Woolsey Wasp? So you managed to go off in the car for trips?*

Yes.

*And did you have to go into hospital during that time? [Papers rustling.]*

I used to have exercises on a Wednesday afternoon. Actually to stay in hospital that was. I didn't have till I was four...

[End of Track 1]

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

*Right, yes, sorry Robin.*

Hmm?

*What were you saying?*

I thought you were going to play it back.

*No, no.*

I had a little girlfriend next door. We had our neighbours – Marjory and Peter had two children, two girls, and I was fond of Patricia.

*[Laughs.] She's a sort of childhood sweetheart?*

[Laughs.] I liked them.

*So you were never short of friends?*

No. [Laughs.]

*So any - [both talking together]. Go on.*

She was very nice. Well Aunt Marjory was fond of me for a long time. I've contacted Patricia since. She never married. I might of married her perhaps but I didn't. She never married

*That something you'd have liked? [Both talking together.]*

But she adopted children.

*But you've kept in contact?*

Not [clears throat] not very often.

*Is she still -*

Spoke on the phone some - [both talking together]

*Have you been in contact recently?*

I've got her address. No I haven't.

*Is it worth trying to contact her again?*

Yes, I will.

*[Rustling of papers.] When was the last time you contacted her?*

But her father – quite a few years – her father died in 1959. He was ill. He went. Peter I think he was called. Oh well I'd... [inaudible]

*Hmm OK. Where's it looks like Timothy?*

He got attached to a little girl at Woodbrooke [ph], called Dawn, but she wouldn't have anything to do with him.

*Oh dear.*

[Laughs.] She had blonde hair. Fair.

*So what's your father doing now then? What was your father doing?*

He was a musician.

*Hmm. So he's independent musician was he?*

Hmm?

*He's independent? He's self-employed?*

But he's a freelance musician.

*Freelance yeah. So, did you still have lots of musical people coming around to the house?*

Yes.

*And did you have good relationships with them?*

I did yes. But my aunts and uncles were musical. We used to have family reunions and I used to play a bit and Tim used to play. They played charades as well you know – my Aunt Dora arranged this, one of my father's sisters. She was a nurse before she married. Then we had Aunt Vera, Binky, she's still alive I think. She must be the remaining sister left. [Takes a drink.] I used to go, we liked the family reunions. We met a big, quite, we had a nice tea as well. Always on Boxing Day...

*Mmm.*

One Christmas our meal didn't turn up, you know, our chicken, and my mother suggested we went up to Broadcasting House. But we had a good lunch then and the concert afterwards.

*Did you have any well known musicians around to your house?*

Hmm?

*Was there any well known musicians that came to your house? Any well known names?*

They knew Henry Wood. You know, who started the Proms?

*Mmm. Did you go to the Proms?*

Yes I did. A long time afterwards.

*But did he visit your house?*

Who?

*Henry Wood?*

I don't remember seeing him. I can't remember a lot about him. [Clears throat.] I've seen photos of him. [Pause.]

*How about your relationship with Tim? Did that, sort of, still - ?*

Hmm?

*How about your relationship with Tim? How was Tim growing up?*

He had stomach ache. He was plagued all the time my mother was carrying him during the raids, you know, he had to cope for it by himself and he suffered with terrible pains. [Clears throat.] He couldn't eat plums. [Takes a drink.]

*How was the house furnished? What did you have? Did you have a big radio?*



We had one with a dial on it, you know, I don't know what the make was. They called it wireless then. With a needle going across, you know.

*Did you?*

It goes circ-, [in circles?], not moving this way, but going round, you know? [Both talking together.]

*Did you have a television?*

We didn't have television until the mid to late fifties. We couldn't afford it. But we did see television when we were living in the flats. We and any other children living nearby used to come up as well, in the lower flats. We used to see children's hour once a week. [Takes a drink.] Course they were [clears throat] mainly Winnie and her mother. S'pose they got it reduced, being pensioners. [Coughs.] We used to like children's television, radio Children's Hour [coughs].

*What, sort of Wooden Tops and things like that?*

No. Like Jennings at School and Cally's [ph] Farm [coughs].

*Cally's - ?*

Farm.

*Farm.*

[Coughs] And The Bell Family; Norman Henry Burns [ph], detective story. [Laughs.] It was always on when we got home from school. [Coughs.]

*Did you have your own bedroom?*

We used to call it the nursery then – that we shared until much later [coughs].

*You shared the room?*

[Coughs].

*You shared a room with Tim?*

Yeah. [Coughs. Break in recording].

*What schools did you go to during this period?*

Up until I joined the Spastics Society I went to the Clare House Prep School. From almost 10, I was nine and 11 months until I left when I was 14, cos I was over the age anyway. My foot was in a bad state [coughs while speaking].

*Your?*

My foot. I needed an operation.

*This was when you were 14?*

Yes.

*And you had a hip operation too, didn't you?*

Much later.

*That's right, that was later, right. So as a child, how did you see yourself? How rare were you, you know, as compared to other children?*

I knew that I was different.

*Did it worry you?*

I don't think so.

*Is that from when you -*

I would have liked to have been able to run a bit [both talking together].

*To run? With the other children?*

Yes.

*But children did do things with you?*

We had... Pardon?

*Sorry, you go on, Robin.*

My mother got for us (I know that) people to help with our schooling, you know, in holiday times, called Beryl. Oh yes, and take us out. We would go to the park or Beckenham Park. I loved the Kelsey [ph] Park; feed the ducks, drakes and...

*That'd be your mum and you and Tim?*

Yes. My friend Anthony remembers that when I was attacked the headmaster picked me up. But I can't remember ever being picked up.

*When you were attacked?*

When I was at the college, at the Prep School.

*How were you attacked?*

I don't know but he said I was crying. [clears throat and takes a drink] I just don't remember that. You'd think I'd remember being picked up wouldn't you?

*Well might be the shock. And how old were you when you joined, not, wasn't Scope [it was previously named The Spastics Society].*

Fourteen.

*Pardon?*

You mean the Scope?

*Hmm.*

I was fourteen and two months. My mother started talking to me, how would I like to go to boarding school as I had problems with communication and I said I'd like it very much. She'd read about the place it was really for a horticultural school, but you learned, you did typing as well but ordinary schooling. But I couldn't go... I had an interview which I passed, I got through, [swallows] I didn't start there until after my period in hospital and then convalescence.

*How long was your period in hospital?*

That was three weeks, then I thought, we went down to my grandparents who lived in Broadstairs...

*Broadstairs in Kent?*

Yes. And then, we used to go down a lot. Then my mother said I couldn't, she wasn't satisfied. They said I could go home, but I could hardly walk. I had to get up the stairs on crutches. And once my mother carried me downstairs over like a sack of coal upside [down], over her shoulder. I didn't master stairs at all. It's frightening; it's not so bad going up on crutches but coming down...

*A long way down, looking.*

Yes. And I [clears throat] had to go back to and from the London Hospital, now called the Royal London Hospital, for checkups. And I had to wear a crepe bandage when I went to the school, for a while.

*A crate?*

Bandage.

*Bandage. To keep your leg - ?*

Yeah.

*Right. And was that successful?*

Dunno. I don't know how long I had it on for. [Clears throat.] I think so. [Coughs.] And this was, what, my first weekend there. Those who could walked to church, but I'd found it very difficult. They had an old army van, you know, for our transport, and they transported anyone in the wheelchairs. I mean two of the older senior girls helped me but it took me a long time to get to church. [Takes a drink and coughs.] But the year after I got there. [Coughs while speaking.]

*After you got there -*

I was confirmed. [Coughs repeatedly.] Do you want to stop?

*No you carry on what you were saying cos it was interesting. You were confirmed...*

In the middle, near the end of the half term, '54, and the Easter term I went home on the Thursday and [coughs] both parents couldn't come. My brother and I drove up, and we used to walk to church, you know, across the common, and I wasn't sure of the way, you know. We got there all right though. And there were other candidates as well.

*So you regularly went to church every week did you?*

Yes we had to anyway. We were compelled, but I enjoyed going to church.

*Is there anything you particularly remember that you liked?*

I liked, well I enjoyed my music lessons there.

*You had music lessons at the church?*

Hmm?

*Had music lessons at the church?*

No. On Saturday afternoon.

*Right.*

When my mother bought a piano. I suffered badly with whooping cough the summer of '54 [takes a drink], and they had somebody who was put in charge, one of the masters put his wife... made her as matron. She took over, this headmistress was very small and she couldn't stand up to Mr Veal [ph]. He was almost running the place and calling himself headmaster. [Laughs.] But I mean this was the time she told me to

swallow what I was coughing up. But another girl had whooping cough at the same time as me, took no notice and got better quicker. [Clears throat.] And the exams were over then (the end of term exams) and I had to stay in till early August, you know, in quarantine. It was then I started piano lessons at home. I'd done a bit of piano [coughs while speaks] at the woodblock where I met Julie Andrews.

*How did you meet Julie Andrews?*

Pardon?

*How did you meet Julie Andrews?*

Well you see my mother told them who we were and she said, 'Oh that's very interesting, we've got a little girl who's very talented.' She was in my class.

*How old would she be?*

She was three years older than me, Julie is.

*And how old were you?*

I was eight, she was 11. She said she remembered me because I was the only boy of the class at the time. The others had gone on ahead of me to the prep school.

*Yeah, a prep school?*

Yeah. Until I was... I liked it then when I went. My last teacher there, Miss Adams, form teacher, and I saw a lot of her after school, almost until I left London. She was quietly spoken, you know, very nice, grey hair.

*How did you see a lot of her, after school?*

Well, after school, yes.

*Well, did she help you more with lessons?*

No I just saw her around.

*Socially?*

Out. She was pleased for me, that I was accepted at that school she knows. It was then I heard about Dr Barnardo's, the children's homes.

*How did you hear about them?*

You know, some people. I just heard about them. The children go who couldn't live at, I didn't know. That's the only children's homes there were then wasn't it?

*I don't know.*

[Clears throat.]

*What interested you about Barnardo's?*

I mean I thought I might join it but I didn't. [Takes a drink.]

*But you went on to boarding school?*

That's right, yeah, after convalescence and my operation, yes. I went January [clears throat] 1953.

*Where was the boarding school?*

In Kent; near Gravesend [clears throat].



*That wasn't too far away for you?*

It was only an hour's travel; my parents could visit me easily. And later on I went home on the Greenline star – they ran the Greenline service that went through Beckenham – I used to go home on that, on a half term. I enjoyed that.

*Right, well we'll end there then and we'll continue from your...*

Yeah [both talking together].

*... boarding school days next time. Is that all right?*

Yeah. [Break in recording.]

*Yeah, I think last week we got as far as Gravesend and you used to catch the train to the boarding school.*

Catch the what?

*The train, to boarding school?*

I went to boarding school, yes.

*At Gravesend.*

Shorne [ph] was the village, four miles from Gravesend.

*Shorne?*

About a bus ride away.

*That's in Kent innit?*

Yeah.

*Hmm.*

It's north Kent.

*Oh.*

It is marked on the map.

*Was it -*

Rochester's a very important town though.

*Was that the first time you'd lived away from home?*

Yes and I wanted to say about my 15th birth, but where should I carry on from?

*Yeah, anywhere.*

On the summer term my aunt had died – aunt Sheila, my mother's [sister]. And she came; it was nice the mistress said to me, 'I didn't think anyone...' On the Friday of my birth, Friday evening, she said to me 'Who's coming tonight?' I said, my mother came with a friend and she told me about the death of my aunt and then she said I'll be staying at the school for the weekend for the half term and it was nice because, being Coronation, we went up to London and drove around London.

*What, this [is] 1953 is it?*

Yes. It was very nice.

*So there was lots of crowds?*

[Takes a drink.] Yes. But I was just 15 then, a few days. On the day we didn't get the news about the conquest of Everest until the Coronation day.

*What Hilary?*

We didn't. But it was on the 29<sup>th</sup> – my birthday – that it had happened.

*Oh right, so that was a big thing.*

Huh?

*That was a big thing?*

Yes.

*That quite impressed you?*

It did yes. Well I nearly passed out. They gave me... I'd never had the bumps on the floor. And I thought I was going to pass out. I recovered...

*Bumps on the floor?*

Well it was a hard floor too, in the lounge.

*Oh gosh.*

You know they lift you up and bump you on your bottom.

*On your bottom, yeah, not very nice.*

[Laughs]. But I was all right, afterwards.

*But it stayed in your memory?*

Yes.

*How about the boarding school itself?*

How, where?

*The boarding school itself, what was it like?*

It was OK but it was a bit...

*Was it big?*

Huh?

*Was it big?*

It belonged to somebody famous. Now who was it?

*What a show star?*

The Darn... The...

*Film star? Or -*

No.

*Politician?*

Lord Darnley.

*Lord Darnley, oh right.*

And it was a nice place. One night I got a fright, I thought a mouse ran down my bed. I got the nice male nurse – Mr Bulman [ph]. I said I was scared stiff and my mother said to me it probably was one [laughs].

*So, was it a dormitory?*

No. I know what dormitories [are], I've heard of what dormitories [are] – they're 15. We only had three of us in the bedroom.

*All right.*

It wasn't like a big school like that.

*So it was quite warm?*

Yes.

*Comfortable?*

Yes.

*You didn't get cold in the winter?*

I don't think I did.

*And were there other pupils like you?*

Yes some, and some were worse. Some were in chairs. One of them, senior boy, Stickrid [ph], he ran the tuck shop. We had a tuck shop with the - [burp]. I was so pleased to have my own pocket money, feel money. At home I used to spend the sixpence on saving stamps for school, you know. But it was nice to have my own money and then, you know, going into town on the bus, on the half day, Thursday afternoon. But the next one was only two days after, it was on the Saturday, it was very close. Whereas at my prep school it was Wednesday and Saturday.

*What's that?*

The half days at the prep school.

*Oh right, right.*

But then when you were a senior there you played games but I was unable to do games until I went to boarding school and they did indoor sport, you know, sitting down sport.

*Right, so you did some exercises and games?*

You know, sports, yes. We had a physiotherapist as part of our... We got that regularly.

*And was that a big help?*

Fairly big.

*It made quite a big difference?*

But this was what they call a 'hut affair' where we had the schooling, you know, divided in three rooms: the physio, the schoolroom and the speech therapy.

*So you had speech therapy there too?*

I didn't have it. But they used to have, when they had choral speaking we had to go out in the garden, you know, it was a horticultural centre anyway.

*Right.*

School.

*Did you take part in that, in the horticultural?*

Well it's part of our curriculum.

*So they kept you pretty active?*

Yes.

*Did you go swimming?*

I don't remember going swimming there. But when Miss Mackino [ph] couldn't cope...

*Miss Mackinter?*

Ah, she was the very disabled lady who run the school. But we had another Master – Mr Veal – and his wife and that's why the place closed down because he was running the place and calling himself headmaster and staff were leaving as well.

*They were leaving?*

You know, cos they didn't like the way it was being run. And on the Easter term of '55, we heard it was closing down. Then my mother said she heard that I might be

able to go to... There is a school opening up for people... There was a disabled school in Croydon called St Margaret's and their children were only up to 11 plus.

*But did the boarding school close?*

The St Margaret's,

*Yeah.*

about the time we were, you know, at the end. And The Spastics Society needed to open up a school quickly.

*Right, but the boarder school in Gravesend, that closed did it?*

Yes.

*Right. So just going back, you used to go for shopping trips. What did you do when you went into town? When you first found you could use money, what did you do?*

Well I used to go, we used mainly go in the pictures (they call it the flicks).

*Ah. Was that a nice one?*

But I had an experience. I never crossed, you know, they went across the road ahead of me but it was a pedestrian crossing and I asked a kind lady, [she] took me across the road, but on the homeward journey we didn't have to cross the road.

*And was it a big pictures?*

Hmm?

*Was it an old fashioned pictures? Big one?*



Pictures?

*Yeah, film.*

You know I'm talking about the films.

*Yes that's right. You went to see the cinema – do you remember what you saw?*

I saw one of those comic films, oh yes, with...

**[End of Track 2]**

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

...near enough to a café.

*Right, oh, yep go on then.*

But we're on to the other thing now aren't we? You see my mother knew what she was like. I mean she was at the... when I went to the... for further education. What do you call it? The school had to open up quickly because the spastic school was closing, they could only stay till eleven.

*Right.*

So the Spastics Society had to find enough money to open up another school.

*Yeah.*

And at the time, when I was at the other disabled college, Miss Mackiner [ph] was having problems with staff and things were going to pieces so they had to close down. And I went to Delarue, you see. But they were there – Mr and Mrs Bowyer – they were only there for one term, but my mother said she didn't like her on the first meeting her.

*Right.*

She had an intuition. And I was told off for disturbing a boy because I couldn't get any attention. I had a terrible headache in the middle of the night, and she said, 'Well did you go to sleep?' 'I did eventually.' She said, 'Well you needn't have called anybody then.' It wasn't like here they didn't have night staff but they had staff sleeping in (resident staff). That's all I've got say about Coombe [ph]. [Break in recording.]

*They had one boy?*

They had one boy there – Ian Boroman [ph] – I met at the other school and he was at Coombe Farm with John who's the... He was quite educated, you know, he wasn't backward at all. He knew what was what. But he couldn't live at Puckle Hill because a lot of them were ill. It was very high up, you know, in the -

*Where was this?*

Highly placed.

*Puckle Hill, did you say?*

That's right. Puckle Hill. It's a corruption of a Puckle – Puck or Pooks Hill became Puckle Hill.

*What was there then?*

Hmm?

*What was there?*

What was there?

*Mm.*

That's where I went after leaving the prep school. You know, I went to a prep school.

*Yeah.*

And I was having problems at home they thought. My mother said to me one tea time with my brother, would I like to go to boarding school, and as I'd read boarding school stories I said, 'Yes I would like to'.

*Sounded quite exciting.*

Yes. And she told me about this lady – Miss Mackinto [ph] – she was 38 then in 1952.

*You're getting me a bit [both talk at once] confused now, Robin.*

What?

*You're going backwards and forwards, you're getting me a bit confused.*

What do you want me to do now?

*Cos I'm not quite sure what you're talking about, where you are. Which school are you at the moment?*

Puckle Hill.

*Puckle Hill?*

Yeah.

*So that was before Coombe Farm?*

Yes.

*Right.*

It was along -

*So, let's go back to after Coombe Farm.*

Yes.

*How long were you in hospital for?*

Well I was in from, that's right, about four months – October to the end of January.  
October the eighth

*And how did that make you - [both talking together.]*

Fifty-nine

*Fifty-nine?*

Yes, '61 till end of January '62.

*That's when you were in the hospital?*

Yes.

*Which hospital?*

Farnborough Kent. Cos there's two Farnboroughs there's Farnborough Kent, yes.

*And how did that make you feel?*

I was all right. I didn't mind going there, but I had to have two operations on my foot and on my hip [coughs]. And then I was at home a long time.

*Hmm. To recuperate? To get better?*

Yes I got better. I had to have physiotherapy. It was all like, you know. I had physiotherapy going to and from the hospital.

*But, was home still in London at this time?*

Yes, we were at London for a long time.

*Lot of changes going on? Lots of things, you know, The Beatles had become famous and -*

Hmm?

*The Beatles had become famous. Did you have a television then?*

We had a television from before I left school, 1956 Christmas. In the autumn they must have got it, late autumn. Because they told me they got it by the time we came home. We'd watched television at school, but we could only do that... Anyway that's what we had, a television, yes. What else?

*Was Tim still at home? [Both talking together.]*

Tim was at home, yes.

*He was?*

He didn't live... He's never been far from home as it is cos in the sixties he'd got a flat in the next road, only about 10 minutes drive away, called Morley Court, where he's been since then. He used to come for lunch every weekend. I saw quite a lot of him. [Door slams in background.] It's nice that he didn't move further away. I'm glad we saw a lot of him, and he used to go abroad though. It was nice.

*So it took you, what did you say? About six months to recover from the operation?*

It was... I came out in Jan; it was a year before I went to Bromley Work Centre.

*But how did the operation help you? Did things improve after the operation?*

It did improve me, yes. It got better.

*And what were they like when you were in the hospital? What were the doctors like and the nurses?*

Most of them were... I didn't like the matron much. Yes the physio was very nice, and she missed me after I left, she said (Miss Sove), cos I phoned her. I knew her number and she had a chat with my mother.

*Oh.*

And some of the nurses were very nice, too.

*So how did you get about once you went back home from the hospital? How did you get about then?*

Oh well I had to be on crutches for a while. I didn't climb up the stairs on crutch, I didn't then, but I got up the stairs all right holding on the rail, with somebody behind me. I hadn't thought of that because when we were living in flats I had to use crutches to get up and down stairs.

*Uh hmm.*

But I began to. It was over a year before I was right to go to Bromley Work Centre, in the April of '63.

*Bromley Work Centre?*

Yes. I went back to the hospital, the interview was held there for Bromley Work Centre. And there just started with six: five boys and one girl. It got up to 20 though.

*Mmm. Is this right in Bromley, is it?*

Yes.

*Near the town centre there somewhere? [Door slams, background voices.]*

It was Park Road. Do you know it then?

*Well I know Bromley town centre, but it's changed an awful lot [both talk together].*

Ten minutes drive by car [takes a drink].

*Used to go there every day from home, did you?*

Yes. Those who could, came by bus, but if they always got there, they were reimbursed at the end of the week; you know they got their bus fare paid for them.

*What sort of -*

But later on we had the welfare transport used to take us, which was better really.

*And what sort of things did you do there?*

Bromley; firms gave us part of their work to do, like assembling, packing, a bit of typing,

*Were you happy with it?*



between lots. Some of it I didn't like, but you were paid for it.

*So you managed to save up some money?*

Hmm?

*Did you manage to save some money at that time?*

I could save all right living at home. I had a cash box but others found it very hard. Cos whenever I couldn't get in, my mother used to (whenever she could) she used to pay me a little bit, gave me a bit of pocket money extra. It was all right till I got problems with a girl there.

*A girl?*

Relationship.

*Oh. What another girlfriend?*

Yes. Well she came home, and I went over to her home quite a lot.

*What was she called?*

Gwen Jones.

*Oh she's Welsh?*

She wasn't Welsh, I don't know quite -

*Sounds Welsh – Gwen Jones. But you used to visit her family home?*

It was only in Bromley.

*Did you get on?*

Hmm?

*Did you get on?*

Did I get on?

*Did you both get on with each other?*

Not all of the [time]. I mean there were a lot of upsets cos she was playing me up.

*Playing you up?*

Against other people. Another boy was upset by it too, long after I left her (Gwen) another boy (Michael Axby [ph]) got upset, you know. I don't know why she was allowed to stay there.

*You met her just socially, just through the work that you were doing?*

Nothing to do with work.

*No? Oh. But you met her at Bromley?*

I met her at Bromley. Met her at the interview, actually.

*Right. [Pause.] Well why did you get into trouble?*

I didn't get into trouble.

*Oh, thought you... Why did it finish, then?*

But another boy messed about with her.

*Right. You decided then that that was enough?*

My mother said they discussed it, that's all it was, I wasn't made any happier it was making me upset. I was going home unhappy sometimes. But after the break up I had a holiday anyway. I went down to Wiltshire.

*Oh, Wiltshire?*

Where we were during the war, well, near Wiltshire. You've got about me in war years haven't you?

*Mm hmm.*

[Takes a drink.] But soon after the break up with Gwen I met a much nicer girl, Liz Saville [ph] [takes a drink]. From Balance in Kent.

*How did you meet her?*

At the Centre [background noise of other people socialising]. Some of them used to go over to the pub, I used to for a while – the pub across the road, the Crown and Anchor,

*Sounds nice.*

on Friday when we'd been paid.

*Mmm. Spending your money [laughs].*

We used to have a club for a while, but people in the end they didn't want to come back to the place they'd been working all day.

*That's understandable.*

But people were grumbling about they didn't have enough money. They're still grumbling they hadn't got enough money today. So what is it that people don't like then, when you get more money?

*Everything costs more, that's the trouble.*

You're not gaining anything.

*Mm.*

I don't know how the transport was paid for, I didn't have to pay. It might have come out of some means.

*What was the transport?*

A welfare ambulance.

*And was it a big place, small place?*

Hmm?

*Was it a big place, a small place?*

The Centre wasn't big. It just had the workshop area. We didn't have a dining room to begin with, that was built on. We ate in the workshop, our lunch.

*What did you say they made there?*

Hmm?

*What did you say they made there? What sort of things did they do?*

I did twin locks,

*Oh right [both talking together].*

coffin handles, sometimes you had to file coffin handles, rubbing a brace ment.

*Was that quite hard work to do?*

That wasn't too bad. I'll tell you what was hard; we did some packing, we had to pack these bath salts and it made me cough a lot, it upset me a bit but the smell was, you know.

*Mmm.*

And bath cubes, I was getting them in the wrong way, you know and it was confusing me completely; the design on the box. And my mother understood that it was difficult for me.

*Hmm.*

And we had a youngster called Heather,

*Yeah.*

and (Heather Ayres [ph]) she was under Mr Mace [ph]. Mr Mace was very kind. And one day she put me in the office in the workshop, to do them on my own.

*Right.*

I mean [noise from recorder] I know it was hard [microphone noise] -

*Wait a sec. [Pause in recording.] Sorry?*

Every so often we'd go out for the day.

*Yeah.*

We used to go out for trips. One was an evening trip. Oh no, I went out with the church then, that was an evening trip

*Right.*

to Southend.

*Uh huh.*

We were a spiritualist then, from the spiritualist church this was.

*When you say 'we' do you mean your family?*

My mother and I, and Tim.

*Did you like it?*

I was quite enjoying it yes. [Takes a drink, door slams.]

*[Rustle of paper.] What happened after Bromley?*

Bromley, I stayed from 1963 to '71,

*Right.*

right into the autumn, you know. I was staying with... there's somebody who used to have students to stay with her. When my mother was away a lot with Miss Loose [ph] I used to go there so that I could still carry on with going to the work centre.

*Why did your mum have to go away?*

Prior to coming to Cornwall, they did come down to Cornwall a lot and my mother needed breaks.

*Right. Was Tim working by that time?*

Hmm?

*Was Tim working by that time?*

Tim was working, yeah. He was working from 1959, at the Royal Academy of Music then.

*Right.*

Yes, he was, that's right. Cos he had a flat then didn't he? That was in 1962 I think, '63. No '66 he moved to his flat. So he was earning then.

*Did you have many friends during this period?*

Hmm?

*Did you have many friends?*

Friends?

*Yeah. I mean things are changing quite fast in the sixties weren't they?*

Friends?

*Mmm. Did you go out and - ?*

I went out quite a lot, yes. I mean when my parents could, we had to take days off because of my father's work, we had to take days off when we could and my mother would take me out for the day, you know.

*What, round London?*

No, down into Kent.

*Right.*

This is before the welfare transport came but I used to take days off anyway. Family day out was whenever we could get it. Weekends were out.

*Why were weekends out?*

Because my father concerts weekends.

*Right.*

I mean we'd go for short drives, yes.

*Did you go to any of your father's concerts?*

I went to several.



*What sort of music did they play?*

Mmm?

*What sort of music did they play?*

Classical.

*Yeah, but what ones? What composers?*

Beethoven, Brahms...

*Where were the concerts?*

Mmm?

*Where were the concerts?*

Well -

*St Martin's? Festival Hall?*

The Festival Hall, yes. Latterly I used to go... my mother suggested perhaps I'd like to go to a rehearsal on the weekend with my father, which is a nice idea of hers and to hear the music put together there. The conductor rehearses one section; whether the violins would be the first violins or the second, or the brass; each section of the orchestra, you hear it put together. He did a lot of work with Otto Klemperer.

*Did he? Right.*

What was he? Van Karajan?

*Hmm.*

He was hard work.

*So how did you see things at that time? What were the changes, culturally, you know that were going on? London was hit by the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and all that sort of thing, old places were being knocked down, new high rise buildings.*

*Everything was changing, television was changing...*

I know this. How did I see them?

*Well, what sort of impact did all the changes have on you? Very different to the 1950s wasn't it?*

Yes, 1950s you didn't have calculators, which was a good thing. You learnt to do it yourself. [Door bangs.] Well as Tim says it, 'Computers are taking over the boring work,' he said. But I loved maths. Computers you didn't [have], and you didn't have answer phones then. My father relied on the phone for his business. Sometimes we'd be out. I said to him once, 'It would have been a help to us.' He said, 'Well I had a wife then.' [Laughs.] It's funny mentioning that phrase. I had a friend, Andrew Caddell [ph] from the school I was at, and we took him back you see. We came over on the bus. I used to go home a lot on the Green Line coach and we drove him back where he stayed at his aunt's sometime nearby and he said, 'They've got a terrible drive, you go right up' and he said, 'This is steep' and he said, 'Your wife did it,' he said [laughs].

*So did you -*

But Andrew I met in Cornwall, before I joined [The] Spastics Society.

*I was going to say were you coming down to Cornwall at that time?*

We'd been going down for holidays apart from '39 when I was little; I was a babe then, they took me. After war years we went down, '49 onwards.

*Right. In the summer?*

Yes. Tim always had his birthday down there.

*Was this near Padstow?*

We were near Padstow, yes – about six miles away.

*What was the name of the place?*

Porth Cothan Bay. Where we lived for...

*Porth Cothan [both talking together]*

... 15 years when we moved down to Cornwall.

*What year was that, you moved down to Cornwall?*

Seventy-one but I had a fortnight at our new home, then I went to Clacton because my mother realised... My mother – listen to this – had been corresponding with the Spastics Society about my future and they said it was decided I would go to one of their homes, holiday centre.

*Hmm.*

Which I enjoyed for several weeks.

*Which one did you go to?*

The Bevdon [ph] Hotel, Clacton.

*That was a Scope home?*

Yes. It wasn't called Scope then.

*Or Spastics Society then. Yeah.*

Yes. And I liked it there very much.

*Was that large, small?*

It was quite a large hotel.

*It was just a hotel was it? Just for holidays?*

It was a hotel, yes.

*Just for holidays, right [both talking together].*

But I had a serious romance there.

*Oh my gosh, Robin. [laughs.]*

The girls; my mother warned me, 'There's a lot of mischief going on; you'd better be aware, careful.'

*Was she a nice girl though?*

I thought, 'Well I better be careful.' And I spoke to the girl, Sylvia, you know, [alarm sounding] at the meal time and so there a few days, on the Saturday she said she'd got fond of me.

*Uh huh.*

Then I went down late November then there were, late October I went down.

*Yeah.*

Prior to this I'd stayed with our friends, Lillian and Tara in Fordingbridge, Hants. They'd been friends of ours since we were little children, was Lillian, and she said she'd kindly have me to stay with her. And then I had to go. They saw me off on the train – where was it? – to Clacton.

*Uh hmm.*

I'm trying to think of the station now [alarm sounds again]. Up to London and the Spastics Society, someone – one of the drivers – met me there, to put me on the train for Clacton.

*Right.*

An hour and a half travel from London.

*Uh hmm.*

Five minutes drive from the hotel.

*How long was that, just about two weeks or something was it?*

No, I was there from November to Christmas time, the first time.

*Right.*

October till Christmas, seven weeks. Then they closed, we went, those who'd been staying before went home for three weeks cos they had people coming down for Christmas.

*Uh hmm.*

Yes, well yes I said I had a romance there you see, so on my second week, she kept saying to me... I knew where her bedroom was, and another boy said...

**[End of Track 3]**

**Track 4 [Tape 2 Side B]**

... a scandal at Delarue.

*What's that? Right. There's a scandal at Delarue?*

Well apparently he'd been messing about with one of the teachers, Miss Tucker and we went to school, apparently when I went to France with them, you know, first group of us went to France and apparently they were married, he'd married Miss Tucker. And Mr Davis the head sacked him.

*This is the boarding school?*

Yes.

*But he went on to work at Delarue, at the Coombe Farm?*

Mmm?

*But he came to work at Coombe Farm?*

No. This is after I left school.

*Yeah.*

We didn't know... I didn't know any more about the Veals [ph] after they were sacked.

*Right.*

I wasn't all that keen on Mr Davis but he understood my worries when I was bullied by the other boy.

*At the Delarue school?*

Yes.

*So you made a complaint did you?*

Well, the parents. When it all came out my mother wrote a letter to him saying I'd been upset by this boy.

*And?*

Made to worry.

*So he had to leave then?*

I didn't leave, no I carried on.

*No, the boy that had been bullying you?*

No, he stayed on quite a while.

*Ah. But he stopped bullying you after that?*

But apparently it went from bad to worse. When he left apparently he got into prison, he went from bad to worse and was in prison or some [time]. He was really... Welsh. We had... My mother did not... There were a lot of Welsh people at both schools.

*Uh hmm.*

We had a Welsh headmaster in those. The boy that bullied you, he is Welsh.



*And Mr Davies was Welsh?*

Mr Davies, yes.

*But he is helpful in the end?*

Yes.

*He helped you out?*

But he didn't say anything about me when I left, he would've normally at the end of term, 'We say goodbye to so and so.' He didn't say anything about us and another boy, John Williams; he was leaving; very severely handicapped. He didn't say a kind, he said it to me private, afterwards, after the assembly but normally they said, 'We say goodbye to so and so.'

*And that hurt did it?*

Yes.

*That he didn't mention it in public?*

[Takes a drink.] But I say, I mean that day was very kind, Miss Gladwin the head staff, when the time I was leaving when my mother came, she said she'd get all the staff to say goodbye to me, all the care staff.

*Yeah, and did she?*

Yes.

*Well that was nice then wasn't it? At least you had that.*

Yes.

*But Mr Davies was a bit of authoritarian was he? He was a bit...*

I didn't like - [Both talking together.]

*You didn't?*

But my mother did not like Welsh people but I had a very dear friend she did love, she liked her very much, Mel Davies [ph].

*And she was Welsh?*

Yes.

*Mel Davies?*

Very ni [nice], I lost touch with her though. She had a friend, Yvonne, as well.  
[Shouting in the background.]

*What was Mel Davies? Was she a teacher?*

A resident, you know, a pupil at the school. Student, pupil, yes. [More shouting.]  
I started off the ball rolling for all the musician, you know, I was the first one to have music lessons there at Delarue. And after, then they got quite a few of them, they organised practice times, you know. My friend Mel Davies learnt a bit too.

*What did she learn?*

Mmm?

*What did she learn? An instrument?*

Piano, I mean. But I've lost touch with her since. Mrs Delarue died. I could get in touch with her son and see if he's got any of their addresses. The last time I wrote to Mel I told her about my mother's death and she liked my mother. The first speech day my mother sat with her, you know. It's funny I haven't got any recollection... I could send it care of Scope.

*Mmm. We might be able to find some ways of doing that, yeah. So, after that school you went to Coombe Farm?*

Yes.

*Did you go home for a period first?*

I had quite a lot, and I used to go home Sunday afternoons as well cos I was only six miles away. My parents used to come, have me home for the afternoon.

*Did you have Sunday dinner with them?*

Mmm?

*Have Sunday dinner with them?*

I had Sunday dinner there. I went home about two o'clock.

*After Sunday dinner?*

Yes.

*And would you go out for a walk with your parents?*

No I used to spend Sunday afternoon at home with them. We used to have what we called our study at home. My brother and I had a room where we could do all our hobbies you know and -

*And what hobbies did you have?*

You know, like reading. He did aero modelling and -

*Oh did he? [Laughs.]*

But then when Miss Loose [ph] came to live with us, she had that room.

*Who is Miss Lewis?*

Miss Loose. We got to know them through, I think my father knew the friend... Miss Loose; her father was a music teacher. She learnt piano.

*So she came basically because she needed accommodation did she?*

No but my mother was worrying about her, what was she going to do when Hector died, so, she hadn't thought. Originally, Norah – I must call her Norah now – she'd, had a maid called Alice and she died, they had planned [for] it, they didn't think that Hector Loose was going to die before. So my mother said, 'Would you like to think about coming to live with us?' And she said she'd have to clear it with us to see if it was all right. She got on very well really; she could be domineering though.

*What was Hector Lewis?*

Mmm? Hector was her father, Hector Loose.

*Yeah but was he a musician as well?*

Mmm? He was –

*Was he a musician? [Both talking together.]*

I wouldn't say he was a music [musician], I think he lectured at the college, Dulwich college.

*OK, well if we finish there.*

We called one of our dogs Hector [laughs].

*So if we finish there for now,*

Yes.

*and next week we'll start off with Coombe Farm, is that OK?*

Yes.

*Thanks, Robin.*

[Pause in recording.]

Where from?

*Last week you talked about Coombe. Was it Coombe Farm?*

Coombe Farm residential centre. [Both talking together.]

*What year was that? What year were you there?*

Oh '59 to '61.

*Right.*

After I left school. I had three months at home before going there. But my mother wasn't all that keen – she did not like the matron for one thing.

*Uh hmm. Whereabouts was Coombe Farm?*

But the good thing - [Both talking together.] You want to hear about the good things. I enjoyed... We were paid for our work as we were here, doing twin locks you know – you ever heard of twin locks?

*No.*

The locks to hold files together.

*Uh hmm.*

First of all we were stripping telephones, the first job I was doing.

*Right, that must have been -*

Stripping old telephone boxes. You know, the box where the bell is?

*Yeah. You had to strip them out and...*

Yes.

*... take them apart?*

Yes.

*And somebody had to do work on them?*

I did a bit of filing as well.

*So what happened to the telephones?*

They were old.

*Ah.*

They were given to us, you know, to dismantle or whatever.

*So not to use again?*

No.

*No. Just what happened to all the bits and pieces then?*

I don't know – they kept them.

*And files, you -*

You know, filing as well, you know keeping a file, I quite enjoyed that. We were paid.

*When you say 'keeping a file' -*

Mmm?

*What do you mean by 'keeping a file'?*

You know like a filing system.

*Yeah. What did you have to... You mean you had to... You actually kept a file?*

I didn't personally.

*No. But you were putting files together for other people?*

Yes, yes.

*Right, right. [Inaudible.] How many of there were you? How many people were there in the workshop?*

Well all of us that were there were. There are more here. There are about, yes there were over 20. There were over 20 there.

*And whereabouts was this?*

Coombe, Surrey (near Croydon).

*Oh right.*

We used to go to the concerts from there, Fairfield Halls.

*Oh. What sort of things? What sort of concerts?*

And they sometimes went to pantomimes there, you know.

*Pantomimes?*

We went to any shows, you know, like they went to see. We went to a concert, my mother and a friend and I saw the rest of the others were going to see Wilfred Pickles in something.



*Who? Wilfred Pickles?*

Yes. He, you know, had that spastic... He hasn't got it now but he had a disabled son.

*No I didn't know, no. Bit like Bob Monkhouse?*

Yes. We used to hear his programme on Saturday: *Wilfred Pickles Have a Go*.

*Did you actually meet him?*

I didn't meet him, no. Never. But he said something most peculiar to somebody at Coombe Park; 'I'm from the Spastics Society give me five pounds,' and that was quite a lot of money then. Ordering people to give it to them.

*Yeah it's quite...*

Not voluntary [both talking together].

*... upfront.*

Yes. We used to go to Fairfield Hall quite a lot to see other things as well.

*What else did you see?*

Fairfield Halls.

*Yeah. Is that a big hall?*

Not bad.

*That's in -*

But I went long after I went to Coombe Farm. [Both talking together.] We used to go to concerts there, with my mother, and my parents, they -

*How did you get there?*

With my parents. At Coombe Farm we went with the care, the centre's transport.

*What they have a van or something?*

An ambulance or -

*Oh. An ambulance?*

You know what we have here.

*Oh right. Minivans and things.*

We did have a coach, I remember because we used to go out in it, Saturday afternoon.

*What, every Saturday afternoon?*

The warden was always on duty, Mr Bowyer and he took us for rides up to the evening meal time. You know, we were back five o'clock.

*Yeah?*

Three to five or something. I enjoyed that.

*Oh.*

And Sunday we went, Mr Bowyer gave the sermon.

*This is in a church?*

He was a divini... Yeah in the home. Once a month though somebody came in to give a service.

*Right. Oh. But going back to the coach trips what places did you go to?*

Pardon?

*Going back to the coach trips where did you go?*

We went for rides round about Surrey, yes. It was a nice coach.

*Did you sort of stop off places for tea?*

Cup of tea, yeah. Yes we did have, yes. They had scouts there, you know, scouts? That was on one day, well evenings, in the evening, in the once a week we had -

*What, putting on a sort of show?*

Mmm?

*Putting on a sort of a show? The scouts?*

No, we had a scout troop didn't we?

*Yeah.*

The scoutmaster said he'd come for one boy, even, Mr Stringer.

*What for someone to join the scouts*

Then he had a disabled man with him, we called him Ron. He was a nice chap. But through that we went to the holiday camp. My last summer there we went to the holiday camp, you know, Woodlarks,

*Uh hmm.*

where my late girlfriend went there, several times.

*Whereabouts was that? Woodlarks?*

Woodlarks is Surrey, I think it's Surrey. Woodlarks holiday camp. I heard a lot about that because it was... You see, they said, 'The holiday camps have done it again.' Everybody got a... there was always an engagement, or marriage

*Uh huh.*

That came back, the holiday clubs have done it again. [Laughter.] Holiday camp.

*Was that a big thing?*

I learnt to do archery; I did a bit of archery there [both talking together].

*Did you?*

Yeah, and swimming. The thing about Coombe Farm, they were always moaning at me and my parents. Always, I was always short -

*Mistake, yeah, sorry.*

They were always stealing my clothes. And the matron, my mother could, you know... About the musical evenings, once a week, he must have taught music, Mr Roach, he's an authority on classical music.

*What he used to come in did he, to the farm?*

He worked, he was handyman. [Loud shout outside.]

*He worked on the farm?*

It wasn't a farm, it was just the name of farm.

*Mmm.*

He worked yes, he was handyman.

*But he used to -*

I liked him. I know I had piano lessons there. I continued from school and that was Wednesday afternoon; another boy did as well. I did like [it], it was nice that I could get home [loud shouting]. I went home every... it was once every two weeks or few weeks for people to get visitors. They were strict about it though. Once I had my friends, Miss Sellar [ph] the care staff she brought my girlfriend down but it wasn't a visiting day it was – the first and third Sundays were visiting days. But they could take me out they said, it didn't matter if they took me out on the non-visiting days, it was all right. But there weren't any restrictions after I left.

*You mentioned your girlfriend; who was your girlfriend?*

I had a school girlfriend, I still think of her – Pamela Sandal [ph] from Delarue school.

*Were you quite close?*

Very close, yes. Well I wrote to her for a long time.

*Nice-looking girl?*

Mmm?

*Nice-looking girl?*

Yes.

*What did she look like?*

I've got photos of her, some time -

*Hair? What colour hair?*

She never... Pardon?

*What colour hair?*

Brown.

*Eyes?*

Brown, yeah. [Laughs.]

*Quite an attractive girl?*

Yes.

*How long did you -*

My mother liked her [both talking together].

*How long did you know her?*

I knew her since we were 17.

*And how old were you at Coombe Farm?*

We were both the same age. At Coombe Farm? Twenty-one to 23.

*You never thought about getting married or anything?*

Lots of times but she said she couldn't do that. I mean we knew we couldn't do it but  
-

*Why's that? Why couldn't you do it?*

Well she said to me she wanted us to be boyfriend and girlfriend.

*Mmm.*

So that was all right.

*Yeah.*

But I'm not responsible enough to marry her, I wasn't then.

*Not responsible enough? Oh. And you'd have liked to?*

Yes.

*Would you have liked to get married?*

Yes. I would have liked to very much. My mother said to me I would have made a nice husband for somebody.

*Mmm. Mmm.*

I'm not very patient though, if we had child [children], you know. I might have got better at it though but the way I am here I'm not supp..., I ought to. But I did meet a nice girl at Coombe Farm – Pat Carling. We were interviewed the same day. From the Isle of Man and my girlfriend Pam lived on the island for a while.

*Right.*

She's very nice.

*What happened to her?*

Pat?

*Mm.*

Well when I left Coombe Farm I saw some of them at the concert, you know when I went to Fairfield Halls I did, and my friend Geoffrey Webber [ph] came over quite a lot. My mother used to have us both over. She would fetch us or my father, you know, he would fetch us in the car. Geoffrey was nice, he came here once

*Hmm*

But I lost... I didn't ask him what his address was. I was ever so surprised. I said, 'Is that Geoffrey Webber?' She said, 'Yes.' [Laughs.] Then John I knew, of course.

*John?*



John was there, you know.

*Oh, John Bennet [ph]?*

Yes but I didn't have a lot to do with John in the old days.

*Mmm.*

Cos we're a closer knit... We're less residents here.

*What kind of building... What was it like? What kind of environment? Was it warm?  
Was it cosy?*

It's a funny system, you went in, there wasn't any hall, just an entrance then you went into the dining room.

*Uh huh.*

Like that, it seemed funny; no proper hall.

*Just straight in?*

Yes. They had a grandfather clock there.

*Hmm.*

Which Mr Roach kept going.

*Yeah.*

But then we had a wall clock. It's funny I didn't take much notice of the grandfather after that. I don't know why we had an extra clock in there, but Mr Roach used to keep the grandfather clock going.

*I love grandfather clocks.*

Mmm?

*I love grandfather clocks.*

We had an antique one at home, my mother thought we got one. Then we had what was called latterly the granddaughter clock and my mother says the only granddaughter they'll ever have. [Laughs.] I thought that was good.

*What other things did you do there – Coombe Farm?*

What, in the workshop?

*Mmm.*

Oh we'd... Wait a moment.

*Well anything [both talking together].*

We were outside the work, we did have, you could do English, you know, so the lady who came to do further education if you wanted, you know.

*Did you do any more mathematics?*

No one taught maths but there was a lady who came, Mrs Erwin [ph] and we used to write. I did English there. That was once a week. Then we had another lady who had a girl called Heather, [her] daughter, she used to come on a bicycle and used to bring

Heather in a little basket [inaudible]. But we had another lady called, who used to read us those funny stories.

*Funny stories?*

You know, the humorous one, what's it call [called] those things? I've got them here.

*Do you know who wrote -*

George, Harris, Rexberry [ph] characters. So, George Harris.

*Oh. I don't know that, you'll have to show me.*

Yeah. I've got the tape.

*Oh. So what happened after Coombe Farm then?*

Well I went into hospital after a while, for quite a while.

*Why were you in hospital for?*

That's something my mother was... She said there was a lady who came to see how a doctor... She didn't know I was getting any worse and my hip was deteriorating but there was a boy much worse than me, very distorted. Anyway that's why and I left Coombe Farm. There was a big row about my clothes because I hadn't -

*What between...*

They couldn't find my things you know.

*What, between the pair, your parents and the school and the - ?*

My father.

*Yes.*

It was my mother [who] was more concerned about it.

*So you lost quite a few clothes there?*

But it just did not... Pardon?

*You lost quite a bit of clothes? When you left?*

Clothes were being given to other people and the matron was always saying I was short of clothes. She wasn't a properly trained matron. At school we had a proper trained matron; matron Connor [ph]. She didn't have any training, this one. But you weren't free with names here like you were, you know they couldn't use Christian names there.

*Hmm.*

Sometimes he'd have a nickname he said you could call me [him]. Mr Denton I liked. He used to run a little service, you know, church service and bible readings.

*Uh huh.*

He was all right. Mr Lacey [ph] was a bit... I thought I'd like him but then he got a bit nasty.

*Nasty?*

Well I said something against, I shouldn't have said it, about the blacks shouldn't be in this country and he was furious; he made me cry nearly.

*It was all a bit controversial then?*

Mm.

*Mmm.*

Yes. But I liked sitting in the garden there, in the summer and they would play Oklahoma, you know, bring the radio out. We'd have music outside; I enjoyed that, on the weekends. [Door slams.] There was a very nice care staff who could play the piano – Miss Meredith.

*Uh huh.*

I liked her. The boys were looked after by, they said they had one woman, they called her a house father, but not real, she was on the house father's side.

*Uh huh.*

Mr Greenall [ph] was all right.

*Mr Green?*

Greenhall.

*Greenall.*

Greenhall.

*Grainhall* [both talking together].

Greenhall.

*Yeah.*

He played the piano by ear, you know.

*Oh that was clever.*

Only in one key though.

*Uh hmm.*

I wanted to go to bed, oh yes I wasn't allowed to go to bed, they were strict about [that]. We laid the tables, people could move around in their wheelchairs. There was one girl who couldn't move at all, they could move around in their wheelchairs easily enough. We had to lay the tables after the evening meal, every night and... No, lay it for breakfast I mean,

*Uh hmm.*

the next morning. Whether we were at, you see Saturday night was a film night and we'd finish about nine o'clock and I'd want to go to bed then.

*Yeah.*

But we had to lay the tables up.

*So you were too late then?*

Mmm. Once I said I had to go to the toilet.

*What happened?*

They didn't like it.

*It was very disciplined then?*

Yeah.

*Ruled with an iron rod.*

But I think it got better after I left.

*So after you left you, you went to the hospital?*

Oh, I went home after.

**[End of Track 4]**

**Track 5 [Tape 3 Side A]**

I had seven weeks before Christmas about, you know, several weeks after.

*What, this is at Clacton?*

Yes. I went home for three weeks.

*In London?*

Yes. Clacton that's right, Clacton.

*What -*

I went home to...

*Keep -*

...Cornwall. [Both talking together.]

*Your parents were actually living in Cornwall at that time?*

Yes. They moved in, I was the first one to leave Beckingham, yes, they came down in October.

*Of what year was that?*

Seventy-one.

*1971. Oh that was quite late, so did they sort of come down to retire?*

Mm?



*Were they retired? Did they come to retire to Cornwall?*

Pa?

*Retire. To retire down here?*

Well we weren't retired. I was told my father still got to go up to London every so often because he wasn't earning money down here. Sometimes he had a bit of teaching.

*How old was your dad at that time?*

They were 60. They were in their sixties then.

*Right.*

My father was 60 at the time.

*Was he still in the orchest -*

My mother was still 60 [both talking together].

*Was he still in the orchestra at that time?*

Yes, he was still working. Freelance.

*And you went to... What was Clacton?*

It was a seaside place. You mean the... It was called the Bentford Hotel where I stayed. They had several other disabled people, waiting for places at homes.

*And this is where you waited before you decided to come to Gladys Holman, is it?*

Well I didn't, you see I was there till May '72. And on May the third I had an interview with Scope (Spastics Society then) and they said about me. My mother had said she'd heard a whisper. She said that I might be, that they were going to send me in Cornwall, to tell me to hang on to that, you know, and I almost said I was going to another place in Essex and then Mrs Molyneux [ph] said, 'Well they want you to try it here.' And I liked it very much.

*That's at Gladys Holman?*

Yes.

*So from Clacton you came down here?*

Yes.

*You stayed a few weeks, see if you liked it?*

Yes.

*Was this the only one you tried at the time or did you try several places?*

Well that's the only residential one. I'd been to Combe [ph] Farm when my early twenties. Did I say that?

*Mmm, yes.*

I went to a residential centre, what one of my friends lived near. He lived at Jacques Hall and his father used to take me over with him to see George.

*Where was Jacques Hall?*

And I met George at the day centre I was at – George Cook [ph].

*Where was Jacques Hall?*

In Essex. Manningtree.

*That's the other one you were thinking about.*

No I wasn't going. I -

*No. Who was George?*

A friend, a disabled friend. I don't know where he is now. Last time I heard he went to a centre at Blackheath.

*Do you know his second name?*

Cook.

*Cook?*

Yes

*George Cook*

And his father was a sailor.

*Right.*

Cos I saw the sailors. You saw the clock. I used to [?] their home.

*Was he older than you?*

He's about six or seven years older [clears throat] than me, yes. But his father was still... I couldn't visit George once his father died. His father died at 80; a good age. And both his parents were around the first time I'd been to their home when it was when I met them in Clacton. I knew George Cook's father, every time I saw him each time he fetched, he transported George to and from the centre. But I didn't get to know his mother till I moved down to Clacton. And they had me, I came over to see George at his home and I did write to him.

*But you've not heard, you've not been in contact since?*

Mmm?

*You haven't been in contact since that time?*

Off and on, yes. But he found it difficult writing letters.

*Right.*

The first thing George said to me when I met him, he said 'I like the classics' classical music. But he liked a lot of pop music as well, nice pop music though not noisy stuff. [Laughs.]

*Good-quality pop music.*

Don't Walk in the Sunset and things [both talking together]. I liked his music that he played. He came over to see me here.

*What, down in Cornwall?*

Yes. When I was... quite early in my time. He was staying in Cornwall. And I was very pleased then. [Takes a long drink.]

*So you had a few weeks trial period down here to see if you liked it?*

Well I was down here quite a while, yes and they said... what's it? I've been here quite a while yes.

*Who was here at that time? Can you remember who was here?*

Well, Betty. You knew Betty, of course?

*Yes, died this year.*

Betty, David, there's quite a lot.

*What about staff?*

Well none of the old staff are here now.

*Was David Ball here then?*

No. He didn't come till much later. We had gardeners then, we did have proper, we had gardeners. And then we had Malcolm Spurrrows [ph], the electrician. He taught; he was doing the laying down the foundations for this present activities. I remember that was a case; I had only been here two days and we had to get out because they were blasting when they were laying down the foundations and we went to Palm Bay for the afternoon.

*Palm Bay?*

Well they called it. It's a bay near here. And it would have been very noisy. There's a lot of youngsters near, some of them my age, the care staff.

*What, the care staff are very young?*

Some, there were quite a lot. There are elder ones as well, they had a mixture. We didn't have housefathers then; they did before I came. I remember we had a chap, Mr Les Peace but he wasn't successful they said they weren't satisfied with his work. [Child crying.] I quite liked him though.

*What would you say is the differences?*

Mmm?

*What would you say is the main difference between how Gladys Holman is now and how it was then?*

I'd say there wasn't so much hassle; sometimes you know

*Less busy?*

No, they were always busy. Well I mean it was...

*Not so much pressure?*

Not so much pressure, no. I didn't feel there was. But I did bath myself in those days till I slipped once and I was. No, I had one on my own and they say they have to check every resident; which is right; they've got to know that we're clean otherwise we'll be ill.

*That's a lot more residents in those days weren't there?*

Well Mr Delo [ph] said he was -

*Mr Delo is the?*

Ex, retired warden. And first of all he said they were going to build extension to the bedrooms he said, 'We're not going to do that, we are going to space you all out. There are some women can't get on together.' And my mother said, 'Well men have problems as well.' [Laughs.]

*That's the truth.*

But [both talking together] I was moved down where the training flat is. I was moved down there, where it is now; there were bedrooms, with my friend Fran Collingwood [ph]. I quite liked it there cos it was peaceful down there.

*And did you take part in workshops and things?*

Yes. They're more strict about workshops, then. And they call it workshop but Mr Dela [ph] didn't like the idea [both talking together]. Quite a while Mr Dela [ph] saw, we'll make it more relaxed and call it activities centre. Margaret Ford [ph] (my ex-girlfriend) she wanted the busy bee or something nice and she actually put a place in the newsletter about it; a complaint. But, you didn't know Carol?

*No.*

Carol was one of my first friends and [both talking together] Muriel Dell [ph] who was the oldest resident; she was in her sixties then and she was one of my friends as well.

*But there was a lot... What activities were there? Gardening?*

We had... Nobody worked in the garden.

*No.*

We were doing polishing, paperweights and that. We used to have open days twice a year then.

*What happens on the open days?*

What happens? People came down; I mean they used to have one in the spring and one in the autumn. Then one year we made so much we cut it back to one; one sales and workday, in the autumn. The care staff, some of the work we couldn't do; they were doing wrought iron work. Everything we have for communion was made in activities.

*Right.*

One of the girls – Jenny Rice [ph] – had a hand with the tablecloth.

*That's still used today is it?*

I used to, I liked also doing polishing, polishing old coins; pre-decimal coins. I used to like that work. And they turned it into jewellery; put the pennies in a mould. I quite liked that. [Takes a drink.] Mr Della told me when I came visiting McFreece [ph] said I always tell people as parents are scattered all over the country, 'Come when you can'. But one thing I didn't like was when we had the open day of this workshop, parents weren't allowed except Carol's parents were staying here – they couldn't refuse them.

*What, to come up to the workshops?*

They couldn't refuse them cos they were staying but they said no visitor, no parents were invited. I thought that was wrong because we had so many from London. That's



on the board out there; July the second, 1973. That's it, Carol was just 22 then. [Takes a drink.] She's a nice girl [spoken softly].

*So did you manage to see your parents much at this time?*

I saw them regularly, yes.

*Did you -*

My father used to teach at the music school and he used to come [talking together]

*The music school?*

Once a week there was a music school near Truro, not Truro...

*St. Austell?*

St Austell, yes. And he used to come and see me once a week, you know, when he was doing that. And they came together also at other times.

*So you lived -*

He used to check my razor and things [both talking together].

*Make sure things were in order?*

Yes.

*They lived at Constantine Bay didn't they? Remember when we went up there and you said -*

We were living at Porthcowan Bay then.

*Oh lovely up there isn't it? Yeah.*

Where my parents had their honeymoon.

*Right.*

And they took me down just before World War Two broke out, when I was a baby.

[Takes a drink.]

*So would you go up there for weekends from here or - ?*

I had weekends at home, yes; or a week; I'd have a full week. I went in the off-season period; February. And I went, they used to come and see me on my birthday; my mother did. We had a friend, you know we had a friend, Miss Loose [ph] living with us, did I tell you? For years she lived with us, because my father knew her and they were both at the Royal Academy and she was studying acting then. Well Norah and my mother came to see me in between times. My father had to still keep going to London cos there wasn't enough to live on. What else did you want to know?

*Well do you have any memories about the changes at Gladys Holman over the seventies?*

Yes. I did rug work; I did a lot, I used to make kneelers. My mother bought a lot of my things. But do you know what? My father had one and he criticised it, 'There's a piece missing.' [Laughs.] A piece of wool missing.

*Were they used in the church?*

And she bought Carol's, my mother loved Carol you know, she thought she was lovely and she bought Carol's knitting. [Takes a drink.]

*Were the kneelers used in churches?*

Mmm?

*Were the kneelers used in the church?*

We didn't sell them to the church.

*No. Just sold them to the general public?*

Yes. You know it's on a canvas and I finished Mr Della gave me the only bit of praised I had from him. One boy, old boy – Charlie Davison [ph] – he used to sit in the corner and smoke; he's very thin, he was one of my room mates; he and David Morgan and Frank Hollingwood [ph]. But when he died I finished his work and Mr Della said I'd done a good job.

*What year did he die?*

He died 1977; just before we closed for Christmas. Cos the two days before he died, they had a joke with him, you know, he was laughing.

*That's quite a shock.*

Yes. But he was quite a smoker. They gave him a corner in the lounge to smoke, you know [laughs]. He had a good sense of humour though. They didn't like me at first, David, and they just accepted me and then when I became useful to them – I used to set my radio alarm clock for David, they begun to like me a bit more.

*David Morgan was quite active then wasn't he?*

Yes.

*Used to help out with the -*

In the garden. Apparently, the staff told me. We had old Mrs Redshire [ph] nice older lady, Elizabeth Ritchey [ph]. She said David was very unhappy to begin with, when he first came. Maybe before he met Betty.

*When did Betty come here then?*

She arrived at the beginning.

*She was here from the beginning was she?*

Mmm?

*She was here from the beginning?*

Might have been. She came from a hospital though [takes a drink]. Well David could be kind, though. He was always banging his door that's one thing. I had to move, I know I was down in the bottom bedrooms, somebody was very near death and had to come down, had to have our room, I had to move up with David. He used to bang his doors twice a day, get clothes out, bang the wardrobe door; frightened me. And another time when Retchen [ph] was ill, I had to sleep with him again. But I didn't go, Retchen died in '84, on Ann's birthday and it was quarter to six, I remember that. I liked Retchen very much, so did a lot of people. He was from India.

*Mmm.*

Mr Della used to tease Cheryl, and Retchen used to say, 'Don't you take no notice of what he says, [laughs] to Cheryl.

*Did Retchen live most of his life in this country or did he come over from India?*

I don't know about the rest of his life. My mother liked him very much. She included him; she liked him very much. She said to me, 'I hadn't thought of this,' she said, 'tell your friend Manish I knew another Indian boy who died. He was telling me he's got a fellow countryman here.' [Laughs.] But I didn't think I'd meet two. I knew a Jamaican girl; Mona Eunice [ph] you know and I was told -

*She was here as well was she?*

No, this was at school.

*Oh right.*

And when I had whooping cough we struck up a friendship and I was in quarantine and she was going to go home to Jamaica and she came up with mumps. [Laughs.] But one boy died from it, you know. But anyway I hear news of her from time to time and she does go home to her home country every so often. [Takes a drink.]

*So you must have been quite happy here to have stayed here?*

Yes. [Inaudible.] I was happier when there was a break up between Margaret, and I was very fond of Carol, but after 21st, you know, she had anaemia and they were very worried about her and they thought she might die. It was that time when she was in hospital I got very fond of her.

*What year was that?*

That was 1973 she went into hospital.

*What happened to Carol in the end?*

Well she was ill. You know, she was. We were told that she hadn't got long to live. She died, didn't she? She died in the afternoon. They'd just given her her tea. But she'd stopped going up to activities for quite a while and we used -

*What year was that?*

Well it would have been... What's the last year she... Well I mean, between 1999 or 1998 till her death.

*Round about '98, '99, right.*

I don't think she -

*And you were close to her all those years? [Both talking together.]*

Yes. She used to be able to sing Oklahoma. I'd play, I accompanied her and she had a lovely little laugh though. And funny the way she'd have of saying things. Every Sunday morning she had a phone call after breakfast and she waited there and one Sunday chef was on duty at home, you know, we had a big chap, I didn't like him much; Mrs Dunstan [ph] was in the office and she was South African. Anyway, she said, 'Is chef here?' That's what she thought she said. And he said, 'No he's off duty.' She said 'I know it is, I'm chef talking.' [Laughs.] And she made me laugh. She was very close to Cheryl.

*Was she?*

She wanted to... She said I've got to... Oh yes another one... Heather, her parents were always being grateful to us for being friendly with Heather, you know.

*Who was Heather?*

Heather, a resident here.

*Uh huh.*

But she was all right until she fell in love with a friend of mine I'd known for years; David Gilbey [ph]. I met him at home and she fell in love with him – he was at one of the holiday homes.

*And she met him on holiday?*

She did. One thing she wanted to do, though, was she wanted to get confirmed. Her mother had said apparently, she'd had a quick christening cos they weren't sure how long, whether she'd live or not, as a baby. She wasn't christened properly.

*Was she later on?*

Then she had her confirmation here; I went to that among others.

*What year would that have been Robin?*

Let me see [spoken quietly] confirmation was in the seventies I think. We got a photo of her after the confirmation. Do you like to see some of them, of her? I mean she did use to do various... She used to do a little bit of work but it was difficult for her; picking felt off some, you know,

*She was in a wheelchair was she, or?*

Yeah. We had no... In the early days as I said workshop was where the bottom bedrooms used to be; the boys' workshop was there.

*The boys' workshop?*

No the boy, the girl, was it? No, we worked down there to begin with while this is being built. The boys, the girls' workshop was down where the sun lounge is.

*Hmm. And what did they do?*

Well more knitting and Carol knitted a lot; toys, poodle egg, poodle neg [ph]

*They did some nursery work and gardening here, don't they in the 1980s?*

Residents didn't, except David.

*Because I saw some newspaper cuttings and*

Yes

*they tried to open like kitchen gardens and things.*

Yeah. We got plenty of time. [Takes a drink.]

*Yeah. You never took part in that at all?*

Mmm?

*You never took part in the gardening at all?*

No.

*Did you have many friends to talk to about music?*

Only Margaret Ford [ph].

*She [was] interested in classical music?*



She loved music [both talking together]...

*What did you listen to?*

... and I got a... She said [both talking together] when I came here my first morn, had first lunchtime here, I played to them and one or two were there; Kathy Hudson [ph], and Margaret Ford [ph]. I played to them and Margaret said she wanted to learn and I taught her. She'd learnt a bit and she could play quite well. I told Mr Dela I liked playing the piano, at that time it was in the hall. He said, 'Well Robin there'll be times when you can't play the piano there,' because the television was out there then but he says, 'it will be all right.' Then I had my little recorder though; I had a recorder which my mother suggested I took up when we sold our grand piano. Anyway, it was nice that I could still keep up both. Well, recorder I could play in the bedroom, cos they didn't go up to their bedroom, then they didn't go up so I had the bedroom free.

*What year did they close the workshops and open the activity centre?*

How do you mean 'close it'?

*When they... Workshops, you know, the old way of doing things, making baskets. That finished didn't it?*

Mr Stella [ph] was there then.

*Uh hmm.*

He was the one -

*She. Wasn't it she?*

Must have been in the early eighties perhaps,

*Wasn't it she?*

or late seventies [both talking together].

*Wasn't it Sheila who's run the activity centre?*

Who?

*Sheila Frost.*

Sheila Frost was one. Mr Stella told us what he... Charlie Randal [ph] worked on his own he said. They had two females in the girls' workshop. He said -

*What did Charlie Randal do? [Both talking together.]*

He was the manager in the workshop.

*Right, right.*

I liked him but he would not have it. I said to him, I was talking about the fact that I came down to Cornwall from Waterloo he said there wasn't such a line. And would not believe it.

*What, to the Waterloo line?*

Yes, the Waterloo to Padstow. He would not have it. He'd never heard of it but Margaret Hawk said well if I did it, it must be true.

*Margaret Hawk?*

Who comes in regular, well she used to but she's ill now, caring for David, you know.

*Oh, Dave Morgan?*

She adopted.

**[End of Track 5]**

**Track 6 [Tape 3 Side B]**

*Right. So, what did Margaret do?*

She was a friend; she was one of the friends of Gladys Holman House.

*Right.*

And Margaret and David had Cheryl over to their home. They [practically] adopted Cheryl. You know they're like parents to her cos Cheryl had lost her parents; I don't know the situation.

*What -*

And Cheryl came [both talking together] here just wrapped in something; she didn't have... They had to completely change, clothe her, you know, buy clothes for her. The hospital didn't look after her very well. She came in '78, on my mother's birthday and Carol had just returned from her summer holiday and she and I befriended Cheryl. You saved this... Are you still rec [recording]?

*Yes that's good [both talking together] So what did you think of the changes then when they activities started and -*

Shall I tell you? [both talking together]

*Jane Turner came.*

I had a restless night when I heard about it. I wasn't happy about it [takes a drink].

*Why weren't you happy?*

I didn't feel, I mean I just didn't like the change.

*Because of changes and... But how did you feel afterwards when you got to know Jane?*

I got on well with Sheila.

*Sheila Foster.*

I got on well with Jane [both talking together]. One time I was... They were stricter in those days. You know the day of the royal wedding; Prince Charles...

*Oh yeah [both talking together].*

... and Diana, we didn't know whether we'd have the day off. You know it was that strict, you know, we did.

*That was under Mr Della [ph]?*

Yes.

*But it was not quite so strict afterwards?*

Mmm?

*It's not so strict since?*

No but I felt tired, you know. I don't know what, I wasn't very well at all and Sheila said, 'You told Charlie you were tired.' They wouldn't accept I wasn't well. I think I was expected to do too much sometimes. My parents did not like... my mother did not like me... She loved Carol, she was very fond of Carol but I was expected to push Carol up those ramps and down the -

*You were?*

Well the care staff used to leave her for me to take up [sighs] and care staff you see, it was left to two people to take 20 odd residents up to activities because the staff were having their lunch. We started, in those days, at one o'clock, half past one in the summertime. And then we'd have an activities garden, you know, outside; sometimes they would sit outside the activities garden...

*Which was the activities garden?*

... at the back here [both talking together].

*Mm hmm.*

You know, through -

*What, by the bungalow there?*

Yes.

*House.*

And sometimes they would have story tapes on as well. I liked that. When they used to have, in those days they used to have what they called, we used to have the young wives in the church; they're called just church wives, the young wives in the church used to come and some of them used to come and write letters for those who couldn't; on a Wednesday afternoon I think, which was very nice to meet them. Sometimes I would have to interpret and help interpret what they were saying. [Takes a drink.]

*Is there anything else you would like to add?*

You see, I enjoyed going. In those days we didn't have any church transport, you know, and once I had an accident; in 1973, Christmas. I slipped when out for a walk and I broke my ankle. I know that. And I had to go to Truro City, I know -

*Truro City Hospital? [Both talking together.]*

Yes. But all the neighbours knew, they wondered, 'What's happened? Who's gone to hospital?' My mother said it was because I didn't heed my father's warning but I mean she -

*What was your father's warning?*

He told me not... no, about it being slippery and my ankle you see. I got up on my good leg and someone coming by said, 'Could you tell my parents, tell my father I've had an accident and I can't walk.'

*Was it more difficult walking after that?*

Mmm?

*Did it become more difficult for you to walk after that?*

About the same. I mean I'm not -

*And did you manage to get to church over the time you've been here?*

Did I - ? [Talking together.]

*Have people taken you to church? Have you been to church?*

Well I'll tell you this, the first morn, when I went to... Well we used to have the Cornish mine students and Carol and I became friendly with Tom Morrison [ph], he

was very nice. He became a friend and we wrote to him and we had another friend, David Beckett [ph]. He was in contact with Tom as well. Tom came to see us once but he was on the church rota, there were boys to... Cornish mine students took them to church and I walked with 'em. But well after my accident I couldn't walk but do you know what the kitchen staff said why didn't I go to church? 'How can I?' I said, 'I'm in plaster.' How on earth she could expect me to walk up in plaster, on crutches. I wasn't doing anything like the amount of walking. They were a bit hard in those days.

*But you take communion here don't you?*

Yes we have that; we're always had it. But in those days care staff assisted; they don't have to now but...

*I think Sharon is the oldest member of staff still here in't she?*

Well, who is the oldest? She could be. She was a spinster then.

*Spinster? [Laughs.]*

She got married. Unmarried then, she wasn't married; spinster is mar... [laughs]. Why, there was a photo call when her, on her wedding. You know they had a photo call on the lawn, you know. I took a nice photo of them.

*Oh did you? You still got that?*

Of the brides; yes. Ah, this is another thing I've never done before. We started the Jersey trips, in 1973. The girls went first, said they'd had a raw deal; they were treated badly, apparently. There were rows in the kitchen, very bad atmosphere. The manager said he was sorry about it. But we went in the autumn, the boys, three of us; Joyce Alford [ph], and there were two house parents, yes. And Mavis. I went in '73, '75, and several times after. It was very nice there.



*We're going to have to turn off in a minute for now, Robin. Is there anything else you want to say this morning?*

Not at the moment.

*No? That's enough now is it? No more thoughts?*

I feel as if sometimes I've been expected to do too much because one night I wanted to go to bed early and I was sleeping with the others. 'Can you help get this boy undressed?' or something. I didn't mind helping Fran. When Fran and I were down in the flat, where the old bedrooms were, I helped to dress him so far then they would come down to help finish him. I didn't mind that.

*But you -*

But I was expected [both talking together] to do so much pushing.

*You were a bit put upon in those days?*

Mmm?

*You were a bit put upon in those days?*

Yes but they only had to, yes [laughs].

*OK, then Robin. Well better finish there for now. Thank you.*

**[End of Track 6]**

**Track 7 [Tape 4 Side A]**

*Right. Robin has some extra thoughts or memories he'd like to record. Robin?*

Yes I would.

*Um hmm.*

You see, my mother was one of six children and she had four sisters and one brother. Well, the brother, Roy, married Doris, his wife and they produced three children; two girl (cousins Myra and Olwyn) and a son, (Ian). Well I got to know the first one when I was 16 in '54 but didn't get to know Myra till when Carol was 16, 1967. We hadn't moved down here. I met Myra and liked her; I was very fond of Myra.

*When you say 'moved down here' you mean to Gladys Holman?*

Yes. That's right [door slams]. When I came, I hadn't met Carol till five years later but there are other memories as well. [A sneeze in the background.] There's an instance when I went to Coombe Farm I was approaching 21 when I came here, Carol was very near 21 as well.

*Quite a coincidence?*

Mm, yes. [Door slams.] Course she hadn't been very well, I was getting quite fond of her then, getting to know, you know. I really [door slams] liked... We were friends in the beginning and it grew to love. Cos I was going with another lady, much older, called Margaret Ford. And then I had an accident and she kept depressing me.

*Kept depressing you?*

Saying that I wasn't improving. I said, 'Well the staff say that I am.' 'They don't say what they mean,' she said. This is when Margaret went away and I got closer to Carol, I spent more time with her. She was very good.

*So what happened in the end?*

Well I gave up [bell rings]. Margaret, we had a row didn't we, on a Sunday afternoon it was and she got upset. Another boy stuck up for me, he was annoyed with her and I had Carol, till she died. It's funny that, see my mother had to go to boarding school cos she was so young. They were brought up by their great aunts whom I only met once when they went to the Isle of Wight – she had quite a strict upbringing. Something interesting about my mother though, she had all the family dolls, they had a family doll called Fifi with proper clothing; you know, shoes, socks, everything and underwear. Lovely doll it was because we sold it before coming to Cornwall. We called her Fifi, I think. Cos I last saw my aunt Doris in '67, that's when Carol was 16. I liked her as well, very nice. It's funny that my father didn't have... His mother, my true grandmother, she died when he was six and my grandfather married again whom we called granny then, our step grandmother. She was she was very fond of us. Then we had, because of course my father had three sisters: Dora and Margaret and Binky [ph] who I see sometimes. She's [coughing] Madeline Spencer [ph] [coughing].

*Say it again?*

My aunt Madeline Spencer she used to call herself Brooks. She said, something she wanted, 'Brooks wants it.' [Laughs.] And Brooks got corrupted to Binks and Binky. Don't know how she is but she's suffering from cancer [spoken breathlessly, coughs]. Both my uncle and grandfather (Uncle Ron and my maternal grandfather) they were sailors. He was drowned at sea.

*Who were?*

I think my maternal grandfather [clears throat] was drowned at sea.

*Do you know where?*

No. It's funny isn't it? What else would you like to know? [Breathless.]

*Any thoughts you want to say.*

Well every Christmas time my Aunt Dora one of my father's sisters, she always arranged a family reunion, all the family together. We would come.

*Where?*

Some of them would come to lunch and we would follow on in the afternoon; it was only 20 minutes drive away.

*This was Padstow?*

No, this was long before we moved to Cornwall, Eltham, south east London. And we'd have a musical matinee because all the cousins would play, I'd play something. It was very nice that. They were all musical; my cousin Ray was organist [door slams] in church. My aunt adopted Veronica because she couldn't have any more children.

*Wait a sec.*

[Break in recording.]

*Sorry Robin, carry on.*

And we'd have more Christmas presents. And my -

*Christmas presents? [Both talking together.]*

Yes. And they'd do a lovely tea for us, party tea. [Pause.]

*But this would be early fifties?*

Well fifties onwards, yes. We did it for several years [spoken breathlessly]. My aunt Dora was a nurse, you see the daughters were well educated. The great aunts sent them to a well-known school in London – Mary Duchalers [ph]. His sisters were very well educated. My step grandmother paid for my father's education. He took up... I asked him how he got interested in the violin. He said somebody came round to their home asking if anybody was interested in violin. My aunts tried it, they didn't manage it but my father took to it like a duck to water. My grandfather didn't recommend him to be a musician but he plodded on. He had to do office work in the beginning cos my grandfather worked on the News Chronicle paper; you know he worked in the newspapers industry. And we went round one afternoon, my mother, Tim and I. We used to have the paper and it was merged into the *Daily Mail*. There was Janet... My cousin was church organist... How long have I got?

*As long as you want, Robin.*

But I mean I don't know who's taking me.

*Mike.*

Well he just comes up for me does he? And we have... I felt closer to my... I had a lovely aunt, my aunt Sheila, one of the four sisters, my mother's. I got to like [her?]. I was closer to her, very nice, but I didn't know the other sister's cos they'd die, they'd gone. I think that's all I can think of at the moment.

*Yeah, but if you want to do some more, we can come back.*

Yes.

*You want to finish now?*

Yes.

**[End of Track 7]**

**[End of recording]**