



Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Michael Somwaru
Interviewed by Stephen Beal

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Interview Summary Sheet

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Interviewee's surname: Michael **Title:** Mr

Interviewee's forename: Somwaru **Sex:** Male

Occupation: Carpenter **Date and place of birth:** 1957, Guyana

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[Track 1]

This is Steven Beal interviewing Michael Somwaru, on Saturday 25th October 2008; for the Unheard Voices project in Eastbourne, East Sussex. So good afternoon Michael and thank you for attending this afternoon. Could you please tell me your full name to start off with and spell your surname please?

My surname is Somwaru, S-O-M-W-A-R-U. And the name is Michael.

Could you repeat your name is Michael?

My name is Michael, the middle name is H-E-E-R-A-L-L.

Thank you very much Michael.

Michael, could you tell us your date and place of birth please?

Date of birth is 20th of the first, 1958.

Where were you born?

I was born in Guyana.

Are your parents Guyanian?

Yes they, they are Guyanians.

When you worked Michael what was your occupation?

My occupation at work was a mobile service engineer that was the last that I worked as.

I am now going to ask you some questions Michael on your childhood and you have told me you were born in Guyana, did you spend your childhood this Guyana?

No, not really. I mean, this is quite a long time ago. I came over in this country aged about 3 and I spent most of my life in this country, growing up, school hood, childhood. Working life.

Your parents they came over did both your parents came over to England with you?

No, my dad came over here at the first in 1960s, 61. Okay. And my mother followed two years afterwards; with my sister and myself.

And did your father come over here for work?

He came over here on the intention of looking for work, yes.

Your mother came over with your sister. Did, were you settled here by the time they came?

How do you mean that?

When, your mother came over your childhood was, were you happy to come to England?

Well I had no other choice.

No, no, but what I am saying is you, sorry -- you settled, the English way of life would have been different to --

I can't see anything other than different, but I have accepted it and I am quite happy.

[04:03]

Yes, yes. School, were you happy at school?

School, went through a primary junior, secondary school. Afterwards to college,

because I was being trained as an electrical engineer and I just followed suit.

When you went to school, early school, infant junior, did you find it easy to make friends?

Yes, I had quite a few friends; I was talked about quite a lot. Did normal things what everybody else was doing, football, this and that. Going out here and there, mixing in the park. All the usual things, yes.

Did you enjoy school?

I did enjoy school. Apparently, I can't say I didn't!

Did you get on with your sister well?

Yes, yes. I mean, I also have one brother, there are 3 of us, I am the oldest in the family followed by my sister and then my younger brother is four years.

And after school did you do any after school activities?

Most activities that I done, well I done all the usual, football, cricket, I was into table tennis, that type of thing.

So your family home Michael when you were a youngster, did you, were you in a house, bungalow?

The very first thing that I remember when we came into this country was living in a caravan on a field.

Yes, and then you moved on to a house?

Then we moved on into a house, my dad was trying his best. My mother's brother was already over here, so it was a two up and a two down, we had an upstairs room and they had the downstairs. And that how it happened for 3 or 4 years, before

moving on to junior school when my dad got his first house which was a normal 3 bedroomed house.

What area did you move to Michael? When you first..

The area that I moved to at the time was Earlsfield. This is South London.

Right. Did you find that daunting?

How do you mean?

The way of life in London is it quite fast and --

To me I was already in the area and I was just growing up as and how and it was just the way of life, that was it. They were coming and going so I was going with the flow and if that is how you mean.

[07:23]

So as you grew up Michael, did you develop any hobbies?

Not really. I mean I had normal things to do. I was in the scouts, cubs, from cubs I was into the scouts and just things like that.

Did you do well at school Michael, you said about the early days at school. When you went to secondary school obviously exams and did you well at school?

I just got the normal exam, I didn't go very high, I got normal --

Did you enjoy secondary school?

Yes, it was a new thing to me because mixing at this and that was great. Good.

Did you make many friends Michael?

I had quite a few friends at the time there as well, yes.

Did you keep those friends when you left school?

On and off. I mean, I still remember a few that I now contact on Internet and it is just going back many, many years ago.

We will come to that later, that is good.

Going on to your mother's occupation and your father's occupation Michael, you say your father come over to find work. Did, was he successful?

He done very well, actually. Because he came over and, what shall I say, he used it as the boat coming into find work from the Caribbean to England. And although he was keen on welding in his days in Guyana, he came looking as to do welding in this country. And where he went and sought he managed to find work as soon as he entered the country, as a fitter welder. And that took him right through his days up until his retirement age of what he was doing.

That is marvellous, especially this day and age. And what about your mother, Michael, was she just ---

She just came over here.

To bring up the children?

Ordinary housewife to support the children and to support him.

Did she ever find any work at all or did she not have time?

Oh yes, she found work herself, because at that time money was very, very scarce. Very, very low. They needed -- both needed to go to work to have some extra money

coming in.

Yes.

She found work as doing sewing, things like that.

[10:21]

Were you close to your father and mother?

I am, I still am. Yes.

Good. Your brothers and sisters, are you close to them?

Oh yes, they still, we are still a close-knit family.

That is great, good. Do you know much about your grandparents, Michael, your mother and father's parents?

The only thing I remember about is my grandmother on my mother's side but she has been gone now for so many years, but I only met her once where the family then with her brother being my mum's brother and sister, they sent for the grandmother to come over to England and I met her for the first time. But I can't tell you how many years that was.

No. Was that to stay in England or a visit?

That was just for her to come over, to pay us a visit from Guyana to England, yes not to live over here, no.

Have you ever been back to Guyana?

I went back once, yes.

Was this recently?

For my 21st birthday and never been back, never had the opportunity to do so.

When you went back, did you, would you like to go back again, did it give you ---

Not really, no. It was just that I wanted to see the country where I was born and I happened to do that but I would not go back there, no.

[12:02]

No. Okay.

After you left school Michael, your first job?

My first job, well, I had even before I left school I was working in local Tesco's. The first supermarket they built in Wandsworth which was also called the Arndale centre at the same time, and I started working there as an ordinary trolley boy and I had a part-time job there which was just weekend and that lasted me right up until 16. I was going to spend on -- stay on at school, but I managed to get lucky and found myself an apprenticeship to go into electrical engineering, which I took up. So I was on a road to into electrical I went straight through that into college. Got my certificates, and was working for a company called Pullen pubs, spent a good 12 years with them, and thought it is time to move on. Can I just stop there for a minute? After spending 12 years, as I have just said, with this first firm I decided to move on and I went into British Telecom, still as an engineer, service engineer. Okay. And this lasted for another 3 to four years. And I was quite happy there too, but I was mainly inside a building all the time and I was looking to get out of the building to progress to other things. And managed to find the last firm that I worked for as a mobile service engineer. But unfortunately, four years into it and really was getting into this job, I was struck down by bacterial meningitis. It took out both sides of my hearing.

Can I interrupt you there; can I come to that in a minute Michael, the hearing? It is

okay if I come to that in a minute?

Okay. Yes.

[15:05]

Because I notice you also had another illness, you suffer with epilepsy.

Epilepsy? Now this was also to do with ---

Was that to do with the meningitis? I wanted to clear that point up, so the epilepsy wasn't a childhood illness?

No, no, no.

Okay that is fine. Okay. So were you at work when you had the bacterial meningitis attack?

Okay. How this happened was - I was at work. I had a bad flu, cold, symptoms coming on. And I just knew something wasn't right with me in the day. And it was a very, very bad winter that we were having, January 1992. And my first job was to call back around to a person's place where her heating system had to be flushed out. As well as not being fully right because I wasn't feeling too good, and I wanted to get away, I still had to get the system working.

So I managed to flush out this lady's heating system, managed to get it going, but she was giving me a lot of ear ache. And I was telling her, please, it is sorted but I really have to get away.

So you really felt rough?

Yes. So I had to let the office know and I just basically told them I have to get home, that I am not well.

That evening or that day I was having sweat, headaches, nothing was right. The wife also found that you have either got a very, very bad cold coming along, but I am not just going to call out a doctor there and then. So this lasted for 2 more days, she managed to tell the office that I am not very well. It was made for an emergency doctor's appointment where he told me that I had meningitis and get me to the hospital straight away.

At this time your hearing was okay?

Yes my hearing was quite right. No problems, but after having penicillin injection at the doctor's surgery and from the doctor's surgery to hospital, I lost the hearing completely.

[18:06]

Did you lose it in both ears Michael or just one ear to start off with?

Both ears, completely, both sides.

Your feelings at that time were what ?

Well, I had to have a good cry about this, no hearing, what am I going to do now. This type of thing.

So when you were told you had bacterial meningitis did you understand what was being told to you at the time?

No, did not know nothing about it at the time, although even the consultants didn't know. I was a young man and they only had heard of this happening to very young children. Or very old adults that were very, very surprised that a young man of my age bacterial meningitis, it is a young man. Never heard of before.

So, you left the doctor's surgery after the penicillin injection?

Straight into hospital.

Did you go to hospital by ambulance?

No, I the wife had the car at the same time and she just got me down there because the hospital wasn't too far, just round the corner actually.

Okay. And you were taken into casualty or whatever? To a particular ward?

I was just taken straight in. How do you say the rooms, because I was segregated from everybody else?

So you were put in isolation?

I was put in isolation, yes.

At this time your hearing had gone?

From having penicillin injection.

When the doctors -- it is a long time to think back I know -- when the doctors were looking at you, you were obviously upset because your hearing had disappeared.

Did you realise then before they spoke it would be permanent?

Well, I didn't know anything. I thought by the next morning hearing has gone now but will it come back and no it didn't. The very same day or the day after there was a hearing therapist that was in the hospital and he was already instructed to come upstairs to try and teach me to lip-read.

So it happened that quick, they thought the next day they could come up and teach you to lip-read?

He decided to come up to say, look, your hearing has gone. I am here to try to see if

we can communicate, but he was very surprised to find out that I was communicating very, very well with him, by just lip reading his skills, by just lip reading his lips.

Without any training? Took me five years to learn.

It was very, very emotional like that, yes.

[21:13]

Thinking back, Michael, your what was your wife's reaction to this? Obviously you had young children?

Very, very young family, yes. She just did not know what to do; or where were we going to be going from here. Because it all happened so fast. And it was just, Oh, at the time very, very devastating.

Were you offered counseling? By the National Health Service or the doctors?

Well, only apart from having the hearing therapist, they offered and said well, you can try hearing aids, that type of thing. Which I did but they did not help me at all. LINK was mentioned here.

LINK was mentioned straight away, while you were in hospital?

Yes.

Did they give you any explanation why your hearing had gone?

Only that having the meningitis that it is an after effect that you either can have some hearing or you will lose your hearing and that was all that I got told about it.

So they never explained the reasons why your hearing had gone or...

No.

Did they give you any hope that it could return?

No, once I knew that my hearing was taken out, they said it is possible that you will never get your hearing back again. Now that it has gone, you won't get it back.

[22:55]

Okay. I will come back to your hearing in a minute because I am very interested. You said earlier that you contracted epilepsy. And that was caused through the bacterial meningitis?

Yes, well apparently they said you can suffer with epilepsy, it is just an ongoing thing that people who have had meningitis could suffer, but I was never mentioned or told this. But being as a person of what I was, I thought coming out of hospital, getting some strength back I was able to continue without the hearing, doing various things and I was just going about my ordinary business and I had an attack. And it was thought ---

Where were you when you had the attack?

I was coming out of the house and I was going into the garage because I thought I am getting strong, I want to start doing a few bits and pieces. And nobody told me you still have to rest and take things slowly.

All I remember of that is going into the garage, having a smoke, coming out of the garage and the next thing I knew I was sitting inside the house on the steps, because it was good that I had few very good friends that noticed a few things and I had just done something and they found me and walked me and put me down on the steps. And I was told eventually that that was an epilepsy fit.

You must have been very frightened?

Very, very frightening, because it not only happened the once I had two further

attacks; where I had to go into hospital to find out why, you know, if it was going to be occurring again.

After that, I spent a night in hospital and they just gave me more drugs and said it is best that you keep on the drugs for life and that is basically what I have been doing.

[25:23]

Okay. So after you, going back to your hearing loss Michael, you left hospital?

Yes.

How long did you have to wait for hearing aids?

They tried to follow up with me after everything, after coming out of hospital which was six weeks plus. Straightaway but found out the hearing aids were no good to me. Even the hearing aids that were powerful at that time they were no good, they were just not powerful enough to help me.

I notice you have a cochlear implant.

Yes.

So thinking back you say the hearing aids were no help at all. What sort of time limit are we looking at between the hearing aids and the decision to give you a cochlear implant?

That all happened quite quickly as well.

Could you give me some details?

We are talking about a year, then, 18 months, because I was referred to have a cochlear implant and had the tests done and they said we put you on the waiting list. And within 18 months I managed to be ---

When the hearing therapist or audiologist offered you the chance to have a cochlear implant, had you heard of a cochlear implant before that?

No, did not know nothing about cochlear implants what so ever; it was all new to me.

Had you met anyone with a cochlear implant before?

No.

So, you went into it blind? Were you given any ---

Oh yes, I went into it finally not knowing is it going to help, both me and the wife went into it together and it was just finding out well, it could help, or it might not but it was the way forward to go at the time.

Yes, did you discuss it with anyone first before you agreed to have the operation? To put your mind at rest?

Only the normal people who were doing it like the surgeons and the cochlear implant team up at the hospital.

What hospital did you have to go to, Michael?

The first one was up at Middlesex before I was referred to RNITU which is now at Kings Cross. First implant that I had.

Sorry, Michael, to interrupt, in Middlesex was what is the name of the hospital in Middlesex?

I know it as the Middlesex London hospital.

Were they helpful?

They were, very, very helpful, yes, very, very helpful.

They took your wife's feelings and your feelings all into consideration?

Oh yes, our feelings, everything was all taken care of.

[28:28]

And one thing I will ask you, Michael, your children through all of this, they must have been very worried and very frightened to see their dad having all these problems?

And they still do. Oh yes, they still do. Apparently, I mean, not a lot of children or not a lot of fathers have the time to see their children growing up and this to me I was at home with the kids and to see them grow up.

So that is a bonus really.

Have you explained to the children what caused your deafness, Michael?

They know very well what caused my deafness, yes.

How old are your children now?

My children now - they are quite tall and big. If you want to know their ages, one has just passed 21, yes 21 and the other one has just passed 20.

So, when you had the first bacterial meningitis attack, the children did they understand what was happening to their dad then?

They knew that their dad had lost his hearing then. And that he has got no hearing.

Right.

So they were told if you want it say something you have to pull on the side to get my attention, wave their hand, that type of thing.

Yes. And had they been supportive?

They have been very, very supportive of me. Yes. Like trying to tell me to slow down or don't speak too fast, and things like that.

That is good, so you have had good family support.

My family has been very, very supportive.

[30:24]

That is good Michael.

So from Middlesex you then went to which hospital?

The RNENT which is in Kings Cross Grays Inn Road.

Do they have a special cochlear implant team?

No, these were the same team but they move the surgery departments from where they were at Middlesex into this hospital. That is basically it.

Okay. And then you had the cochlear implant fitted?

Yes.

Would you like to tell me the tragic news what happened?

Yes. Well, apparently, I was very, very happy with the first implant; although it lasted for a good three years and apparently it broke. It broke inside; the electrode I was told has broken and the bad part about it was we have to take it out and we will try and fit a new one in. But it was the time that between that because I was so proud

of being able to understand, hear words, hear speech, people's voices and being able to communicate. But being told it has to come out, I thought they were talking about well, we can do it next week for you or very soon. This wasn't the case. Apparently it was another six months and from a happy go lucky person that I was, I went downhill very, very fast.

When you say you went downhill very fast, obviously the disappointment in a way you must have been losing your hearing again. Were you offered any help, counselling?

No I just took it on myself what you want to know.

How was your GP, was he supportive?

They tried to be, but it was just the question of waiting and, you know, I wanted it done now but you can't have it.

You must have suffered pain and intense pain, at that time when it broke to have the operation replacement?

It was just depression, it was way, way depression that I just went from being happy and I went down and I wasn't doing things that I should have been doing. My appearance was not looking too good and even when the wife was saying, you know, try, do this, do that I was taking it in but it wasn't getting through. But I just had to let it go. But it took a good six months and then they finally booked me in and said, we will redo the whole thing and the good part about it was that although it was still on warranty from the cochlear implant because at the said it was faulty equipment and they will replace it, I was upgraded to a newer model.

What model --can you explain what models you were given to start off with and then the model now, do you understand?

Well, I started off with a 22, which was basically 22 electrodes, cochlear implant. And this was a body worn unit. And that is the same one that broke. And they replaced it with a newer version but this was still a 22 but 24 electrodes which I could

operate, but this was still with another box, and this worked quite better than the previous one.

Okay. Thank you. Can you still have an upgrade now, Michael, can they operate further?

I can have another upgrade now which I am patiently, patiently waiting for; because the last time I was upgraded which was being part of Cochlear's research which was year 2006. I have been told that there is a new model out now which is the Freedom. And I am just waiting for them to tell me that I can be upgraded.

[35:36]

I am going to ask you a few questions now Michael about politics. Now feel free to answer but if you don't feel happy, don't worry. But do you, are you involved in politics at all?

I only do the ordinary things, like vote for the politicians if I want to, that type of thing, if that is what you mean, yes.

So, I mean, do you feel that the government should do more for people with deafness or one party over the other or how do you feel personally?

I feel personally that everybody is doing enough; I can't hold one against the other. That is fine.

Okay. What about religion, do you follow religion at all, Michael?

I am a Christian, but I don't follow as much as what I should be doing.

Do you have faith; do you think faith helps you through your problems?

Sometimes. Okay. All I will go with is that.

Okay. Do you class yourself Michael as being disabled because of the problems you have?

I do because I have balance problems as well as the deafness. I mean if I have the implants off or the battery has failed, I still have a hearing problem because I can't hear.

What do you find the attitude of medical staff over these problems when you explain it to them?

I understand it to them. I can put it across to them that I am deaf or I need something and do not shout to me or this and that. And I can put it across. But ---

Do you find them helpful?

I found everybody helpful.

Have you come across any people that don't understand your disabilities? In the medical profession?

Not at the moment.

Good.

Not at the moment. I have been very, very lucky who I have seen and I have managed to explain to them that they have to look at me and that I have to lip-read sometimes. But I have had nobody who said, or shouted, they have all been fair to me.

It sounds to me you have had a very good hearing therapist.

I have had a very, very good hearing therapist, yes, very, very good. I will recommend him to anybody.

Good, that is good. Do you still see the person, him?

I still see the person, now and again, yes. Chris Woods based at Mayday hospital.

[38:48]

And how do you find the lip reading now, Michael, do you --

I do it all the time, still, but it helps when I have the implants on, okay.

Even with the implants, that is what I was going to say.

But without the implants if somebody is a very, very good speaker I will follow it.

Have you ever thought about a hearing dog?

No. Not really. But it wouldn't go too well because the rest of the family aren't into pets. So I can't win on that one actually!

[39:29]

I want to talk about the employment side of things, Michael. Obviously reading through your questionnaire, unfortunately you said because of your accident to deafness, your employment was terminated. Would you like to explain how you felt inside at the time? Because you had a lot to put up with, didn't you?

Well, at the time I thought what do I do now. Okay. I mean, I managed to try to go back into electrics, but it was turned down because of other health reasons. Not being able to steady oneself up and down ladders, not even to hear fire alarms, it was taken on to them accounts. Can't go back into this field of work.

Did you feel angry inside?

I was angry at the time but what else do you do.

Not getting too personal, did you manage to get benefits okay?

At the time yes, and no. And it went that we were going to lose the house at one point. That is how bad it was.

How did that make you feel, Michael?

Terrible. But in the end I had some insurance that helped me out. And without that not being there, at the time, goodness knows what would have happened. But the wife is now back to work as well, the only benefits that I get which I am entitled to.

You don't have to, no, it is entirely up to you.

Okay, that is fine.

So, you then ventured into voluntary work. The implants have given you the confidence, the lip reading as well. So, would you like to tell me about your voluntary work youth, you heard about LINK and the hearing therapist?

I heard about LINK through the hearing therapist as I have said, Chris, and from there it has opened up quite a lot of new doors. I mean, I was first here at LINK just after losing the hearing because they thought it would be good for you to mix with other people; that you are not the only one in the same boat; that there are others like you. And it just opened up a few insights into the deafened community then. That is how I want to put it.

[42:48]

When you first attended LINK did you do the intensive programme?

I was on the intensive programme, for one week.

How did you --

I am speaking too fast.

No you are fine. You are doing fine Michael.

It is not as what it is as today. And although I have been quite lucky to have asked to come and see how is it being done now, I was very, very, very surprised and taken aback. 15 years to now it is quite a long way to go. Everything was on board and pencil and chalk and now we have glorified things as palantypist who can type things out for you to read off the screen.

When you first, that is great. When you first attended the course, did your wife and children attend it with you, Michael?

The children were too young to attend to find out what it was all about. But I had the wife come down with me, yes.

And were you, did it open your eyes to what your future held?

Sort of ways, yes.

Did you go away feeling positive?

I went away very positive, to see what I could do, but it was quite a few years before I think she was into doing some of LINK's voluntary work.

[44:33]

So in the 15 years since you have attended the course, you have been involved with LINK in various ways. Would you like to share some of those with us?

I will go in the last 7, in the last 7 years of the 15 years then I have really formed or come into LINK, in the voluntary role. If that makes sense.

Yes. So what are your interests now, Michael? What interests do you have?

It is to help late deafened people like myself. I mean I am still classed as an outreach volunteer, where I can go visit contacts if contacts are put through to me. Okay. I am disappointed that we could not have changed the roles here of not being involved or being trained to be an interviewer instead of being interviewed. If it is possible if the roles could be changed or if I could have another go, I would like to give it a try.

Okay. You obviously get satisfaction out of helping people with deafness?

I get quite a lot of satisfaction out of it, it is for me just saying something has happened to myself but to me, other people who are possibly going through the same frustration, anger, and for me to tell them I have already been there, it gives me something to sit down and talk and to help them through things, where I have been in the past.

When you had your meningitis attack, do you wish that there was someone who you could have spoken to who had gone through the same as you, or could have supported you more?

I couldn't think there could have been anybody more supportive, now at the same time what has happened, it happened and we have moved on from there. I mean, I have had the help through the hospitals, the counsellors and it was just things that moved on. Everything went into my favour, instead of going backwards.

[End of Track 1]

[Track 2]

Can you describe how you are feeling because of what happened to you in your life?

I can't say whether I am good, bad, or the feelings, I am just saying, I feel normal. I can't I have bad feelings; I have never felt bad about it. I have lost the hearing. I have gained something back. Although work wise, I am just, I am okay, I am happy.

Yes, that is good. Yes. Could you tell me obviously it is a life changing experience when you lose your hearing. Could you tell me how you feel it has affected your life?

I would say it hasn't affected that great deal. I still do various things. Going shopping, spending time with the kids, going out with the wife. Mixing, I still do all of that.

Are you actually involved with any other interesting groups or societies?

I have another hearing group, people who have lost their hearing, okay, I am involved with that. I am also involved with cochlear implant users group as well.

What do you do with the hearing group, Michael, do you just meet socially or is it through newsletters?

It is just socially, we go to the pub where we meet up and it is just a chat, amongst yourselves as like a hearing person would do in the hearing world, whereas deaf people are allowed to communicate as well. And that is why we do it. We can also have a laugh, in our own way; and chitchat.

[02:22]

Have you faced any discrimination because of your deafness?

I have never faced it myself, no.

That is good.

But I know it is there and people can say, well, because of his deafness he can't do this or he can't do that but I have never personally faced it or somebody hasn't told me that because of that, that is why you cannot do this or you cannot do that.

Very early in the interview you said when you were at school you enjoyed sports. Do you still follow sport at all or get involved in any sports?

I don't personally get involved in any sports now. But I just go and look at it. Mainly some cricket sometimes, both my boys are into cricket, but I don't play no more, no.

Did you ever play after you had the attacks?

A few times, but not now.

It didn't affect you at all?

No.

What about travel, do you travel?

I like to travel about. On the train. On the bus, that type of thing. I do like flying when I can, when I have some money!

Yes. With a cochlear implant does flying affect you at all?

No I find it no bother at all. I find it is perfect because some people have said, what is it -- the pressure or when you are hearing the pressure is like going deep down into water, that your ears blow out. Where I used to suffer bad in the beginning when I was hearing, and I could never, never liked flying. But when I feel with the implant it is vice versa, I just don't get it. So if I could fly all the time I would fly. Perfect.

[04:34]

What about the personal relationships with your wife? Has that altered in any ways at all?

No not really.

Your relationship has not altered because of the deafness or the problems you have had?

We have had the odd arguments here and there, but like everybody else, but I have the loving support of her.

So she is your ears?

Yes, sometimes.

Apart from LINK is there any other support net works you have been involved with?

Only with my cochlear implant users group which I must say is, although the group has been together now ten years plus, okay, and the team there we get along quite well. Everybody who mixes although it is a small charity, it has got charity status now, home counties cochlear implant group and we have got 50 plus members and we are now a registered charity and it has moved from strength to strength, so it is very, very good. Although I am not on the committee, but I help out as much as a member.

[06:02]

Going back to when you had your accident, Michael, both your parents what was their reaction?

We are looking back onto it, I mean, they were devastated as well. What does one do now? Who is going support his family?

Did they understand what was happening to their son?

Only that he is growing up, he has lost his hearing, that is all, they didn't know what meningitis was, all of us didn't know what it was.

Have you been on to the Internet to find out anything about the hearing? Or what meningitis was?

Oh, yes, as soon as it happened, what it was, water on the brain things like that. And then that was just all I was being told. I was learning through it for myself, but you read in newspapers every winter comes along, kind of things to watch out for. Because they say it is in the air and people can be a carrier. And it just needs time for it to strike, that is it.

You sound a very positive man, Michael.

Thank you very much. I like to be.

Okay. I think we will end it there, because you have answered the questions I have had to ask you. And thank you very much.

[End of Track 2]

[End of recording]