



# Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Bridget Pettet  
Interviewed by Fran Walker

British Library ref. C1345/08

## IMPORTANT

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## Interview Summary Sheet

**Ref no:** C1345/08

**Collection title:** Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

<b>Interviewee's surname:</b>	Pettit	<b>Title:</b>	
<b>Interviewee's forename:</b>	Bridget	<b>Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Occupation:</b>		<b>Date and place of birth:</b>	1941, Devon

**Date(s) of recording:** 26<sup>th</sup> October 2008

**Location of interview:** Hearing Link head office, Eastbourne

**Name of interviewer:** Fran Walker

**Speech to Text reporter:** Emma White

**Type of recorder:** Marantz PMD660 on compact flash

**Recording format :** WAV 16 bit 48 kHz

**Total no. of tracks:** 2                      **Mono or stereo:** stereo

**Total Duration:** 52 min.

**Additional material:**

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**Interviewer's comments:**

**[Track 1]**

*I am Fran, Fran Walker, interviewing Bridget Pettet?*

Pettet.

*On Sunday, the 26th of October, 2008, for the Unheard Voices Project in Eastbourne, East Sussex. And I am going to start by asking you just a few basic questions.*

Yes, Fran.

*Then a little bit about your background, general bit about your background,*

Right

*just to sort of warm up so we get to know each other a bit better, and then go into the sort of nitty-gritty of the interview, and covering all sorts of things about your hearing loss, and as you know, it is part of a project to record the history of people with an acquired hearing loss, and if there is anything you are not clear about, just stop and ask.*

I will ask. Fine.

*Ok. So, if you could just tell me your full name and that includes your maiden name, if you have changed your name.*

Yes. It is Mrs Bridget Nesta Ann Pettet, and my maiden name was Daly, D A L Y.  
*And what's your main occupation been?*

When I was working?

Yes.

Well, I am a housewife, retired now, but I used to be a fashion model.

*Oh right, yes. The date and place of birth?*

12th of August, 1941, in Exeter, Devon.

*And your mother's occupation?*

Mummy was a housewife, and mummy, you know, mother.

*Your father's occupation?*

Daddy was a Brewer. He made beer.

*A brewer? A Brewer, oh right!*

*That leads us on a little bit into some of the more personal things, so if you could tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in Exeter, who you lived with.*

Right. Well, I was born in Exeter, and presumably, then, went to stay with my grandmother when I was a baby because that is where daddy lived as well. His mother lived in Exeter, and parents.

Then because of the war, I was born during the war, we went up to Scotland to live. It was safer up there, and daddy was in the army, but whether he was in the army up there or not I don't know, but mummy and army wives and their children were sent up to Largs in Scotland.

*They were sent to Largs in Scotland. Right. How long were you there for?*

Well, being just a little babe in arms I cannot really remember.

*Oh right!*

Not for very long, I should not think.

*Exeter is the first place that you remember?*

No. Don't remember because I was born there, so I was too young to remember, then we went up to Largs, and I had done, as a child, I did lots of paintings of sunsets and mummy said we used to have a lot of sunsets up there because Largs is on the coast, so that is the only memory I have of Scotland. Going back.

*So where is the earliest place that you can remember living for some time?*

Trowbridge in Wiltshire.

*Oh, right.*

Trowbridge in Wiltshire. When I was about four, four or five I went to school there.

*Is that where your father was working as a Brewer?*

Yes. Daddy worked for Ushers as it then was in Trowbridge, and I remember being very naughty and not wanting to go to school. I had green and white checked dress on but I didn't want to go to school and I cut my hair off, and I stuffed it into my doll's head! (laughter) But I was still sent to school. I was still sent to school.

*Right. Was there any reason you didn't like school in particular, or just that you --*

Just didn't want to go.

*You just didn't want to go. Did you carry on not liking it? Or was it --*

School days were all right, but Trowbridge, I had -- well, it was just one primary school there. I suppose you would call it primary school. From there I went to a boarding school because my parents' marriage was not happy, so I was sent away from home, as it were, with my brother. Ran away from school, tried, did a big escape with sheets out of dormitory window but was caught by the cook coming back one evening. I was hiding in the rhododendron bushes. I did not go very far, but no, those

days were not very happy because I knew my parents weren't happy, so Trowbridge was from the ages of about four or five until about ten, and then after that we went to live in Malta.

[05:40]

*In Malta? Oh right.*

Yes.

*Quite a change.*

Again, daddy was a Brewer out there as well. He was head Brewer out in Malta.

*A Head Brewer?*

Brewer, yes. He still made beer. He was head Brewer. He went out first, and then we followed on afterwards, but my mother heard that the flat that we were going to live in above the brewery, the previous occupier had had TB, and she was terrified for our safety, so she said, "Well, I am not staying there until it has been fumigated", so we had to stay in the Hotel Phoenicia in Valletta, which was very nice, until the flat was safe to go back to. Then I went to school out there. My brother was over here in England at a prep school, and I went to the convent of the Sacred Heart at St. Julian's Bay, Malta.

*That was a day school, then?*

A day school. I was always late. The bus used to come, and Maltese buses they make a lot of noise and the driver used to bang on the bus like this and I used to go charging along the corridor, down the steps, out across the drive, into the bus, my hair flying, my hat all askew, my satchel, to catch the bus to go to school.

*You obviously weren't that keen on school but what were the other things that you liked doing in your life at that time? What were your hobbies?*

Oh, hobbies? Swimming, and swimming was wonderful in Malta. I couldn't really swim, not well, but the water was very buoyant, the Mediterranean, and it was so inviting, so we just jumped off the diving board and hoped. It was wonderful. Yes. Swimming. Wonderful.

[08:00]

*Were your parents not together then?*

They were together but just unhappy, unsettling time. My brother was very disturbed when he came out on school holidays and things. Yes. He was very upset about everything, and we were out there from 1950- 51 to 54, but mummy had to come home for an operation, hysterectomy, and daddy just didn't care, really, you know. She was finding it very hard to cope, and we were also put into school temporarily down in Havant when we had to come back with her and those weren't happy days either because we were put into lodgings, as it were, as children. Then we went back out there, but the marriage wasn't working, not really. I think mummy felt trapped on an island and she just wasn't happy. I would say we had a disturbed, disruptive childhood, definitely. All I wanted was my parents to be together. Somehow a Georgian house with a nice little drive, maybe a sherry on the mantelpiece and a fire and a dog, you know, to be together.

*Nuclear family. Yes.*

But nobody has everything.

*No, no. And what did you do after you lived in Malta? You were beginning to --*

Well, we came home and we lived temporarily with my grandmother. I can't remember what daddy was doing, looking for a job, I suppose. He also came home. My parents tried it again, it didn't work, then mummy got a little house and I went to school in London, I did PNEU school, Parents National Educational Union school.

*What is a PNEU?*

Parents National Educational Union.

*Oh right. Yes.*

I went to that school in Queen's Gardens, I think it was. We lived in a mews cottage just nearby but I was the only child whose parents couldn't afford to have school lunches and the headmistress said, "Don't worry, Bridget can have school lunches", and in those days mummy went out to work, which was sort of not very common in those days, certainly nobody else at school's mother worked, and it was a super school. I went to school with some amazing people. I haven't kept in touch unfortunately, but it was quite a school.

*After school, what did you do next?*

After school, my brother was in boarding school at this time. He was expected to get into Clifton College which was daddy's school, but everything went sort of pear-shaped because academically he didn't make it. He wasn't going to make it, even in spite of a crammer, so mummy was working, and she was demonstrating at the ideal home exhibition, and she met a chap there who said, "Well, why don't you come up to Scotland", that is where I live now, but there was a great need for ex-pats to have bed and breakfast accommodation, B&Bs, a guest house. So mummy thought, "Well, that is a good idea", so she sold the London cottage and bought a great big house in a residential area that was not in a very good state of repair. We had an old Ford Popular car literally tied up with string and she packed my brother and I into that and said, "Right, education is good, you know, the state system in Scotland was very good", so he went to East Kilbride and did quite well, and I went there too, helped run the guest house, fell in love with a few guests at the age of 16, 17, went to a secretarial college in Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow, because mummy thought I had better have a training.

*Something to fall back on?*

Yes, something to fall back on, and that is what I did. In the meantime I was going to, I thought, marry one of the guests, at some time down in the future. He was a Scotsman and a bit mean and I soon decided he wasn't for me. I then decided I wanted to go into the Wrens, and mummy said, "No Bridget. No. A bit immoral and you are a bit too young to go that far away", so I said, "Please, then, could I do a modelling course", fashion modelling, and she agreed to that, providing I came down to London, lived with Granny, and I did it from there. Having done that, I did fashion shows, I worked packing parcels, answering telephones, general dog's body, but also typing in between, sort of make ends meet, a little bit of television work. Anything that I could get, really, that was legal and moral.

*You were still living with your grandmother?*

I was still with my grandmother, then tragedy struck in 1960. Granny had a stroke and she died, and I was there with her when it all was happening, so that was a big shock, very, very --well, it was dreadful. Then they said that she would never be able to play the piano again, and that had been her life. She -- this is mummy's mummy. She wrote with Norman Wisdom, "Don't laugh at me because I am a fool", and she had written songs for Max Bygraves and she knew quite a few, you know, of the old stage people, as it were, as they would be now.

So granny was no more, so we had to get hold of mummy in Scotland, her sister down in Southsea, and the police got hold of her and her brother who was in Christchurch, and everybody had to come up and granny's flat was no more, and after that I can't quite remember what happened. Obviously we had granny's funeral, and then mummy had to rent a flat.

[End of Track 1]

**[Track 2]**

*I am sorry if it is going over things that are upsetting you. Just stop whenever you want.*

It is fine. It brings things back that is all, sometimes. Well, mummy had to sort of pack granny's home up, and then we stayed there for a while until things were sorted out, and then she did rent another flat, and my brother and I, he was then trying to find work. Having been to Davis' College in London, but he wasn't -- he was just difficult, which made my life difficult as well, but then mummy had the chance of going to Majorca to live. By this time I was about 18, still working a little bit as a model, still office work. She bought literally a pigsty, (laughter) which she had seen on a photograph from a very good friend in Holland, as I told you earlier today she was half Dutch, a quarter Dutch, and she had seen -- she knew this chap very well. He said, "Well, why don't you come out, brighten your life up, you have had a hard time, Bridget can take care of Michael", my brother, and that is what she did. She bought this little tiny pigsty and she went out to Majorca in her mini van. She was a pioneer.

*Very enterprising.*

Oh, she was. She had just a sleeping bag, just a few bare essentials, a little primer stove and off she set, and she went out there not speaking the language, she drove all the way down through France, down to Barcelona, across on the ferry, across from Barcelona to Palma, where she obviously signed the papers for buying this house, pigsty, and drove up to the village at Puigpunyent which is just northwest of Palma, and this last year Colin and I went back there and we found her house, I haven't been able to go back, not for all these years. She was out there for about six years until ill health brought her back to England. We had our honeymoon out there. But her neighbour was still living in the house next door, not speaking any English. We still didn't speak any Spanish, but all she said was, "Mucha contente, Mucha contente" that we had gone back to find her, so mummy was in Majorca and I was looking after my brother who was damned difficult, a teenager, and very much like daddy in temperament. Still is. I love him to bits but still is. And, I did the best I could with

him, and then I met Colin in an office, and apparently I went for a job interview in a very slim, dark clerical grey dress with stockings with seams absolutely, with a hat with gloves and a bag, and I was given the job as a typist, and he was a patents clerk who worked in the patents office of the National Research Development Corporation, and that is where I met him. I decided not to marry Ian, before then, and certainly loved Colin very much and have done ever since.

*You have been together a long time.*

Since 1960 when I met him. Just after granny died. She died in the June, June the 6th, I think, which was her birthday, I believe, and then I met Colin in the August, beginning of August. Yes. And we have been married for 44-and-a-half years. Wonderful.

[04:41]

*Moving on to your hearing loss, when did you first become aware of any problems?*

When I was 16, in Scotland at the typist's when I was doing the shorthand typing, the head teacher there was certainly a lovely person, but she had a very soft Edinburgh accent, which is more difficult to understand than Glasgow, where the school was, but she beckoned me to the front of the class, but I wasn't hearing, and I didn't hear and I didn't hear some of the paying guests that mummy had. I couldn't understand always what they were saying, but I used to think it was sort of normal. Didn't occur to me, really, that I might be deaf, or have a hearing problem.

So, no-one else in your family had had any problems?

Yes. Mummy was deaf in one ear a bit, or how much, I don't know, but when I asked her later on in life what had caused it, she said, "Well, I don't really know". One of her aunts on the Dutch side had been stone deaf with a trumpet. I remember her talking through a trumpet but mummy thought she might have been hit on the head or fallen, it might have been that.

*You would think you would notice being hit on the head?*

Well, she was by her stepfather as a child.

*Oh I see, right, sorry.*

So that might have contributed to it, so we don't really know. I just sort of went through life, through my early twenties I think I saw a --yes, I saw a hearing specialist in my twenties, but there wasn't much to be done, so I just --

*That would have been in the early sixties, wouldn't it?*

Yes it would, yes. It wasn't really until my early thirties when I had a first hearing aid.

*What prompted you to do something about it then?*

Probably getting tired, getting tired probably realising that maybe, you know, there was something to it and I wasn't hearing other people's comments. You are not hearing so well Bridget, you know, do something, and I went to Pembury hospital. This is when my first real recollection is, and went to see a consultant there, and the woman that was going to do my audiology tests came out, I was the only one in the waiting room, came out and I had been sitting there for ages, she kept coming out, and then she thought -- she said, "I was looking for an 80 year old", so she knew what my hearing looked like, obviously, from somewhere previously and associated that with someone being much older, and I said, "No, I am afraid it is me".

*So that must have made --*

I felt terrible. I was really brought down to -- I tried to laugh, but it hurt. It hurt

*It must have done. Yes. Did you get a hearing aid then?*

I did. I did. I persevered with it for a bit, but it didn't do any good. Not only that I got very, very narrow ear channels which has caused a lot of difficulty over the years, and the darned things don't fit very well, however hard they try to make the mould, they don't fit very well. So not very successful. So I soldiered on.

[08:40]

*Was it causing you any problems in your everyday life, then? What effect was it having?*

Frustration. Frustration. Really. But I got quite adept at watching people's mouths, not knowing anything about lipreading, or anything, really, you just have to get a bit sort of clued up as to what helps you and coming to Link --

*So you were picking up the skills as you went along?*

Yes, but Link really put it into perspective many years later. Really helped.

*After you got those hearing aids that you weren't very happy with, you were still working or were you --*

I was more a mother, but if there was a fashion show or demonstration job or -- I had done all sorts of things, you know, modelled at the motor show, fashion shows here there and everywhere. The main place of work was at Lachasse in London which is just literally in the last two years now closed down.

*I am sorry, what was the place?*

Lachasse, and at one point I was talking to Lorraine, maybe to try and arrange a fashion show, but it was too premature and Lachasse was closing down, about to, although they agreed to do it, but we hadn't got enough members and it was going to cost too much money to put it on, so it didn't ever materialise, but I would have loved to have done that, to have made some money for Link.

[10:25]

*Oh well, there are still opportunities, I am sure. Was your hearing causing you any problems during these years, any ongoing problems?*

Balance wasn't very good. Driving the car, but again, I wasn't really clued up enough to realise that that was all to do with hearing loss, and I suppose I didn't want to accept that I might have had a hearing loss. I pretended it wasn't there and did the best I could to get over it, really. But of course you don't get over it.

*Did you tell people about it or did you keep it to yourself really?*

Oh I kept it to myself. Yes I did. And then. We've moved quite a lot and then eventually we came down to Hastings. We had bad financial troubles, lost our homes, lost our business, virtually the lot. Didn't quite go bankrupt, but good things come out of bad, because at the gymnasium that we had in Hastings, we met some wonderful friends and still got them, and one worked in the audiology department at the Conquest in Hastings as a volunteer, and she said, "Bridget, you must do something about your hearing. I am taking you for a hearing test", because at the gymnasium that we had, people used to talk to me, I didn't hear them. They thought I was arrogant, rude, just, you know, ignoring them, but I didn't know.

*It was a noisy place, presumably.*

It was very noise aerobics music, background music, we had wooden floors, it was a nightmare. Coffee machine going by, you know, the reception area, telephones ringing. Dreadful environment, but we didn't think about that when we took it on. But anyway, we both loved fitness and it seemed like a good idea at the time. Unfortunately it wasn't, it was a bankrupt business but we didn't know that so we stayed there for four years and tried to do the best we could and our son, who is now in Australia, he worked with us as a gym instructor, met his wife, who was Australian, over here, who was a nurse. They met and married and gone back to Australia about 13 years ago now, but eventually I went to see the consultant at the Conquest, more

hearing aids, I think I had two up there, but no good, and after seeing him I suppose for about seven years he said he was going to send me to St Thomas' and Guy's for an assessment for a cochlear implant.

[13:53]

*How did that make you feel?*

I was thrilled to bits but I didn't know much about a cochlear implant. I hadn't met anybody with one. Eventually I did and managed to find out a little bit, but I was terrified, and when it actually came to -- because I was borderline, because I had some hearing, I remember saying, "Please don't knock me out of, you know, the assessment on round 1. I do want to be able to hear", and I have heard that these things work, but I was told all the good things about them, plus some of the negatives as well. But anyway, after nearly two years of going backwards and forwards, I was assessed, because you have to be psychologically prepared to have one. I went for it and did it.

*Right.*

But the night before the operation I nearly ran away. (laughter) I was terrified, I was, and Colin had to go to work so he couldn't stay with me in London at the hospital, and two days later I have got it, you know, and I have had it for five-and-a-half years.

*What was the rehab process like, getting used to it? How did that feel?*

Quite natural. Quite fine, because it seemed to balance with the hearing that I had. They also did a new technique in the operation on me. It is an Austrian one, and an Austrian presumably surgeon came over and was in the theatre at the same time where they were trying to preserve the residual hearing I had, and they did another woman from Plymouth, Margaret, in the morning, and I was done a bit later. She still has got her hearing, as far as I know.

*Oh right.*

Mine lasted for six months, the residual hearing, and then it just died away and went so I rely entirely on that. I have got some hearing in this ear but not very good. Take this off, I know there is -- no people are talking but I don't know what they are saying, and I rely a lot on facial expressions.

*It sounds as if you were soldiering on with quite a severe loss for a number of years.*

I did. I did. A lot of headaches, a lot of frustration, a lot of anger, and annoyance with family, "Oh mother you never hear, cloth ears", they used to call me, you know, not being -- they were frustrated. They didn't know how to deal with it.

*Frustrating for everyone, but -- yes.*

And I came here and that taught me to be more assertive, to say "hi, you know, wait a minute, what are you saying", put your hand up, how to have people -- the way they sit, you know, with the light on your face, difficult with beards, difficult with moustaches, difficult with glasses, all those sort of things I learned how to deal with, so yes, now I can be quite bossy. Much happier.

[17:37]

*When you were bringing your children up, how did it affect your relationship with your children at all?*

Probably I didn't -- it wasn't severe enough when they were tiny. I wasn't aware of it being severe, but having said that, I didn't always hear them cry, and I didn't always hear our dog whining, so maybe, you know, it was there. Definitely since the age of sixteen that is when I was first aware of it, but I pretended it wasn't there. I didn't know it wasn't normal.

*And now?*

Much happier. Much, much happier. Yes. Definitely. More in control, and when I had this I told people that I could now hear in colour.

*That is a lovely way of putting it.*

Everything was fuzzy, black and white before, but now I am hearing in colour. Yes. I still get very tired, and if there is a lot of noise and people talking, I prefer to be out of that environment, I prefer it to be quieter. I still rely on the subtitles, unless it is a news reader, and I am watching them, but on the whole, I am more than happy with it. Yes.

*You deserve to be a bit happy after such --*

Oh gosh, I felt as though I was getting my life back. It had come to a big crossroads. I was becoming more isolated, not going out, not wanting to go out, not wanting to talk with friends, getting out of things, or I would jump into something say oh yes please and then wonder what on earth I had done because it was too much. Too much. I lost a job once working for a friend –

[19:47]

*You put a little bit about that on your form. Do you want to say a bit more about that?*

Yes. That was really hard. I worked in an office, to give me back some confidence, for a friend, but I used to go get very tired and upset and that was obviously upsetting her staff, or they couldn't deal with it, but you try and learn the computer, and the person has to be behind you to show you what to do, you cannot be looking behind you and looking at the screen and the keyboard.

*Yet there is probably very practical ways that they could have helped you.*

Yes. It was decided, you know, that it would be best if I left, but having built my confidence up a little bit, I learned to use franking machines and I learned to use that, a little bit, all sorts of things, but I couldn't converse with others in the office and be part of the team. I just couldn't do it so that was sad.

[21:03]

*But Colin's always been -- how has your -- Colin coped with your hearing loss?*

Brilliantly. He's absolutely my rock, 100%. That is not to say he doesn't get a bit frustrated, or his hearing isn't maybe quite so good now as he's getting older, but he always repeats things for me, but sometimes, if you are feeling vulnerable, or a bit tired, or you haven't been well, then his frustration can be upsetting, because you learn to be very astute when people's faces -- you can read, even if there is just a slight grimace, or hmm, you know.

*I know.*

You do know. Yes. So that can send you into the depths sometimes, but 99% of the time -- and it has been a damned sight better since I have become more assertive, even with friends. We have got one very good friend and he used to get very ratty with me, "Oh Biddy you never hear my jokes, you never hear the punch line", and it came -- Colin was standing up for me and he said, "Now look here Tony, Biddy is deaf, don't you ever be like that, you know,", but since I have become more assertive, and I have explained more, and he's mellowed more, this dear friend, then it is a lot better with everybody now. They will make allowances for me, which is good, but I can make dreadful mistakes sometimes. Complete Bloomers! (laughter) With numbers, jokes, punch lines, but if you are feeling positive and good, then you can laugh at it and, you know, do the best you can. That is all you can do.

*And your grown up children now, has that changed anything now that you have got your implant?*

Oh yes. They are much happier. I think one of the real sad things was with our little grandson, which is now sixteen, when he was about six, I suppose, and I was keeping an eye on him one day and he was hungry and he was asking me for a sandwich and I didn't know what he was saying.

*Little children's voices are quite hard, aren't they?*

Yes. It was, "Gran I want a sandwich", and then I understood what he wanted but that really hurt, that I couldn't attend to his needs when he wanted it. I still find it a little hard to hear the grandchildren in Australia on the 'phone, they are better than they were, clearer voices now.

*Have they got Australian accents?*

They have, yes. Yes they have. But no, the boys are fine. I mean the youngest one will be 40 at the end of November, and the other one, Andrew, is 41 now in Australia. I have got a 21 year old granddaughter, and the youngest granddaughter in Australia was 10 a couple of days ago. But my voice is gravelly, as you can probably hear, and that is to do with my hearing, hearing loss.

*I cannot really hear.*

It is a bit. They have looked into it and said it is probably difficulty with hearing.

*Do you want to take a break?*

Yes. I will have just half a minute.

PAUSE

[25:14]

*You were saying a little bit about your balance problems.*

Yes. I do get balance problems. It is not all the time. Suddenly, you know, I could be just standing somewhere and my head starts to spin, but it isn't Ménière's but, you know, it is just one of those things with the hearing loss, and also if Colin is driving me in the car and we are going down a hill, every time I feel sick. I just say please slow down, whatever it is, it is just going down. I don't mind going up but it is the going down just sort of upsets the balance, and fairground rides, no thank you very much. Couldn't do that.

*The other thing you were talking about a few minutes ago was the tinnitus.*

Tinnitus. Yes. That is worse, a lot worse, but I just try and forget about it. I know I have got to live with it, there is nothing I can really do about it, you just try and think of other things.

*That's right.*

It is not there. (laughter) It can be a bit annoying, a bit intrusive.

[26:33]

*I know you came to Link a few years ago. How did you hear about Link?*

My consultant, Mr. Meredith, who I believe is also on the Board here, whether he was then or not I don't know, but he suggested that maybe a course here at Link would be beneficial, and I thought well, that would be fantastic but they had difficulty getting funding but eventually they did, and I have never really looked back. I have got a lot to thank Link for. It is good. Very good.

*Throughout the years, it sounds as if some people have been quite supportive to you and other people in the Health Service less so. Would you say that was --*

Would say that is definitely the case, yes. I think deafness is misunderstood. I think it is only in the last -- literally in the last few years that people are really starting to make a big noise about it, and people are beginning to be trained to be deaf aware.

An awful lot of people don't know about it, or they will say, "Very sorry", and look at you and start to speak slowly and then they start to gabble away again. They all do it. My Doctor does it. He knows darned well I am deaf. He will turn away and look at his screen, and he has got glasses and a beard and moustache. He should know better. I told him so. On the whole, now, I expect to be respected, I expect people to have a little compassion, they don't always, but it is just one of those things that I have to live with and many others do as well. But airports can be nightmare. The last time we travelled, one of the chaps -- because you cannot go through the airport security with a cochlear implant, you have to be hand-searched, and I had got a card to say, you know, I am a patient, et cetera, and explain what these things are, and he said, "Oh, we have thousands of these going through a day. What is different about you", so I then had to explain, and when he said, "Thousands", thank goodness I listened and stood my ground, I said I am not going through there, I am not allowed to. I have to be hand searched. Why? So Colin goes one way and I go the other and with that eventually he did listen and I was marched off, and I thought oh God, they are going to really search me, but anyway, they eventually understood that you can't put this through the x-ray machine, I have to be hand searched, and showed them my patient card, and he did have the grace to apologise afterwards, saying he was very sorry, he didn't know, but people should be more aware. They really should. You know, thank goodness for places like Link or Hearing Concern LINK now, and training, more training given to staff, hopefully, you know, we will be recognized, because you cannot see deafness. Many people are said, "But you don't look deaf", and I think, "Well, what does a deaf person look like?" Or, "You don't even sound deaf", because I have had hearing I have still got a voice that goes up and down, not all on one level, as some people with no hearing can peak more on a monotone level. But I am getting there.

[30:28]

*Good. Good. I am sorry to keep going back over this but you were talking about your cochlear implant.*

Yes.

*Who first suggested that? Some people have to fight quite hard to get one.*

Very hard. Mr. Meredith did at the Conquest, said he would send me up for assessment to St Thomas', and as I said, they looked at me very hard for about 18 months to two years, and then it was finally agreed that yes, I was suitable to have one. Then as I say, I got pretty scared. It was a bigger operation than I anticipated it. Didn't know enough about it. Now I have got a computer I can look up anything I want to, but I did not have one then.

*Has it affected the image of yourself, now that you have accepted your hearing loss how has it changed the image you have had of yourself over the years?*

I feel more as a whole person now, with hearing.

*Before you felt?*

Oh, so vulnerable, but very vulnerable. Years ago when I was a lot younger I was a very shy person. Over the years I have got more assertive, I have had to be, but then my hearing loss was getting worse and worse, I definitely went into my shell, definitely. I was a shadow of the person I am today.

*Did it -- how did it affect your sort of activities, your day-to-day activities? You say you were going into your shell.*

Well, there is not much that I wouldn't tackle now. Before I would avoid talking to people. Now it wouldn't bother me at all, but my first -- always my first thing on the 'phone or to whoever I meet, I tell them I am very deaf and have a cochlear implant.

*But you can use the 'phone?*

Yes. Oh yes, I do. Bit naughty, I don't actually use the cochlear implant ear I use the hearing that I have got in this ear, but this is getting worse, so I rely on my amplification button all the time, so I am going to have to really start to use this, definitely. I will always try and make a 'phone call, but if it involves a lot of numbers

or banking and things like this, then I like Colin to be there in case I have to pass the 'phone over.

*Have you been involved with other people with a hearing loss at all, either through Link or through anywhere else?*

Through Link, through Link yes. They have a social group that started here called the Chain Gang. I *was* a member of that, but because of -- we do a bit of house sitting, we look after other people's animals, and our social life, or seeing family and friends, that is interrupted many of the social outings. I couldn't do both, so I have actually said because this year I have had a lot of health problems, I have said I will not be a member any more but I still keep in touch with three or four of them, and we will meet when we can, you know, at a mutual time. Yes.

*That is support for each other?*

Yes, definitely. In fact, it was Elsie Wood who is a friend of Beryl's, Beryl I think --

*She was here yesterday.*

That's right, Elsie and Beryl are good friends and Elsie Wood was more or less the first person that I met with one of these, although she hadn't done a course here at Link but I have met her, and we have become good friends, and she has got her implant as well. Yes. And Beryl is lovely. Yes. And Ken.

*Do you still find ongoing problems? You described the scene at the airport. Can you think of any other examples of --*

Hospitals. Yes. Just recently, in this last year, I have had breast cancer, then they found something on my ovary, but that wasn't cancer, but it ended up with a full hysterectomy, so I have two operations and radiotherapy in between December and May. Going to operating theatres and things like that when I was scared stupid, scared stupid and I hadn't got my hearing in. I am sorry. I felt desperately vulnerable and very frightened. But one thing -- they looked after it for me when I was in theatre

and when I was having radiotherapy, and I was fine once I got it back on, but I do feel out of it when I haven't got it, and when I travel, St Thomas's are wonderful, well, Medel, the company, and they give me one, a spare one for if I am travelling to go to Australia.

*Do you want to have another pause?*

Yes.

[End of track 2]

**[Track 3]**

[The final track of interview was not recorded although there is a full transcript]

So hospitals are difficult places. If I can get somebody to go with me, I find that is better because sometimes you are just nervous or you don't always ask the right questions. I have learned to write things down, and ask consultants to speak slowly, but that demands time, and there are certain procedures that you cannot have done when you have got a cochlear implant, and the consultant came round to see me just before the hysterectomy and I told him about this, and he said, "Nobody told me that you couldn't have bipolar, whatever it was", or mono polar, I can't remember. There are certain procedures in an operation to stop the bleeding, and so he got really, really very cross and I said, "Well, I did explain it to, you know, when I was having my sort of pre-assessment for the operation. Nobody told me. Anyway, he went and looked everything up on the computer, but I didn't know if I was having the operation or not, so I was fairly stressed out. If I am tired or stressed my hearing is far worse. Far worse, even with the implant. I just want to creep away and have a lie down and I think my immune system and system generally has been shocked this year so I am a bit more tired than I would normally be, so that suffers. But with rest I am okay.

*It has been a hard time for you recently.*

It has been a bit of a basinful to put it mildly, yes. I have got to be positive now and look forward.

*On a more upbeat note, you have been to Australia?*

Upbeat notes. Yes. Definitely.

*You have had doors opened that maybe --*

Upbeat, definitely. We are going to Australia, we are going to have a Christmas out there, see the family, see the grandchildren, yes. It will be good. But I still won't write it in my diary when I am going. I know when I am going. I can talk about it but

I am not going to at the moment fate. Up to three cancellations, so yes. Life is good, and I feel extremely lucky to be living in Hastings, we have got a jolly good hospital, good consultants, I have been well looked after in all areas. Love living by the sea, so on the whole, no, life is pretty good.

*Is there anything else that you think we need to cover? Do you think we have covered – is there anything else you want to talk about yourself, or --*

No. I think we have covered most things, Fran.

Deafness is a difficult thing to deal with but there are so many avenues and so many people out there to help you that you have to go and ask for it, and you have to be prepared to battle a bit, you do, but -- and you have to be prepared to stand up for yourself and be assertive, but you can get through it. You have to live with it, you know? If you are deaf, you have to live with it and do the best you can. That is the way I look at it. I am hearing in colour. It is better than black and white.

*Yes. That is nice. Okay.*

Thank you very much. It has been a pleasure to be interviewed.

*There are so many things that you have talked about.*

Well, if you haven't got everything --

*Well, I am sure between the recording and this, I am sure we have got everything.*

[End of Track 3]

[End of Recording]