



Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Fran Walker
Interviewed by Andrew Goodwin

British Library ref. C1345/17

IMPORTANT

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Oral History
The British Library
96 Euston Road
London
NW1 2DB

T: +44 (0)20 7412 7404
E: oralhistory@bl.uk

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Interview Summary Sheet

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Interviewee's surname: Walker

Title:

Interviewee's forename: Fran

Sex: Female

Occupation:

Date and place of birth: 1953, London

Date(s) of recording: 14th December 2008

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Name of interviewer: Andrew Goodwin

Speech to Text reporter: Francis Barrett

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[Track 1]

This is Andrew Goodwin interviewing Fran Walker on Sunday the 14th December 2008 for the Unheard Voices Project in Chester the Speech To Text Reporter is Fran, Franny. If I can ask you to give me your full name, please?

I'm Fran, Fran Walker. I was born in London 1953. I am an information manager for a charity. My father was a postman and my mother was a secretary.

Okay, how long was your father a postman for?

I don't know, erm.

Was he always a postman?

I think he tried various things before that but I don't know when he started.

Was he a postman when you were a little girl?

Oh yes, he was a postman when I was born, yes.

What else can you remember about your childhood?

Well, erm, there was me and my brother who was a lot younger than me, 7 years younger than me. My Mum worked from home. She did freelance secretarial work so our house was always full of typewriters, duplicators, all sorts of weird equipment and that's how I used to earn my pocket money helping out with mail-outs and things.

How much younger is your brother than you?

7 years, 7 years younger.

You really are his big sister?

I am his big sister, yes.

Are you close?

Not particularly, no. No.

How about when you were young?

Erm, not really no. He was very musical so he went off to music school at a very young age and... I don't know, our lives were just very different, you know, a 14 year old and a 7 year old had very different lives, you know.

What else can you tell me about your childhood?

Erm, my grandmother lived with us as well and she was, it was her house in fact. My parents lived in her house in North London, erm my father had a lot of health problems and mental health problems so my childhood was a bit odd sometimes.

Would you mind giving an example?

Erm, I always felt very uncomfortable bringing anyone back home. My grandmother had one room, there was all the office equipment everywhere so there was nowhere to bring friends to play or anything like that so that was quite difficult and my father could sometimes be erm, sometimes quite odd with people. He didn't know, so it was another reason not to bring people home.

So, you tended to go out most of the time?

Erm, no. I used to just sit in my room a lot actually and read. I was quite a bookworm, I used to do a lot of reading, fairly solitary child.

What sort of books did you read?

Oh anything really, anything and everything, school stories, classics, magazines, whatever [laughs]. I think my favourites were the Little House on the Prairie books, Laura Ingleswilder.

[04:52]

So, were you like this when you were going through school then?

Yes, mostly, yes. I had friends from school but erm, not loads not loads.

What can you tell me about your school?

Erm, well I went to a huge primary school, so there were 48 of us in a class [laughs] it seems a lot.

Wow?

Yes, I know and all the classes were that bad, people, unlike now, erm, it was a really good primary school had a very good teacher especially the last year of my primary school had a really charismatic teacher he was great and secondary school was okay, erm, there were some very arty, sociable -- there was a very much an in-crowd that I wasn't part of, so sometimes I felt a bit left out then.

What sort of decades are we talking about here?

This is the 60s.

Did you experience much of the 60s?

Not till later, no [laughs] just that little bit too young.

Can you remember anything interesting about your school days?

Erm.

You mentioned you liked reading. Were you involved in anything to do with reading while at school?

Well, not really. I mean, work, nothing specific you know, erm.

Any clubs things like that at school?

I played a lot of music. I played viola in the orchestra and I played in the school orchestra and an orchestra outside school so, yes, a lot of music.

Was that something you particularly enjoyed?

Yes, yes and we will come on to what happened later too, yes.

Anything else about school? Did you have many friends?

Yes, there was a little group of three or four of us and I am still in touch with most of them, yes, erm. I remember we used to go off and stay. One of the friends had a cottage and I mean from the time we were 15 or 16 we used to go off and stay in that cottage in the holidays, yes.

Sounds lovely?

Yes and one year we got snowed in and that was great. That was really exciting [laughs].

How old were you when this happened?

From 15 or 16 we did it. I don't think you would let your 15 or 16 year olds do it now but we were, yes.

[08:24]

You left school and then you did what?

I went to university in Liverpool.

To study?

That was great that was, living away from home for the first time, so and that was -- Liverpool in the early 70s was a great place to be, lots of music lots of bands lots of poetry evenings lots of folk music, all sorts of things and even little bits of work I suppose, though not very much and just, I don't know, for the first time I felt I was really part of a group of proper friends, a bit of a social life. I really -- it really felt different from being at school where I had always been a bit solitary.

What did you study at university in between the parties?

History and English.

Okay and did you pass?

Oh yes. Just about [laughs]

Okay and then what did you do after that?

Well, first of all I worked in a bookshop for a few years and then I was the manager of the book shop and I was doing a lot of adult literacy teaching as well at the same time and involved in various local campaigns, then I became a community worker and was the coordinator for a community centre nearby and I was living in Brixton then and I was really finding community work in Brixton in the 80s really quite hard going so I went back to college and did a library and information studies course. And I have worked in information management since then though I have never worked in a public library.

[10:35]

Can I go back to a comment you made earlier. You said you did lots of local campaigns. Can you elaborate on that?

Well, erm, the anti-Nazi league, things like that and anti-rate capping campaign and various issues.

You were quite politically active?

Yes.

Are you still active?

No, I think the most active thing I do is not going to Burma on holiday and that's about it!

Okay, so you are still an information manager now?

Yes.

What does that entail?

Erm, well now I do things like look after websites, look after our e-mail communications, a little bit of PR work though I found that quite difficult, internal sort of statistics and management information. It's erm, a national charity with branches all over the country so I go out to branches to look after the members, erm, all sorts of bits of all sorts things, yes.

Quite a responsible job?

I suppose so yes.

Do you enjoy it?

Not a lot no, erm, I think it's to do with my hearing it's become incredibly IT orientated, erm, because those are the aspects of the job I can develop well whereas some of the more networking side I find much harder to do so it's become very much an IT job.

The PR side of things you are doing less nowadays?

Yes, yes.

[12:56]

Would you mind telling me more about your hearing loss, for example when did it start?

Okay, well, I was it was to do with work really I had first noticed it I was meant to be handling phone calls and I was finding it much harder to understand what people were talking about and I knew there was a little bit of a problem and then we moved to an open plan office and I couldn't manage at all, so I went to the doctors and she said, 'Oh you have got a cold'. Well, I had got a cold so she gave me some antibiotics or something and the next time I went I had also got a cold and eventually she referred me to an ENT place but not as an ear patient but as a nose patient because I always had colds although I was saying, 'I am not bothered about the colds, what I am bothered about is not being able to hear'. I went to see a nose specialist and said, 'I don't think this is the issue, I think it's my ears that are the problem', and that was the first time I had a hearing test and she was quite shocked to see the level of my hearing. That must have been about a year after I had first gone to the doctor.

When did you first go to the doctor?

This would have been about 1994 I think.

So in '94 you were working as the information manager still?

Yes.

You were answering the phones a lot and finding it difficult?

Yes.

How long did it take before you actually decided to go to the doctor?

I had noticed it gradually and I think almost as soon as we moved into the open plan office I thought, 'I must do something about this, I can't hear what people are saying'.

People are ringing up sometimes in distress and I was having to say, 'I am sorry, can you say that again, I am sorry', so that's when I first went to the doctor. It was about a year before I actually saw someone who said, 'Yes, you have got a hearing problem'.

So, it was a year before you first went to the doctor and then you had your hearing test?

No, no, no, I went to the doctor almost as soon as I was aware that the problem was so bad but because she kept saying, 'It was your nose, it was your cold'. It was a long time before I saw an ear person or, as I said, it was a nose specialist.

How did you feel then when you were told you had a hearing loss?

Well, in a way I felt relieved that someone was accepting that there was a problem, it wasn't just me being stupid at the end of the phone, so it sounds a bit odd in a way but, yes thinking, 'Oh I will get a hearing-aid. I will be able to hear' I thought', but erm, that's not really what happened because over the next two or three years it got a lot worse quite quickly and at one point I was going for a hearing test every two or four weeks because it was going down so fast so, erm, that was one strand of problems and then I was also getting dizzy spells and I had had those in the past but not related it to hearing problems, so it was a form of Meniere's disease although it's not quite proper Meniere's disease but near enough.

Okay. So, by 1995 you were having regular hearing tests?

Yes, I think a little bit later by then.

[17:08]

'95, '96. So when did you get to the stage when you needed more help?

About yes, erm, I suppose as my hearing got worse I can't quite remember the years but at the end of the '90s, that was when it was getting worse and it started off as a joke then, an inconvenience, then it was a problem, then it really became almost like a crisis, I suppose not crisis but a severe problem. That's when my hearing therapist recommended me to go to LINK. That was 2002 when I finally went, yes.

So what was offered to you before you went to LINK, so you were having all of these hearing tests? Were there any support or equipment offered?

I had my started with one hearing-aid and then.

When was that given?

About '95 I think, yes. I didn't even need to wear it all the time when I first had it and then the audiologist I saw, who I found very difficult, he upset me a lot. He said, 'Oh your hearing is dropping like a brick. Why aren't you wearing two hearing-aids?'. I said, 'No-one has given me two, I have only had one'. He said, 'You should be wearing two', so he gave me a second one, erm.

How did you find his manner?

Well, he was the only person who I found really difficult to deal with. I found him very erm... well, I mean he reduced me to tears a few times, just very unpleasant but he saw me as a problem to be solved, so I did get very good hearing-aids and he would spend a lot of time with me. It was just he saw me as a pair of ears, nothing else, not a person.

So you end up then having 2 hearing-aids?

Yes.

So, we are talking about seven years between you having the first hearing-aid and the time you were referred to LINK. Was it the same audiologist?

Yes. It wasn't the audiologist that referred me, no it was the hearing therapist.

[19:24]

Can you tell me more about your hearing therapist then what was that person like?

I can't remember much about the hearing therapist. I just saw her a few times.

But what was she there for?

Erm, we did a little bit about, erm, exercises for hearing on the phone, erm, a little bit about communication strategies, erm, it always seemed quite helpful while I was in the sessions but it never seemed to quite fit in with the problems I actually had.

Never quite fits in with real life?

Yes, yes.

You didn't find that useful?

It wasn't un-useful but I think I needed more than the odd half hour. Also, because the hospital had such good conditions all the rooms were soundproofed and everyone was very deaf aware. It was very easy to understand what was going on there but out in the real world it was very different so it always felt a bit unreal.

[21:23]

Okay. So, you then got referred to LINK. What were your feelings at the time you were told about this organisation?

Well, I was quite excited actually, just to think that erm, I would be meeting other people with the same kind of problems. My daughter came with me. She was about 13 and she found it a bit difficult. Everyone was – well, I was the youngest person there and apart from her, there weren't any other children there so it was a bit hard for her so she joined in and I just found it really, really useful to see people who were coping really well even though their problems were worse than mine, so I think that was the thing that I took away from it, the fact that people coped rather than some of the specific things, some of the communication strategies, you know.

Okay, what else did you find useful about going to LINK?

Erm, the information on it was the first time I saw a Captel phone and I have used one at work. I have some Access to Work funding for a Captel phone. They have gone

out of business now so I am without a phone again. It was not ideal, it had a separate number. It was not part of the switchboard. I never really got incoming calls through it but at least I could make phone calls.

So at work you are now using the telephone again?

No, no, Captel has gone out of business so I am without a phone now. So, I just rely on e-mail really.

It's an alternative, isn't it?

Yes, yes, I mean I couldn't manage without e-mail.

So, you are quite happy not using the telephone anymore?

Yes.

What did your daughter think about LINK?

Erm, well, as I said, she was the only child there but she did contribute to the sessions and certainly for the next few years she was -- she has always been pretty considerate of my needs actually and certainly it seemed to make a difference, yes, she erm, she always speaks very clearly so I can always understand her and she always used to interpret what her friends said. I could never understand other children's voices so she always used to if she had friends round and I said, 'What do you want for supper?', she would interpret what they were saying and she did that sort of instinctively really and she has always been quite happy to make phone calls for me, though I don't really like asking her but erm...

So she has always been supportive for you?

There were times too when she was a teenager and she could say, 'I am sure I told you I was going to be out really late and you could have not heard', and I would say, 'I am sure you didn't tell me', and I am convinced she hadn't so sometimes she could use it, yes [laughs].

[25:17]

I can understand that. What about the rest of your family, were they equally supportive?

I haven't really got any other family. I see my brother occasionally, my Mum had Alzheimer's at this time. I never really told her about my hearing problems and my father had died by then and the other thing I haven't mentioned, my father also had hearing problems different kinds, he had meningitis, oh in the late '70s and which left him a little bit brain damaged, pretty deaf and he still had the sort of problems he'd had earlier as well so he became a complete recluse, complete recluse, didn't really talk to anyone and so although I said I was relieved when I first got my hearing loss, as it got worse I was very, very worried I was going to end up like my father because he was just completely isolated and he wouldn't wear his hearing-aids or at least he wouldn't switch them on because we didn't know how difficult it is to get used to hearing-aids. We weren't very sympathetic or supportive about it but we didn't know. We would say, 'Switch them on' and he wouldn't, so that's quite frustrating.

When your father lost his hearing, what sort of support did they get, do you know?

He didn't really get any I don't think. I was not living at home but as far as I know I don't think he got any support.

So you had already gone off to university by then?

It was after then, it was after I was first living -- after university in the late 70s.

In the late 70s right. So, did you actually see your father much by the time he lost his hearing?

My mother or my father sorry?

Your father?

My father? Erm, yes, a bit but as I said he would -- he wouldn't talk to people, not even to me so it was... yes.

What I am trying to get to understand is your father's lost his hearing and I am trying to find out what support he would have got from his family?

I don't think we gave him enough support no, no, no. I mean, I always think it was bad karma. I lost my hearing because of not being sympathetic enough to him.

You made an interesting point earlier that when you lost your hearing you were worried about turning into a recluse like your father?

Yes.

What other thoughts went through your head?

Well, erm, what went through my head?

Did you wonder about the kind of support you would receive having seen your father receive not very much?

Well, I didn't know what support was available myself then and it's only really through my lipreading classes and through going to LINK that I found out about things. My lipreading classes were the biggest support, I would say the biggest source of information.

[29:31]

How did you find out about lipreading classes?

Erm, I can't remember, erm, I remember it was quite hard to find one that was in the evening while I was still working but I don't know where I originally heard about them, no.

Okay. Would it have been from your audiologist or hearing therapist?

It wasn't from the hospital, no. I think it was something I found out about myself.

Can you remember when you first went?

Yes, it was about 1999, I remember very clearly.

So, what was it like going to lipreading class for the first time?

Oh, it was good it was good, erm, it was nice to be able to hear the punch line to jokes and being with people who would talk slow enough to hear, yes. It was great, I have always enjoyed them.

Can you remember your first time?

I can, yes. I can remember doing, 'The man that broke the bank at Monte Carlo'. We were doing, 'P, B' and, 'M' so I remember doing, 'The man that broke the bank'.

So that's a lipreading exercise?

Yes.

It's interesting, you say it was good to be able to hear the punch line to jokes. Is that something you had been missing then?

Yes, and I think I still do because people start laughing before they get to the end of the jokes. You get the joke and the big build up and then what happened, what happened?

If you are out with your friends then do you still miss the punch line to jokes or do they accommodate you in any way?

Yes, probably. Erm, if I am out with one friend at a time it's fine but if I am out with a group of friends I still find it very difficult. Individually people can adapt but it's harder in a group I think.

So?

Or I remember at the beginning and then as the evening wears on.

Especially after a few glasses of wine?

Yes, exactly.

So, you must find it hard to cope in a lipreading class because there are lots of people there?

Well, not really, no because people are much more aware of how to talk one at a time and things, so that's a very different environment from being in a restaurant, a pub or something.

[33:01]

Okay. Are there any other places you go to where you find it more difficult or easy to follow conversation?

Well, I don't go out a lot these days, erm, I mean if I go to the cinema I usually go to subtitled ones and they are on at stupid times, so no-one wants to go with you or I do go to the theatre with other people, yes actually, yes.

So, the theatre, I am trying to imagine that would be quite difficult for you?

Stage Text performances where you have the captions on the stage above the stage, the captions what people are saying, what the actors are saying, appears on captions above.

Oh a bit like subtitles on a television?

Yes, yes.

Right and are they on quite often?

In London, yes. I think if you lived anywhere other than London you would be a bit limited in your choice but, yes I don't go that often, say once a year but, yes, yes. In fact, that's a little story I forgot about. That's what first sent me to the doctor was going to the theatre, I've just remembered. I was in the National Theatre and I could see these actors on the stage and I couldn't hear at all what was going on, so I think that, combined with not hearing at work, was what made me go to the GP. I have just remembered.

It's interesting, very interesting, so you are now at the stage where you are wearing hearing-aids and you are going to lipreading classes?

Yes.

[35:17]

How do you feel the effect – sorry, how did you feel your hearing loss has affected your life?

I think the two main things were that I don't really go out and see friends anymore and the other thing is that work is such a struggle really or finding it -- thinking of anything other than what I am doing at the moment is a struggle.

Can you elaborate on that last point? What is the struggle for you?

Well, as I said, it's very IT orientated but I feel I miss out on meetings, various problems, I don't go on training courses, I feel I am very limited in looking round for other jobs, erm, I miss out on the social side of work.

In what way. What things do you miss out on?

Well, just gossip and chatting and things.

So, you don't join in the gossip the chatting in the office?

No, I mean, at meetings, if people are talking to me they will make a point of talking so I can understand them but if they are not talking to me then I don't know what's going on you know.

What about outside of work, are there any -- there are no struggles in your everyday life?

Well, as I say I don't really go out much so, erm, so that puts me off doing things I would otherwise do. Obviously when my daughter was little you are working full-time, you are a single parent, you are not doing many activities anyway but now she is older there are things I would have probably started doing I wouldn't think about doing, you know, learning new skills and classes and things. Erm, you know I would love to go to a reading group, book group, or something. I know I wouldn't follow and things like that and I really miss my music. I mean, yes, I played viola for a long time and now music just sounds horrible to me so I've sold it and I don't listen to music at all. Music was a big part of my life, all kinds of music.

Because of your deafness, you have sold your viola. Is that right?

Well, yes. No, because of my hearing loss, yes, music just sounds rubbish now.

The hearing-aids you are wearing don't they give you enough hearing to be able to hear normally?

Yes, but not music. I can hear one to one conversations but I still need -- for instance, I would still need to watch on the screen as well. I am not really getting the whole conversation either from lipreading or -- it's like a badly tuned radio, you know, it's the volume is there but the clarity is not.

[39:15]

And that is even with your hearing-aids in?

Yes, with the hearing-aids. Without the hearing-aids I can't hear anything.

Nothing at all?

No.

Is there anything else that can be done? Would you be able to get better hearing-aids?

Erm, well these are meant to be very good ones and I have tried other models, other more recent models and they never seem as good as these so although these still -- these are digital ones and they are early digital ones. I still have a huge problem with background noise, erm, but the other ones I have tried seemed even worse than the ones than these ones.

Is there nothing else that can be done?

Well, I had a cochlear implant assessment and I was sort of borderline so she said, 'Leave it and see what happens over the next few years', so I was quite happy to leave it.

Would you mind explaining what is a cochlear implant?

Erm, when you have instead of hearing-aids you have something that actually acts instead of your cochlea as far as I understand it. Erm, yes.

So, it's like a different type of hearing-aid then?

Well, more than that I think, isn't it? Erm.

Do you feel that your hearing is still getting worse or does it remain the same now for a while?

The last few years it's been fairly stable I think. Yes, the last two or three times I have been it fluctuates a bit, not as much as it used to because it has gone right down. Before it was fluctuating a lot and that was one of the things that made it hard to fit hearing-aids because it changed so quickly up and down.

[41:48]

Are you still seeing the same audiologist?

Erm, not if I can help it [laughs]. If they say, or is there anyone else, or would you rather see someone else I would say, 'Yes' but they don't always ask that when I make the appointments so I am afraid I do have to see them but I see a consultant rather than the audiologist usually.

Is this just specifically for your hearing loss? I remember you saying earlier you have dizzy spells as well?

It's for hearing loss and balance, yes.

I remember you saying you had dizzy spells as well?

I had dizzy spells but then I stopped having dizzy spells and what I would get is spells of very distorted hearing when, erm, it's hard to explain, soft noises would become very loud and loud noises would become very soft, so for instance I played cards with my daughter and just the noise of the cards going over each other sounded like a police siren in my ears. It was very weird but that seems to have stopped too. That's why it was light Meniere's but not proper Meniere's. It was still disturbance in the cochlea but it wasn't affecting my balance; it was affecting the hearing.

So is this a recognised condition?

I think what it is, it's that Meniere's comes in lots of different forms, so you can have things called atypical Meniere's where it's -- it doesn't display all the proper symptoms but it's the same kind of thing.

Are you getting help for that?

Erm, well there isn't -- for a long time I had a low salt diet and some medication, then on my doctor's advice I stopped the medication because of the possible side effects

and I would say the Meniere's seems to have improved a bit since then but that might be coincidence or something, I don't know. It didn't show up on the hearing test but it feels different.

[44:32]

So, apart from the audiologist which you have mentioned before what's your general impression of the NHS?

Well, the consultant I saw was lovely and she has been a big support over the years and the hearing therapists I thought were helpful but they have a very limited role to play and also I never saw the same one twice, so I felt I would explain all my problems then we would only have about 10 minutes left to actually deal with them.

But on the whole?

On the whole, yes and being able to go to LINK. I have had a huge amount of support, yes.

What sort of support have you had from LINK?

Well, I just went on the residential course that was in 2002 and we talked a little bit about that.

This is the one you went on with your daughter?

Yes.

Right and was the only support you have had from LINK?

Erm, yes, I mean I went to one or two of the conferences they have had recently but that's it really, yes.

And you found that useful?

Yes. Yes, quite interesting.

In what way?

Well, it's always interesting to hear other people's experiences I think, really and to see people who have actually sort of persevered with what they needed other than I think sometimes I am a bit too accepting about things, so to see people who have persevered and getting better treatment at work or whatever I find quite encouraging.

So, you take those ideas and put into practise?

I feel I ought to but I never quite do it, yes.

I am exactly the same yes, shush! There is something else I would like to ask about. You mentioned quite early on you left university, you left home and went to university and you started to talk about the freedom you felt leaving home. Can you tell me more about that?

Erm, I don't think it's particularly relevant to my hearing necessarily.

[47:26]

Do you travel much at all?

Well, yes a bit around Europe, yes. I never went very far but, yes sort of France and Italy and Germany, yes.

Was that before or during hearing loss?

Well, erm, I mean different kinds of travelling, really, I mean before, it hadn't really stopped me travelling, no. I am not quite sure what you are getting at sorry.

Well, you say you have been travelling?

Yes.

Was this travelling before you had a hearing loss?

Yes.

Or have you been travelling even with your hearing loss?

Both. I mean, having a child makes more difference I think than having a hearing loss counts to travelling.

Can you explain how?

Well, before I would do things like hitching and camping, well I would still go camping but there would be more unplanned holidays.

But you say that your hearing loss hadn't stopped you travelling?

No, no.

[48:55]

Do you have any other interests? I mean you say that you stopped listening and playing music. Are there any other things you still continue to do?

Erm, well, as I said I used to be involved in politics but I am not at all and that's only partly to do with my hearing; it's general cynicism to do with as I have got older I think. My hearing would make it difficult I am sure.

In what way?

Not to be able to hear what was talked about at meetings and erm.

Do you have any other interests that you have at the moment?

Well, I have got an allotment. I spend a lot of time on that, erm I go out walking,

erm, and at the moment I am training to become a lipreading teacher as well.

Is that a long course?

It's meant to be four terms and has been squashed into one year.

But you've started doing that now?

Yes, so I have done the first term, just finished the first term and it's really good. I really enjoy it and it's something I am hoping to do, a bit of part-time, erm, get me back talking to people instead of talking to computers really.

And you will be able to do this near to where you live I presume?

Either near where I live now or I am hoping I will be able to move somewhere else I don't know.

Is this a full-time course or doing it in the evening?

Oh no, no, you do a block of a week and you follow, you observe classes one day a week, so I am working my five days over four days, so I can observe on the fifth day and do my homework, so it's another reason why I am not going out very much in the evenings too.

You are obviously keeping very busy?

Yes.

You hope to qualify next year?

Next July.

You are looking forward to it?

Yes, yes.

So, that means you will be changing your job?

Well, not exactly. I don't think you could actually make a living out of lipreading teaching, so it's either something to fall back on should anything happen to my job or that I could do part-time and cut my hours down a bit. It really depends what happens. But it's like doing this, it really is to see what doors it would open. As I said I was feeling very frustrated in the job I was doing, so it's really just to see what else I could do.

'Depending on what happens, it's like doing this'? You mean this particular project, the Oral History Project. Is that right?

Yes and since I have been to LINK I haven't actually been involved in anything else. This is the first thing.

[52:44]

You are getting more involved in the side of deafness in some way?

Yes, yes, yes. Yes, erm, I think instead of trying to cope with an ordinary life being deaf I am trying to think of how I can use my deafness to help me cope with my life, if you see what I mean.

Is it working?

Well, I think yes, probably I can see that it will do at the moment. I still feel work is still a struggle, so it's nice to have a visual of something that is not a sort of endless struggle -- not endless struggle, it's not as bad as that but, yes, something a bit more in tune with the rest of my life, yes.

Okay, erm, you say there is a possibility you may move to a different area. Will that affect your relationship with your friends?

Erm, yes erm, well I was hoping -- the place I fancy at the moment is Hebden Bridge. So I was hoping everybody would come and stay the weekend with me and I would see more of them than I do in London. Maybe that's a little fantasy, I don't know.

You are still keeping in contact with your friends? You say they are from university is that right?

Oh no, I haven't really been in contact with university friends. They are more people that I have known, either through, erm, when I was living in Brixton or erm, from having my daughter I think yes. I haven't got lots of friends.

Are they reasonably supportive of you?

Erm, on and off, yes. I think we talked about this before but if you see people one at a time it's okay but sometimes in a group it's harder.

Do they tend to meet you one on one?

I tend to prefer it if we meet one on one, yes.

I don't have anything further I need to ask but do you have any particular thoughts or a story or anything you would like to mention before we finish?

I don't think so, no.

Okay. In that case then I will be stopping the interview at 4:20. Thank you very much indeed.

[End of recording]