



# Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Christine Beal  
Interviewed by Sarah Smith

British Library ref. C1345/22

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## Interview Summary Sheet

**Ref no:** C1345/22

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

**Interviewee's surname:** Beal

**Title:**

**Interviewee's forename:** Christine

**Sex:** Female

**Occupation:**

**Date and place of birth:** 1957, Southampton

**Date(s) of recording:** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2009

**Location of interview:** The City Inn Hotel, Bristol

**Name of interviewer:** Sarah Smith

**Speech to Text reporter:** Mirella Fox

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

**Recording format :** WAV 16 bit 44.1 kHz

**Total no. of tracks:** 1

**Mono or stereo:** stereo

**Total Duration:** 1 hr. 8 min.

**Additional material:**

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**Interviewer's comments:**

**[Track 1]**

*This is Sarah Smith interviewing Christine Beal, Chris Beal, on Friday 13th March here in Bristol for the Unheard Voices project and our Speech-to-Text reporter is Mirella Fox. Can you just say for the recording Chris, your full name including your maiden name and your date of birth?*

Right. My full name is Christine Beal, my maiden name was Davidson, and my date of birth is the 3rd July 1957.

*Thank you. And your occupation or your former occupation?*

I used to be a telephonist and my last profession was a sort of a secretary for a blind group.

*Okay thank you. And your mother and father's occupations?*

My mother was a housewife and my father he was in the army, then he worked for a company which made machinery and then he was an analyst, which was analysing water, paper, anything and everything, a lot of things that came in from France, sweets and different things. But he sadly passed away now, so...

*Thank you. So I am going to start by asking you just some questions about your background and your early life. Do you want to tell me a little bit about your life growing up at home as a little girl?*

Well I am one of six children; I have got two brothers and a sister older than me, and a brother and a sister younger, so I was in the middle roughly. My mum was very clever, she had us all in order, she had boy girl, boy girl, boy girl which we thought was quite clever of her, and I used to share a bedroom with one of my sisters who is 8 years older than me. But we had a very, we were all very close as children, although there is an 18, 19 year gap between the oldest child and the youngest child. But so as you can imagine it was always a very busy household and we always had lots of animals, cats and dogs, hamsters, gold fish, tortoises, budgies, all sorts of things. It was like a little zoo and we lived in a 3 bedroom semi detached house, it was the - we, I lived there until I got married at 18, and we had a fair sized

garden. We used to walk everywhere though because my parents never had a car. So we just got used to doing that. And the school was only a few yards away really, though we always tended to be late for school even though it was right on our doorstep! But it was a very nice childhood, we didn't have a lot of money, but we always knew we were loved and cared for and we always had holiday to the Isle of Wight which seemed like we were going abroad as children, but.

[03:54]

*Where did you live?*

Southampton, sorry, lived in Southampton and I am still there now, so.

*Your brothers and sisters were there any particular ones you were particularly close to?*

Yes, probably but when I was growing up have I a brother who is two years young are than me, called Steven and we were very close, there is only two years difference between us. So we were like best friends, but now I am older it was probably my oldest sister who is 8 years older than me, Linda, we are very close as sisters, we can always rely on each other and that and see each other quite often.

*Are many of you still in Southampton?*

Yes we are all in Southampton, well one of my brothers moved to Chandlers Ford, which is about six miles outside of Southampton but he is still there, but apart from that all five of us are in Southampton, so we are very well travelled.

*Your holidays to the Isle of Wight, what did you do there? Was that all of you together?*

Yes. Well my older brother is ten years older than me, so by the time I was ten he was 16 and at college, so I don't remember actually holidays with my older brother, but I can with the rest of them. We used to go to a place called Gurnard in the Isle of Wight, which is not far from Cowes and we used to stay in a chalet there, but it was funny looking back now it seemed quite primitive, because it was a little gas lanterns that didn't have electric and they didn't

have water either, we used to have to go to a field sort of half way down this field, to get the water and take it back to the chalet. And there was no actual flushing toilet. It was like a, well now it would be like a corrugated drum but we used to go round to that and round the back of the chalet; it was like this a little shed area and the I can always remember the, there were like dustbin men but they weren't, they were obviously something to do with sanitation, used to come twice a week and empty it, my dad used to leave two and six on the toilet pan. As I say it seems very primitive now but in those days we thought it was the height of luxury.

[06:22]

*And what about school?*

Well I went to.

*You said you were very close to the school.*

Yes very close to the infants and junior school. I didn't particularly like school; I preferred infants and juniors to secondary school. But I remember going for the first time must have been about five, and thinking I don't like it here, so I don't think I will go again but I think a lot of children probably think that. But it was, you know it was a nice little school and as I say the junior school I quite liked but wasn't very keen on secondary school at all.

The best bit about school I think was home time. But we used to have school dinners occasionally we didn't have them all the time but was never particularly keen on them. They always seemed pretty gross to me; things they served up and made you eat, but luckily in the senior school we were able to take sandwiches or come home, so that was a lot better.

*And you said the best part of school was home time. What was it you didn't like about school?*

Most of it.

*Really?*

No, it sounds odd doesn't it but no I didn't, I had quite a few friends and that, but I suppose I

didn't really like the discipline of school. And well I suppose because we had such a close family, I suppose I just wanted to be back home with my family really. So it was quite a tough time really for me.

*And are you talking about the whole of school or are you talking about the secondary school?*

No, mainly secondary school. I think infants and junior was much better, but senior school was I found at that quite hard as very grown up you seem to have to grow up very quickly once you went to senior school and a lot more was expected of you. And your behaviour and that. So I was very keen to leave school, so I did actually leave at 15, though my parents wanted me to stay on, I didn't want to.

*What did you do when you left?*

I went to work for a, because in those days your mum and dad, my mum and dad weren't very wealthy, well they didn't have you know it was difficult I suppose for my dad with six children he was always in the fairly low paid jobs, so we were expected to go straight on to, into work then, so I can remember going along to I can't remember what it was called now -- not the job centre, it was a little place we had a youth, my goodness I can't think of the name.

*Like a careers advice place?*

That's it. Something like that, and the lady would go through a box and have all these jobs and there were quite a lot of jobs through then, do you fancy being a nurse or florist or doing this and that. So my first job was actually in a shoe shop, but I was only there for about two weeks and I didn't like it. So, I left that and then I got a job in Woolies in Southampton, Woolworths when it was, and that was in Southampton high street. And I was there it was actually only temporary for Christmas but because I got on so well, with the work I used to work on the cheese counter which I absolutely hated. But that was when the people would come along and ask for four ounces of cheese and you chop it off with the old-fashioned wire cutter which I was always seem to be breaking for some reason.

*I had no idea they used to sell cheese at Woolworths.*

They used to have food at Woolies; they used to sell food as well.

*This would have been what kind of year?*

That would be 1972. Yes. Because as I say I was 15 and then my oldest sister worked for the telephone exchange in Southampton, but she just got married that year in 1973, and she moved to Basingstoke. And I rather fancied the idea of being a telephonist as well, so I went along and got an interview but they didn't actually take you until you were 16. But because I was very keen on leaving or as I stayed for the Christmas and then they asked me to stay on but after a couple of months I had had enough, so I went to work at Southampton telephone exchange.

[11:25]

*And what was that like?*

That was really good. It was in, it was a modern building the exchange that I was at. It is a just short of flicky switches, but if you did Directory Enquiries and Inquiries you actually went up to an old centre in the middle the high street where they had the old-fashioned sort of wires that you pulled in and out. But we actually came up to Bristol which is where we are today, to do our training. So, that seems like many years ago now which it was, but and I actually enjoyed working with the old cords better, it was something about them that was nicer pulling them in and out and da da da but I enjoyed the work.

*Can you explain how a call would work?*

You would have a light come up on your system in front of you, then you put the cord in and ask what, you know say 'directory enquiries, which town do you require?' And they would ask for a number a, say, Coventry, so we would have to look it up in a book we would have to go and get the book for Coventry. And then sit down and then they would give us the name of the person and the street that they wanted and we give them the number. But if it was something somebody phoning up, say for an inquiry or they needed to be put through to anywhere, we would put the cord in to take their call and we would have to put the cord into another hole to connect them to the number that they wanted and then dial it on the



old-fashioned round dialing knob.

*That has the numbers on from one to zero.*

On the tell yes.

*So was this international calls?*

No, that was the separate unit. International calls went through to the modern telephone centre at the bottom of town, we had a particular bit there, that you would then put the calls through to London and the international calls would go through from there. So but I did work on emergency for a time, 999 and that was quite interesting but could be quite frightening if somebody phoned up to say they needed an ambulance or fire brigade or whatever. Putting that through used to panic me a bit because I used to think, no somebody at the end of here.

*So did you have to put them through to the emergency services?*

Yes, yes. We would have to tell them to hold on while we were putting them through to the police or the ambulance. You know, so and ask them some details that we could then pass on to the emergency services.

*What kind of things would?*

Well, I remember a couple of times there were fires that people had phoned up about. Sometimes, I remember once a cat got stuck up a tree and that is, that was I was quite calm about at that one. That seemed quite you know, something not to worry about. But it was quite interesting, a lot of different calls involved in it.

*And were the emergency ones all from Southampton?*

Do you know what, I can't, I think it was. I may have been the New Forest as well, but probably I would think more just Southampton because things were a lot more locally based then. Whereas now if you call somewhere it tends to be in either another part of the country

or even in India or something like that. Then the services were much more locally based. So.

*So, was this the same job that you your sister had done before she got married?*

Yes and she carried on doing the job up in Basingstoke, she did the same sort of thing, but up in Basingstoke, yes.

*How long were you there for?*

I was there for about two years, I suppose.

[15:48]

*Until you got married?*

Yes, then I met, actually that's how I met Steve, my husband. We, I knew a lady, well I knew a lot of the other girls at the telephone exchange and I met this lady there called Pat and she said she had somebody she knew who was in hospital, you know, a man, young lad, and would I fancy going on a blind date to meet him. So that is, it was actually between me and another girl but this other girl wasn't available at the time, but I was. So, I went.

*Had you been on blind dates before?*

Well yes sometimes actually saying that a couple of dates through the telephone exchange when you talk to customers on the phone, I had met a couple of chaps talking.

*Really?*

So yes so they were blind dates.

*How did that start on the phones then?*

Sometimes they would say, you have quite a nice voice, you know, do I, you do I know you or who are you and you just strike up a conversation. It wasn't allowed you I should add just

one of those things that and then sort of just arranged to meet. And usually with a friend though. There would be couple of us go long, we were quite sensible.

*Good. This friend of yours asked if you would go and see have a blind date with Steve and when was this can you remember?*

Actually the exact date I can remember the exact date because it was the 14th September 1974.

*Can you remember what you wore?*

Yes, actually I had a blue a blue jacket on, sort of velvety because they were the sort of fashion then and blue jeans.

*Lovely, can you remember what he wore?*

Yes, well he was in, I actual went to the hospital to meet him, he was in Lord Trelaw's\_in Alton\_which then was hospital for people with orthopaedic problems. So, when I actually went to the hospital because I didn't drive I was only 17, Pat drove me there, it was a Saturday evening, and Steve was in bed, well laying on the bed and he had a pair of Rupert like trousers on, like squares little squares. And I think he had a red shirt on.

*And how did it feel going on a blind date to the hospital?*

Well I don't know really. I can't remember it was so along ago. It was well I was quite nervous about going. But the lady who took me, she had known Steve since he was a small child and she said that Steve actually there was two children, Steve and his brother Alan. And she said that Steve was like the nice brother and Alan was a bit of a rogue, remember that and she said Oh he Steve is definitely the nicer one, but I don't know, I must have been pretty daring of me but I do remember being pretty nervous. And I brought Steve a present it was a little tiny bottle, in those days, Brut aftershave, but it was a - I remember it was, well, 50 pence it was, so it weren't ten shillings, but probably was then but and it was in a little sort of plastic container. So I remember buying him that. And his mum and dad were actually by the side of his bed when I got there to meet him. But they were going on holiday the next day to

Italy. Which would have been the Sunday and I remember Steve's mum she had been just been stung by a wasp. So she was trying, well she was in a bit of a panic over this wasp sting, so but Steve and I went into a side room and then got chatting to each other, and we seemed to get on.

*How ill was he?*

He just had his second knee cap removed, he had had one done about 18 months previous to that, and then he just had his second one out because he is very tall chap, he is six foot six, six foot 7 and so they had because of growth problems and that and football injury although he was only 17 as well, they just taken out the second knee cap. So he actually had his leg all in plaster. So he was walking with a cane or might, no, crutches actually, and so he had been in those days when you went to hospital to have your knee done, you were in there for six weeks solid. So, he was just short of coming to the end I think he had been there about five weeks; though.

*How old was he?*

17, same age as me yes

*Had he grown up close to you?*

No, the first time I had before met him, I didn't I had never known him before, that was a.

*It was the first time, but he grew up in Southampton.*

Yes.

*But not anywhere near to you?*

We, he was on the other side we call it on the other side of the water, I was on one side and he was on the other, I lived in Bitterne Park Southampton and he lived in Freemantle, a place called Freemantle near Shirley.

[21:40]

*Right. And did had there been, were you used to illness and hospitals and stuff like that in your family.*

No not at all. That was an eye opener because I had never even had a visit to the hospital, never had anything to do with the hospital up until that point. I think as a child I went to see my mum in hospital when she had had her varicose veins done. But I was only small, so I can vaguely remember it but apart from that no, nothing at all to do with hospitals.

*Go on.*

I was going to say after that, because Steve had the ear problem, had an ear problem as well, and he also had the knees both knees problems so after that, I did get to know the hospitals very well.

*Yes. And can you it will me about that first meeting then and you going off into your little room and having a chat.*

Yes, well I think we were talking to each other for about an hour, but really about our childhood I think. And different you know animals and where we had grown up and yes Steve told me about his mum because his mum had had a lot of illness; she actually had a brain tumour when Steve was about 12, and she was one of the first people in Southampton to have been operated on for this brain tumour; it was a pituitary gland and so she was lucky to still be alive actually, so we and I was always quite nosy wanting to know about things which were going on so it was quite interesting. And we parted after the hour and Steve said he would give me a ring; well we didn't have a telephone at home. The nearest thing we had was a telephone box in the next road and funny enough my mum used to go round to this telephone box once a week, for my sister to ring her from Basingstoke from another telephone box, so that's what Steve and I did. I said I would hang around the telephone box on this night and I gave him the phone number because I had it anyway on me, because my sister used to ring my sister, and he rung me from Alton hospital about four days later. In this telephone box. No mobile phones then.

*No. And so, what was it that you liked about him?*

Goodness. He just seemed very gentle person, easy to talk to. And he actually came out of hospital about a week later and we went our first date was actually, we went to Bournemouth on the bus from Southampton city centre, and went down to the beach and that and walked along the beach and I can't remember the number of the bus now, I should, but anyway. It was Hants and Dorset bus station. I don't think that exists now but then we came back and we just got on really well together. Just seemed as I say very, we just seemed to connect really.

*And did you meet your family and brothers and sisters?*

I think it was the day after when we went to Bournemouth, Steve because from there he had to catch the bus from Shirley into town and then another bus from town to Bitterne Park and I near where I lived then, we have got a great big park and there is a bridge going over the water, so I said I would meet him off the bus. And I walked up to a place called the triangle and walked across the bridge and Steve got off the bus but of course he was hobbling along I always remember that because he still had his plaster on and he had a stick and took him I walked back and went to our house and of course Steve was mad on football, funny enough one, well all my brothers like football, one of them is football mad. So, instantly, but two of my brothers actually when we got back indoors were playing Subbuteo, and Steve joined in with that and was a hit straight away. Because my brothers as I said one of them in particular loves football, so Steve really bonded with them.

[26:29]

*Great. So it wasn't long between then and when you got married.*

No, it was about, well a year actually, a year exactly. More or less, we got married on 10th September, 1975.

*Yes so a year since you met.*

Yes.

*Gosh. And tell me a little bit about the wedding.*

It wasn't anything grand. We went to Southampton registry office, and Steve had a purple suit on which when we look back at the photos now we have a good laugh about because they look a bit and I had like a trouser suit on so it was a bit, we do look a bit comical, the children have hysterics, so.

*But it was the 70s, yes.*

Yes '75, so we don't get those photographs out too often. And then we went back and had tea at my mum and dad's so very interesting.

*So.*

Nothing grand.

[27.34]

*So you mentioned Steve already had a hearing problem at this point.*

Yes.

*What was his hearing like at the time you got married?*

Well it didn't seem, I suppose, I didn't really take much notice of it at that point. Because the worse things seem to be his knee that he had a lot of trouble both his knees because once he had had the knee caps out, his balance was very poor and his legs gave way a lot so he was quite often falling down, but he did have constantly from the left ear where he had had the mastoid operation, a discharge and I suppose that is what I was first aware of, rather than the hearing loss it was the discharge; which was never ending, it was always it wasn't a very nice pleasant thing because it was always leaking, and of course in those days, long hair was the fashion for men. So of course you used to get in his hair as well. And also used to go on the bedding when you went to sleep at night so he was always having to go to the hospital and they used to put a which can in it a bit like a wick that used to go in the old paraffin lanterns

but a lot thinner, but I can remember it used to go and have them put into his ear and we would have to go back a few days later and they pull it obviously out and it seemed to go on forever the wick did coming out and they.

*Did it go right down?*

It went down to like the mastoid cavity which is where the infection was, and.

*You said he had a mastoid removed.*

Yes a mastoid operation.

*And when was that?*

That was before I met him that must have been when he was about 15 I think.

*Right so he had problems for a long time.*

Yes, yes.

*What was the effect of this around the time you got married, I mean was it what was the effect of it?*

To be honest, I don't really -- I suppose I just got used to him going to the hospital but it was just something, I suppose, I just coped with it. I didn't really, I mean it wasn't very pleasant as I say, it wasn't the smell of it wasn't very nice, that was something always I remember, I always tended to stay on this side of him on the right side, because the left side was the discharge. And I mean he did lose quite a few jobs through it though, that was the thing. He was training, he used to work for a place called Millbrook furnishings which made beds and furniture and quite a few but he had to have so much time off because of the ear infection and the problem with his knees as well. Of course in 1976 we had our son, Richard, and I suppose I noticed it more then because I was trying to look after a young baby, of course we didn't have much money at all, we were reliant really on Steve's wages; which when he was sort of off sick a lot, we then had to claim benefits because you didn't get paid when you were off



sick which was quite hard work. So it I used to get a bit upset because obviously I used to worry about paying the bills and trying to find money for food and that at the same time.

*So how did that like manifest itself between the two of you then?*

I think we were obviously too young, we were only 18 when we had our son, so we were very, very young parents. But I think I suppose when I look back now, I think I had to grow up very quickly. And Steve as well, though it didn't seem to worry so much as it did me at that time. But that is how I felt. I felt like I was probably older than my years, very quickly. Because I used to deal with the money right at the beginning because Steve wasn't very good with money in those days. When he used to perhaps he would get his wages he would want it treat me to something, so he would go and buy me a cardigan or something. But I used to sort of when he came home with it, we have not got any money to buy, blah, blah blah. So it was hard work.

*And how, what are you like when you are worried about things?*

Well in those days, very worried. I mean I used to go and sit, my dad I was very close to my dad when he was alive and he sometimes would come across and buy us a bit of shopping and I could talk to him and also my older sister because I was very close to her, I needed somebody really to talk to. But you know, it was hard, I mean when I think back now, it was, we were always struggling, that's how it seemed like, like we could never save any money very well; was, I think money was obviously a big part of it. Financial problems and that were, you know and I didn't want to like when I was growing up, obviously with five brothers and sisters it was very hard for my mum to, I can remember in those days you could sort of run up, I remember the little corner shop near us, my mum would run up bills there, she could send us up the shop with a little note and say could you let me children have this, this, and this, for their for tea and I will pay you at the end of the that was a common thing in our street. You know. You didn't sort of having it on tick really we used to call it. But sometimes if mum obviously had other things to pay, he didn't get paid at the end the road, so we would have to go the long way round from school as he would call us in and say, can you tell your mum to come and see us, so it was a bit you know, that frightened me as a child. And my mum and dad used to have an insurance man come and we used to have to hide behind the furniture, my mum couldn't pay him, I always remember at that was a Monday.

So, it always, I was always worried about getting in debt and things. So even to this day if I can't afford it he don't buy it, I am not one to run up bills and things. It has made me very careful.

*Yes. Shall we stop for a minute?*

[34:32]

*Okay then. So, can you tell me about your other children, when they came along.*

Well, Richard was in 1976, and then Sue; Susan, was in 1978. So we had just the boy and the girl. And so there is about a year and nine months between the two of them. So then it was even more hard work having two of them, and Steve obviously was still having ill health and that. So, and we lived at the time in a flat a two-bedroomed flat that is right, and in those days you could just do a council exchange, a straight exchange. If you could find somebody to swap with, so then we moved to a house in Coxford, Southampton. Which was a bit of a rough area and I didn't like the time there at all. We were there about two years. And then we moved to another flat which was 3 bedroomed in a place called Townhill Park Southampton, and very, very noisy neighbours, we had there. For about four, 3, four years, yes must have been about 3 or 4 years we were there. And we had a couple up above who were always screaming and shouting into the wee small hours of the morning. And both sides of us the neighbours were quite noisy. And we managed to move to a house in 1983 so we have been there ever since actually. Been there about 25 years now.

[36:29]

*So, what at what sort of age were your kids when Steve's hearing became very bad?*

Right. They, well obviously I can remember when I had Richard Steve used to have what was called sort of drop attacks. And he was at work a few times when he came over dizzy and was rushed to the hospital. So that was when Richard was only about, because I was expecting Sue then so Richard must have been about a year and three months, something like that and I can remember going to visit him, took two buses to get there. At Southampton general hospital but it was in the what I call when we used to have the matrons, and I can

remember going in with rich holding his hand and there was Steve in the, they used to have rows of beds then, there was about 22 beds 11 each side of the room. And they were all very well made and I can remember Steve, you know being a lot of men in this ward. But sort of like tucked in very precisely in bed and I can remember Richard sitting on the bed; he was only a little boy, and I can remember the matron saying, nobody sitting on the beds please. So it was right from an early age when they were small so they grew up with knowing that Steve always had ill health. Then and he would work in between but as I say it was very difficult to hold down a job and as I say also with the trouble with his knees, and then I suppose I mean he had a the discharge from his ear for about, goodness, easily 20 years. He put up with that. And because he used to get so fed up with going to the ENT department and nothing really, they didn't really offer him any different treatment, it was always wicks and anti-biotics and back to the wicks again. And they would want him to go down like every other day at the hospital, of course you can't hold down a job and do that as well. So, for a long time actually, he neglected the ear and just you know to try and hold down a job but then he would be I will perhaps at the end of the year quite badly. And back to no pay and benefits again. The surgeon he had then was a Mr. Morgan, which he wasn't particularly keen on. And I think when our son was about 18 his hearing had started to deteriorate and he started having these bouts of sickness when he was quite poorly and we didn't know the reason why. And then he got back into the system at the hospital and had his ear looked at and they said it needed, he needed an operation urgently, because all the infection had damaged his ear and it could spread to the brain. So, he had to have this, another radical mastoid operation and after that he had that when our son was 18 which was about 15 years ago now. But then he developed after that the ear still leaked for a time. And that was the surgeon called Mr. Randall did that and then I asked if we could have a second opinion and he had a surgeon called Mr. Morgan and he was really lovely, because by then Steve had started to have attack, these attacks where every so often he would be sick and dizzy and we didn't know what the cause of it was. And I remember starting then to read a lot of medical books and it sounded like Meniere's disease and Mr. Morgan actually diagnosed Meniere's disease which the other surgeon said it wasn't that. But apparently with true Meniere's, you can actually watch when the person is having an attack, if you look at their eyes when their eyes are darting, the pupils from side to side. And that is instantly with Steve very recognisable. So.

*Can you describe a Meniere's attack?*

It is awful. Really I always get in a panic if Steve says he is starting to go a bit sweaty, if he looks hot and sticky and he says usually says I am feeling a bit dizzy. And then I know that he is probably going to have an attack.

*Does he know he is going to have an attack?*

Yes probably, yes. I think he sometimes he is loathe to admit it, for example, we are doing but yes, he has a good sign of we know when it is going happen. But in the early days it was frightening for the children because they didn't know, I mean at that time when the attacks started I was actually started to go to college because the children were just coming to the end of education and that. And so I had gone I was going to computer classes and typing classes during the week. And I quite often used to get a phone call you know from the children, they were teenagers then but mum could you come home because dad's been taken poorly. I mean at that time Steve had just learned to drive as well. So, I mean I can remember our son being in the hairdressers once with Steve, but they learned to know what they had to do. So, you know they were very good about it. You know, it did panic them a bit but now I mean obviously they have grown up with it so they.

*What did they have to do?*

Well really make sure they could get Steve home. Which you know pretty quickly because otherwise he they would have to call an ambulance and he would be taken to hospital, where they we have to wait really for the period of the attack to die down. Which could be anything from 12 hours to 48 hours.

[43:12]

*So what is happening to Steve during the attack?*

Well, he really sort of loses consciousness to a certain amount. You can still talk to him and that but it makes, with true Meniere's it makes you violently sick. It is not like you get the symptoms, the sweatiness, the stickiness, and then receive says that the room starts to spin a bit and you find you cannot stand up. You really have to lie down and it happened to us a lot over the years and what does upset a bit is when people think he is drunk but Steve is not

drunk, he doesn't drink alcohol. And half a pints a lager once in a blue moon, so people used to think he was being he was an alcoholic, you know, perhaps and he used to be very sick. Anything and every, it all everything, Steve can go for hours and hours just retching all the time. It is not and it was very frightening and it did, about, I suppose, five years ago it got so bad Steve couldn't, it was so disabling for him because he couldn't do anything, and I mean even now it is very limited to what he can do. He is not very good at bending down a lot to pick you know pick things up or bend down to his head still spins now, you have to did so careful but it did reach a point about five years ago where he had had enough of it, really. And of course that was around the time I think when he got the hearing aid as well and started audiology going to audiology. And helping him more. The hospital seems a lot better today there are a lot more understanding of the condition. But it got to the point where we couldn't really plan anything, we couldn't do anything, or plan anything, because of the illness and the only way that Steve would try and medication, there is medication called Buccastem I think it is called and you dissolve it under your tongue and there is also Stemetil but you can have it as a suppository or as a tablet. But that's very difficult when someone has been very sick to get them to keep that down; with the sickness and the only thing that seemed to help a lot was injections, Stemetil injections. So I asked the doctor if it was possible if I could have the injections so that I didn't keep having to ring up out-of-hours surgery for people to come and give this to Steve, because the attacks sort of seemed to be getting longer and the out-of-hours service in Southampton was getting worse to get anybody to come to see you in the middle of the night. I can remember once the doctor didn't turn up so Steve had been being sick for about 18 hours, and come that Sunday morning I was absolutely at my wits end and I called a friend and we took him to the walk in centre in Southampton which are centers which are opened now we have about 3 or 4 of them in Southampton, if your doctor is not available, they are only open during daylight hours, really. But and I we got him up there and they sent him straight to hospital because he was so badly dehydrated and I actually got told off for leaving him for that long. But so then I got on you know, saying well I couldn't get anybody to come. And I said to the doctor I had had enough, you know, is there any way I could give him these injections? So the doctor we saw was lovely and he actually gave well the nurse did gave me some training with an orange, how to administer these injections myself. Though by law I am not technically allowed to do it, but they sort of were a god send because now if Steve has a bad attack, I can give him an injection which doesn't stop it, but it will halt the severity of it. But every time I do that I have to let the doctor know that I have given him these injections. But has helped me a lot. And they put Steve on water tablets about five

years ago, though he is not got high blood pressure, but it is to drain the fluid away from the middle ear so that which helps the balance and helps keep it on an even keel.

[48:06]

*Have you always had good health all this time?*

No, I suffer with an under active thyroid which came in to play about 13 years ago. And I had quite bad depression. And it was and tiredness, I didn't know the reason why. I just, I struggled it was bit like wading through treacle every day. And I for about nine months I just felt really ill but I didn't go to the doctors and I didn't know what was wrong with me I put on a lot of weight. And as I say I was so tired all the time. And my concentration went and everything but eventually I went to the doctors, she said it I think I though what it is, did a blood test and I had an under active thyroid which I have to take medication every day; for that. But and I have suffered with a bit of, I have arthritis but...

*What about your children?*

Health wise?

*Yes.*

No, they are touch wood, they are pretty good. Our son works in China now, he is a tour operator and travels round the world. And our daughter is a housewife, she has two children but no, they haven't got any hearing disabilities or orthopaedic problems so far as I know.

*It sounds like there was a lot of hospital to-ing and fro-ing while your children were little, so it is probably a bit of a god send that they had a fairly straightforward health.*

Yes, because it must have been difficult for them. I mean, as I say, they got to know the hospitals pretty well as well. And I probably out of all my brothers and sisters I am the one that is obviously had more to do with the hospitals over the years than any of them. As I say I never set foot in a hospital really until I met Steve, but now it is...

*Second nature.*

Yes, second nature.

[50:27]

*Obviously I don't want to be too negative but are there have there been any particular low points during because of Steve's hearing loss? Any difficult times?*

Not, not so much really with the hearing. I mean, I have, it is something I suppose, I suppose really if I am honest, going to the LINK centre about which was nearly three years ago, I tend to be one of those people who likes to find out about illnesses. If anybody has an illness, no matter what it is, I try to look it up because I think libraries are very good places there is so much information now on the Internet. I like to find out about things. So, I try to find out a lot about Steve's illness myself and although I didn't really, to be honest, when he got his first hearing aid, which was five or six years ago, I stupidly I know now, I thought that once they gave him the hearing aid, aids, because it was two then, his hearing would be as it was before. I think Steve felt that as well. Because we didn't know that much about them. And we of course when he did he, I remember we were in the audio department and they gave him these hearing aids and they said, the lady screwed up a piece of paper and I remember Steve going Oh, Oh my goodness it was you know he was so amazed he could hear this piece of paper. But he said it was n like the sound he had had before. But I still I suppose I think until I went to the LINK centre, I still thought it was a decent sort of hearing. But really going there for the five, six days, did change it for me because we were the majority of people in the class had the hearing loss in the group and we got to meet some really nice people. And it was amazing for me to see how people managed to talk to each other in different ways. But also the eye opener was Steve also suffers from tinnitus as when we were given these head phones to put on and we had to sort of do part of the lesson with these head phones on, with this noise going on in the background constantly. And several people said that was the turning point for them, because you suddenly realise how difficult it is for the deaf person. Also, I think being with other deaf people it was lovely for Steve, but it made me realise as well how tiring it is for other people as well, because I find it tiring. Steve gets extremely tired and but it was nice to be with other people and I found it, we both found it difficult going home afterwards. Steve because he was back in the hearing world and myself actually because I was back in the

hearing world, where we had such a nice week with the other deaf people. But it did sort of change a lot for me I think then. It made me much more aware of Steve's deafness and about the hearing aids and that. So, I mean, it hasn't really, I mean it has been hard work and it sort of did get me down I think in the early days then. But it is also been a lot worse for Steve being the deafened person. Because he got very depressed about it and the fact that I can remember going into audiology and I had gone to get a cup of tea while Steve had gone in to sort of see the audiologist at one hearing test. And I went back sort of in to get him and he was just stood at the counter crying his eyes out and I said what is the matter and he goes, my deafness is going to get worse. I am not going to be able to hear the grand children and I am not going to, and of course I think it just hit home for me, I mean I felt worse for Steve than myself. That was when really I thought perhaps a hearing dog would come would be a good idea and hence we went down the road of and that is really the past two years have been much better for Steve I think. With the hearing dog, because we have got involved in a lot more things and we meet an awful lot of people now. We also started, Steve was brought up with religion. I wasn't really. I went to occasional Christmas thing and I was christened as a child, but which was strange really because both of my parents were went to Sunday school and things like that but with six children none of us did. But Steve has always believed in the bible and you know that there is something after we pass away and that. And we found a nice church near us which we both been attending really for the last 18 months. And it is opened up a whole new, not just the God part of it, but we have met a whole lot of new friends there and there they are so nice and caring it was like going into a big family and they welcomed Yogi and the church and as I say we go to a lot of functions and they have quizzes and dances and all sorts of things. So it's really really been - we have a very good social side of things now, which we didn't have five, six years ago. So and I do think that helps, you know with everything because there is always someone to talk to if you want to. Luckily I have a big family so I can talk to them. But so I think there is, Steve says himself, there are good things which have come out of it as well as the negative side of it.

[56:57]

*And Yogi, the hearing dog, who has been very well behaved on the floor, what sort of practical things does he do for Steve?*

He will tell Steve because obviously that's another thing. I have always had to attend in



recent years, all the hospital appointments with Steve; because much as we are in, what 2009, now, things have advanced a long way. They still in all departments in the hospital and in our own audiology department included they tend to come out and call Steve and they go, Mr. Beal and it is very quiet voice that even I have to difficulty hearing. Because in our local audiology they normally have the television on as well. Lots of people chattering, so I struggle with it. So, that's the one thing that Yogi still can't do, he can't tell Steve that is so I still do have to go to most appointments with Steve but in the home I was worried about leaving Steve on his own because of attacks and that. So it restricted the things which I did. But Yogi now, he will tell Steve when the door bell rings. He will put his paw on Steve. And Steve will say what is it Yogi? And Yogi will automatically take him to the front door. So Steve will answer the door and also the telephone. He is also got a special timer which he sets if he is boiling the kettle the dog will come and tell him when the timer goes off for the kettle or also the cooker. And very importantly with the fire alarm and the shop alarms, which Yogi actual has done a couple of times in the shop, he has gone up to Steve and touched him but in those circumstances, he doesn't take him to the sound. He will lay down which means to Steve it is a danger sign. So Steve won't go and investigate, he knows have I to get out of here quick. He is also supposed to do the morning alarm chock as well but that is a one sound Yogi has never liked working to; he will do it in practice when the trainer comes down every year to check that Yogi's still working to all the sounds, he will probably do it then in the daytime. But actually in the morning Yogi is as lazy as the rest of us in getting up, there is no way he is getting out of his bed to tell him but it is the companionship as well of the dog. Steve has to do everything for Yogi and he says himself Yogi is his best friend now.

*It sounds like having Yogi is not only a positive thing for Steve but it also is for you as well.*

Yes, it is, it is. Because it is, I know now I can go off like my, my older sister and I belong to an over fifties club and we can go to the outings and we go on day drips with them and that and I know Steve is going to be okay, with Yogi there. So, it is almost, because obviously it used to be the children were at home, they would come home from college and then work and what have you; so there was always someone there; but now of course Steve and I are on our own, so it is very positive.

[01:00:17]

*And you talked about your trip to the LINK centre and obviously hearing the tinnitus and trying to do the session with the tinnitus sounds was a turning point. But you also talked about the communication and seeing how other people communicate.*

Yes.

*What sort of things did you change about your communication after you had been to the LINK centre?*

Before we had been to the LINK centre and joined just at that time we had starts we Steve started going to lip reading classes, we had tried doing sign language. But most of the people on the two courses which we attended were hearing people. So who were doing it for qualifications and that, whereas Steve was doing it to try and learn sign for every day life. But they were so quick at doing it; Steve couldn't keep up with them. So we didn't carry on with those two courses. But then we, Steve joined a lip reading class which he attended for about a year on his own and then I went as well for two years. So, that helped a lot and we do a lot of practice between us in lip reading. But also I think as a married couple, and we have been married 34 years this year, you develop your own sign, you don't necessarily need the sign signs in the book, the British Sign Language. We do our own signing; which we found other people sort of tend to do as well. Find their own sign and also we do finger spelling. And obviously another way of communication is pen and paper, obviously. And you can also actually use a lap top if we meet up with some other friends who are deaf, once a month, and one of them sometimes brings his lap top along and types the words, you know, up and it is much easier because when you have a group of 3 deaf people and two listening, hearing people, together it can be quite noisy and hard work. So, you know there are many different forms of sign really. It is not just the ones that were, I mean the chalkboard we have even taken a chalkboard and a chalk along with us to places; for quickness and that. So there are many different ways.

[01:02:50]

*And I suppose some partners that live with whose husbands have disabilities I suppose, might consider themselves or might be considered to be a carer as well as a partner, is that something that you view yourself as?*

Yes, I mean, sometimes it seems like that. We have actually got carer groups in Southampton which carers can go along to. And do go on outings and have a cup of tea with every different people and that, different times and I have actually got the phone number and the leaflet which I have for about three years. But I have never actually done anything about going along, because I think we have got many hearing friends as well. And people, you know, which, who I can talk to, so I mean I suppose there are aspects of it that I always seem to be looking out for Steve and one thing he is to the very good at is obviously with traffic. If the traffic is behind him we like to go down into the countryside and do walks country lanes and that and of course I have to always be alert for traffic. That can be a bit nuisance sometimes but even the grandchildren tend to pull him and say granddad, there's a car coming. But yes, I mean there are but I suppose we have always been pretty good friends as well, obviously in the early days I don't think you do tend to, there are so many things going on that you probably have a lot more rows in the early days. But when you have been with each other for a long time, you do know how each other works really. So, Steve can if I am poorly Steve tends to be the looker, looks after me and I do it when he is not well. So it works very well together. We tend to be like the glove the left glove and the right glove sort of thing.

*When you need some support when you need to get things off your chest, who do you talk to?*

Well, I tend to talk to Steve obviously, because he is, he listens to me and after all these years we know when something is up with each other. But I have my older sister and I have also got a good friend that I have met in the church, Carol she is a good friend and I can talk to her. But I think we have got to this age and realised that everybody has got a problems, the one thing you do learn is nobody really has a straightforward life. It is we all have different problems along the way and it is I think as you get older you just learn how to deal with them better.

[01:05:52]

*Yes. If I can just ask you about the grand children, you mentioned them briefly then. What their reactions are or...*

Yes, I suppose the sad thing the one sad thing with the grandchildren is for me is that obviously I have got as I say five brothers and sisters and the 3 girls we have been married a long time. One of them 40 years, 34 years and my younger sister about 28 years. So we have got long marriages, but only one of my brothers ever married; but unfortunately he separated from his wife about six, 7 years ago. But our two, our two children Richard and Susan have both got failed relationships, our son was married and he is divorced now but got a small child, and our daughter was with somebody and they separated and she has two children. So I do feel a bit sad in the way that they have sort of both got extended families now in they both lived with their mothers, but new partners have come in so that is difficult for them. So they have had their own problems to deal with in that side of things. But as to the ill health with Steve and that, they are very good. And obviously Joseph\_who is not yet 3 doesn't really understand about deafness, I mean he will talk to Steve quite often he will phone up, his mum will ring on the telephone but Steve can't talk to him because he can't hear him. And Joseph doesn't understand that. Or he will talk a lot to Steve but as he has a very quiet voice Steve can't hear it so have I to relay it all the time. What Joseph is saying but the other two, obviously being nearly six and ten are a lot more understanding of it, because we have tried to explain to them about it as well. They are very good with it. They are both will bring people's attention to the fact that Steve is deafened, and obviously with Yogi he wears his coat when we are out and about, so they tell people that Yogi is a special dog, he's a hearing dog, so and they hear us obviously. We go to a lot of meetings and collections. They have actually been on a collection with us and stood, you know they don't hold the tins but they are quite chatty with other people. So they are quite good at explaining the situation which I think is can only be a good thing for them really, because it is already.

[01:08:48]

**[End of track 1]**

**[Track 2]**

**THIS PORTION WAS NOT RECORDED**

*So you are talking about the children, it is giving them a good start.*

It is giving them a good grounding because obviously we have taken them to the hospital appointments as well and they have seen things which have gone on and that, so it is not a bad thing I don't think. Because it makes them aware of other people's disabilities and I used to work for a blind group, so I have known a few people who are blind as well and so they have met a few of those people, so they are aware that people have got sensory issues and problems.

*Just one question I wanted to ask. If you were to meet another partner of a deafened person for the first time, I mean, is there any advice you would give them or any kind of tips you would give them?*

Well I would say try and, try, it is very difficult obviously living with a deafened person because or deaf person, because it was for me when Steve started to lose his hearing quite rapidly. I would find I like I was constantly shouting all the time and also I would get, he would be in another room and I would be having a conversation and then he would come in and I would say, well what do you think, and he would say what do I think of what and I would say, I he can't hear any of this but I have got used to that now but it is hard. I mean I think it is hard on the person who is caring as such and the person who has the illness. So but I would say stay, go to the LINK centre and try and see it, get involved as much as you can in what the other person, the deafened person is going through. Try to get involved and read things and talk to that person in a way you do take on the role a bit of a councilor I think in doing that, because really if you can't get to terms with how it is for them, they are going it find it hard to come to terms with. Whereas I have tried always as well, we joke a lot, obviously you don't always feel like joking but we do, we do tend to sort of laugh a lot about things. And which is always a good thing because it does take the tension off and the pressure. So, I mean obviously for you yourself, go out, there are people out there and there are lots of people you can talk to. And I tend to find the one thing I would say over the years is I have had to find a lot out for myself. But obviously once you taken a LINK course there are so many different things they show you, different telephones to use and different

equipment, so it is amazing the equipment which is out there for a deaf person. So, you know, in general I think the health service has improved a lot as well and they are more willing to tell you what is going on now as opposed to years ago I used to find it was just a job to find out anything but now doctors seem to be a lot easier to talk to.

*Good. And just before we finish then, your plans for the future, you and Steve off to your retirement?*

Not, I am not thinking that. We tend to take to be honest, each day as at a time. I don't think we have ever, we have never been very adventurous people so we do, we are quite happy with the simple things in life. The grand children give us a lot of pleasure, we like meeting up with our friends occasionally. We go to the theatre sometimes. We went the other day and saw the calendar girls. We go to the pictures when we want to, but we, you know, basically we do do a lot of things still. Obviously we walk the dog and we go into the forest. But we generally do tend to not think too far ahead I don't think you can in this day and age, best to sort of maybe a few months ahead plan, but we don't tend to, I don't think we have got any long unfilled ambitions you know. Our son is trying to get to us go to China still to visit, which you know, I would like to but obviously flying is a bit of a problem for Steve with his ear problem, it he tends to make him a bit deaf when he is flying. So, but he said today I wouldn't mind going out. So that might be a plan for the future to you know, go abroad but basically we are quite contented I think is the word.

*That's good. Is there anything else you want it tell me about.*

You have to jog my memory. I can't think of anything, I probably think of a hundred things.

*That's always the way, it is always the way. Okay then, that was really interesting. Thank you for talking.*

Thank you.

All right then.

**[End of interview]**