



# Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Pat Howe

Interviewed by Roland Hilton

British Library ref. C1345/43

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## Interview Summary Sheet

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<b>Occupation:</b>		<b>Date and place of birth:</b>	1942, Bradford
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**[Track 1]**

*The date is 5 April 2009. And this interview is being carried out in Edinburgh to record the oral history of Deafened People. Deafened people who have used the spoken language for communication but have not - but have acquired a severe to profound hearing loss. To avoid the communication problems due to hearing loss the interview is being supported by Palantype which provides a verbatim, real-time text display of all that is said. Our Palantypist today is Hilary Maclean. My name is Roland Hilton and I am deafened. Today I am interviewing Pat who is also deafened. So, Pat, can you please introduce yourself by telling me your name and date of birth.*

Yes my name is Patricia but I don't use Patricia I use Pat. It is Pat Howe. Date of birth is 1 October 1942

*Can you tell me your maiden name?*

Maiden name was Pells. P E L L S.

*Where were you born?*

I was born in Bradford in West Yorkshire.

*You still live in Bradford?*

Yes that's right.

*Have you lived anywhere else or have you spent your life in Bradford?*

I lived in London for a while when I was young. I did not long after I was born very briefly my father got wounded in the chest and he was told to come away from Bradford where there was all the fog so we moved to London where his family come from. Unfortunately he died in London so we moved back to Bradford just before I was 3. And I've lived in Bradford ever since.

*What's your family? Do you have any brothers or sisters?*

I have one sister and I have two daughters. No children. They don't have any children should I say.

*What has been your main career or employment in life?*

I was an audio typist, secretary to Managing Director of an engineering company. I think that's what caused me hearing loss to start. Boss used to shout into the dictaphone if anybody disturbed him.

*Got any pets?*

Now we just have two cats. We've always had dogs. We've had Labradors for the last 40 years but we had to have our last one put to sleep last year. I also had a Labrador hearing dog up until last year which she had to go back because she had a dislocated spine. Just two cats now. We've always had fish tanks. But we've no fish tanks now, the last one died last year as well.

*How would you describe your character now?*

I don't know, that's for other people to decide. How would I describe me character? Laid back. Happy. Not always happy. I try to be cheerful. You know, talk to people, cheer them up, is that okay is that enough?

[05:28]

*Yes that's OK that's given us a bit of background. What I'd like to do now Pat is to start to go back to the beginning of your life and we'll work through gradually. Could we start with your childhood? What are your earliest memories, what's the first thing you remember in life?*

When my father died we came back to Bradford and we came to live with my grandmother and grandfather, and that's my early memories actually living with, especially my grandmother, because me mother used to go out to work so my grandmother more or less

brought us up. When we were young. She also had - my uncle had two children within 12 months and my grandma also looked after the oldest one of the two so I was pretty much brought up with him and he's 10 month older than me so Grandma, Granddad and my cousin. And earliest memories, my grandma used to come and tuck us up in bed after my mother had put us to bed and used to say 'don't forget to say your prayers'.

*Your Mum and Dad were they both employed? What were their jobs?*

I don't remember my father at all as I say, he was wounded in the war, and he died before I was 3. So I just don't remember him at all. My mother, she worked pretty much she was a seamstress. She worked most of her life. She got married again when I was 7, 8, something like that. And my stepfather brought us up- we're all one family sort of thing. That's when my sister was born. She was born to my stepfather.

*So you saw a lot of your family at this time?*

Yes, I think when I was growing up families kept together and kept in touch and you kept in touch with uncles and cousins and aunties and had regular get-togethers, birthdays and stuff like that it was the normal thing.

*Where were you living? Were you in the town itself or outside in the country?*

Both actually. I don't know if you know Bradford but my Grandma lived off Leeds Road which was a reasonable area then. Then we moved to West Bolling, when my mother got married again. I still live in West Bolling - or should I say we still live in West Bolling - different area but still West Bolling.

*Moving on to your school years what's your earliest memory of school?*

I vaguely remember infant school where we used to have a sleep in the afternoon and there were mattresses laid on the floor. Then we had to go have a sleep and I vaguely remember that we had to have a drink, something on a spoon some medicine. Could have our orange juice and it was horrible tasting stuff. Then when we went to school in West Bolling - sorry Middlestone then as it was, which was all right I don't have any particularly memories. Then

I went up to Bolling Grammar which was very, very posh. Can I interrupt a second. Do you want me to give you the spelling?

[End of Track 1]

**[Track 2]**

*Before your teenage years how did you spend the weekends and evenings?*

Playing out on a local field with the other kids. We used to play cricket with a stick and a stone. There wasn't all this 'be careful thing' nowadays. We also used to go to the local cinema I think probably once a week, sometimes twice. Obviously we didn't have television in those days but we did have books which I still love. But you played around with the other kids.

*Tell me a bit more about how your life and education moved on prior to starting work after you left your first school where did you go to?*

I pretty much started work after I left - very briefly, I wanted to be a vet so I took the subjects that led to me wanting to be a vet but when it got to the choice I took subjects I wanted to finish with. The head mistress told me I couldn't take those subjects because it wasn't a suitable job for a girl. So I said, right I'll finish as soon as I'm 16 then. So I finished, went into an office. And that's where I started my typing career. It was a firm who manufactured rolling shutters.

*So, this was a job that you sort of took not the one you wanted. Would you have still liked to have been a vet? Do you regret not having been that?*

I would have liked to have been a vet because I love animals and I get on with them, but as far as regrets are concerned it's too late now to sort of have regrets. I enjoyed my job in the office and as I say I also went to other companies and I eventually ended up as I say as secretary to Managing Director. I also met my husband at the place I work at. So, regrets, well, if you start regretting what you didn't do in your life you go on for ever, you live your life and carry on.

*How old were you when you got married?*

Have to stop and think about that. Wait a minute.

*What was the date?*

35 years ago. 26 September, I'm trying to think of the year. I'm hopeless at remembering dates. '74, '75. That's the best I can tell you.

[04:24]

*Your hearing loss, how did it first become apparent? You were deafened at the time you started work deaf at the time you started work. Or not?*

No, I wasn't. As I say I was an audio typist. Since 1960s I've been going in hospital to have polyps removed from my ears on a regular basis. It started sort of shall I say once every three or four years and gradually got closer. Now I go between once and twice a year to have polyps removed from my ears. Whether that was the result of my deafness or whether it was my boss shouting into the microphone I don't know. I think it is possibly to do with the operations. I still go to have polyps removed regularly and I go every week for the last about fourteen years to have my ears checked every week and cleaned out.

*This time you were just sort of –*

I first lost some hearing in mid '97, I can't tell you the date. Say, May, June possibly. I lost some hearing. And I got a bone conduction hearing-aid fitted. Then, on 12 November 97, I woke up to no hearing whatsoever. I can tell you more about that if you want.

*For the moment can you tell me what your circumstances were then. You weren't married at the time you lost your hearing were you or were you?*

Oh yes.

*You were married by then?*

Yes I was.

*You had your family as well.*

Yes.

*What was your first feeling? How did you feel when you loss your hearing like that, what was your reaction?*

It could be a long story but very briefly I didn't realise I'd lost my hearing. I woke up - I get up first and leave Duncan sleeping because he's bad health wise, so I got up before the alarm clock went off which is not uncommon, went into the hall where the dog sleeps and I knew, it felt as though there was something missing and I didn't know what, it's rather like when you - if you go out and you've forgotten something you don't know what it is, it's in the back of your mind you've forgotten something, that sort of feeling. Anyway as I said I went into the hall, went out went to the bathroom, went to the toilet. Coming out of the bathroom I thought, oh, did I flush the toilet? It registered I hadn't heard it. So I checked, went downstairs and started preparing the dogs breakfast and one thing and another and as I say it was still rather like when you get up in a morning and you're feeling that something is missing and you don't know what and then when you pull the curtains back it's snowed heavily, you realise what was missing is the usual sounds, it was that sort of feeling. But I thought it was this bone conduction thing that was faulty or something wrong with it. Duncan checked it and there was nothing wrong with me so we went straight up to hospital where as I say I'd been going for a long while. They know me. I don't even need to give my name nowadays. Mr. Chris Raine was there and I got to see him, I don't know whether you know him but he's the one that does cochlear implants, he was the first one I think in this country. Anyway, I went to see him and he got me into the ward which I normally go to so I know everybody there and the routine and everything. I was there just about a week, they'd sorted everything out trying to find out what was wrong. That helped calm me down a bit because I know the people and the routine. It does help. Familiarity. But then he told me, well I don't think - me hearing nerves had gone. That was it basically. As I say I still go every week for treatment and he put me in touch with the audiologist. A while before that when I had this bone conduction aid fitted. She told me about LINK Centre. So, I was sorted out to arrange to go to LINK. And I went there and in February or March the following year. That helped a lot because it gave me a lot of information and all I knew about hearing loss was hearing-aids. I didn't know about signing and lipreading and stuff like that so I did get quite a lot of help from that point of view. Apart from that I just about saved every piece of paper that came through the letterbox

including envelopes so that all my family had to write down everything they wanted to say to me.

*The day after you had lost your hearing, what did you feel then? Was it despair or frustration, anger, what sort of reaction?*

Well as I say, I was in hospital then. If you like it was a sort of safe environment. I didn't have to do anything or meet people, new people or anything. It was a rest if you like, a time to try to acclimatise.

*You got home, you couldn't hear your husband couldn't hear your children, what feeling did that generate in you?*

Well, obviously I was very, very sad. It was very upsetting. Because Mr. Raine had told me about this hearing nerve gone and I'd have to get used to it then I had to start sorting our lives out from that. As I say storing every piece of paper and everybody writing on it and such. It's a bad thing, hearing loss, because I think firstly because there is nothing to see, and secondly people don't understand it. They treat you as an idiot if you can't hear them. So, I had that to cope with. Fortunately I did have a lot of support from Duncan. That helped a lot.

[13:22]

*Is there any history of deafness in your family?*

My mother had slight hearing loss as she got older. I think it was what do they call it, age, there is a name for it I don't know what it is. You'd to talk a bit louder for her and make sure she were looking at you. That was it. I think it was just as I say age with her. She didn't lose her hearing.

*Were there any other influences in your life at this time? Things like religion, sport or anything other than the family?*

I go to the same church for well over 50 years. So, obviously the people there knew me and I knew them. Yes, you get support from your church from the congregation. It was sad not

being able to keep being involved with the things that I was involved with. I used to teach the youngster group on Sunday school and be on various church committees and stuff. Obviously I had to lose those.

*Was that something you could continue with, you still manage to get to church and be involved with the church after losing your hearing?*

I still go to church and do some things. I used to collate and print the church magazine when they had one and with a pew slip, they don't have those things now. One thing I did last weekend is show the children how to plant seeds because the sermon was about growing as a Christian, and I have an allotment which my vicar knows about, so I do get involved to a certain extent although nothing to do with hearing.

*Do you find that helpful? What you're getting is a connection, that you might not otherwise have?*

I think I probably would have had anyway. Yes, to a certain extent, it's nice knowing that you are a part of the church community although not as much and obviously I don't know as much that's going on. People do write notes for me and my vicar sends me an email when there are things to tell me but you can't get as involved and you can't expect everybody to write everything for you to tell you everything.

[16:54]

*When you visited hospital initially you've told me you saw the ENT surgeon. Did you see anybody else, hearing therapists or getting advice on equipment and things?*

When I first went that first day as I say Mr. Raine got me straight onto the ward. I did during that week I did see the audiologist. As I say, they didn't know what my hearing problem was. They knew this bone anchored thing, there was nothing wrong with that, so you know the problem was something else and as I say I was in that week for him to sort out what it was. There wasn't a great deal of point in me seeing the audiologist until he found out what the problem was. I did see a social if you like social type visit, tell me what was available if you lost your hearing completely and stuff like that, but that wasn't decided until after I came back

out of hospital when it was arranged I'd go and see her and as I say she arranged for me to go to LINK Centre which I'm eternally grateful for.

*So you were getting some help, some co-operation before you went to LINK, a little bit.*

Well, as I say I go to hospital every week. I can see Mr. Raine the specialist. When I go every Monday I go on a Monday because that's the day that he's there, so whenever I need to see him I see him there and then, or unless there is somebody else with him then, but you know what I mean, I see him the day I want to see him. If I have any problems or anything, so, I suppose from that point of view they're doing the best for me and it's person I can have a natter with and explain stuff to him, he's that sort of - I can have a natter with him. He's a social type of person if you like. Not officially-wise if you know what I mean.

*You'd lost all your hearing at this time, did you get any help with lipreading?*

No, as I said, the audiologist told me about LINK. It was middle of November when I lost my hearing, 12 November, by the time it was sorted out that there was nothing you could do talking about into December coming near Christmas, it was February when I went to LINK so there wasn't a great deal of time in-between the Audiologist did tell me there were such things as lipreading classes and such like that. Unfortunately there aren't any in Bradford. She did tell me about these things but with the short time between all this and going to LINK there wasn't time for her to sort anything out for me.

*Did you get any help with things like hearing dogs, would that have been useful?*

I didn't know anything about hearing dogs. I don't know whether it would at that time. I don't know whether it would to be quite honest. I suppose it would have done. When I went to LINK I got sorted out with the vibrator thing for door bell, telephone, smoke alarm, burglar alarm and my husband's personal alarm. That helped because it let me know when there was anybody at the door and I also got sorted out with a minicom which was a big help. Although I think there is an awful lot of people who won't use minicom. It's hard enough known about them.

*With time to reflect, do you think you should have had –*

Sorry - I didn't say it's hard enough knowing about. An awful lot of people who won't use the minicom. No, I said there is not enough people know about them.

*Do you have a minicom now?*

Yes, I do.

*Do you use it?*

I use it all the time obviously. I'm the one who does make calls rather than Duncan. But I must admit, I use emails perhaps more, more than minicom. It's easier because if you want to leave a message, if you ring somebody and they're not in you can leave a message. Sorry if you ring someone and they're not in, you've to ring back. If you send an email you know they're getting the message whether they're in or not.

*How long have you been using email?*

Pick a number. 10 years?

[End of Track 2]

**[Track 3]**

*Pat, in that first stage, did you get any other problems, dizziness, balance, tinnitus and so on?*  
Yes, yes, yes! Balance problems quite a lot, tinnitus now and then, I have to come down steps backwards because looking down makes me dizzy. Sometimes if I'm turning around too quick I sort of go a bit over-balance sort of thing so I do have to be careful in that sense.

*Were you offered any help for those?*

As far as tinnitus is concerned the most people offer you is music, listening to music, which is a bit pointless when you've no hearing whatsoever. I think it's a case of go steady and keep an eye on yourself that's basically it. As I say, coming down stairs I come backwards because it's safer if you like than looking down. It doesn't affect me as much.

*What about counselling did you get any help with that, did anybody talk to you about sort of some stress management and so on?*

The audiologist as I said the first few weeks, first couple of weeks I saw her, she did say that stress and - the best thing I could do was if I was feeling upset and stressed whatever then sit down, have a rest, get myself a cuppa and read a book, watch telly, whatever but try and relax.

*What about relationships? Obviously when you can't communicate within the family, with your children, with your husband, things get rather tense. How was it affecting your relationships?*

I think Duncan and I have stayed just about the same. We have a laugh with each other. Obviously it was difficult for him, harder for him, he's not one for writing, and our oldest daughter Sam she'd already left home so we would see her couple of times a week, it was a case of writing a note when she wanted to tell me anything. My youngest daughter she lived in Gateshead at that time. She was married. She actually offered to learn sign language, go to classes for sign language, which we left it to be sorted out and then we found out as I say for signing you need to mix with people who know sign language, it's not something for the general public if you like. So they did come down, about once a month to stay overnight or

we went up there. Every three or four weeks or so. They used to ring up and talk to my husband which was a bit frustrating to me because he told me afterwards what had been said and then I said 'why didn't you tell them this?' or 'why didn't you ask them?' - you get things like that which are frustrating. But there is nothing to be done about it is there?

[04:41]

*Role disruption. Did you feel people were doing things for you when you wanted to do them yourself or were they encouraging you to keep independent?*

I don't really know. I did tend to try and do things myself. Obviously there are some things like I'll ask Duncan to do which is ringing somebody because a lot of people as I say don't like minicoms, or they don't know about minicoms and they'll put the phone down. So, shall I say official phone calls I'll leave to him. In a lot of cases. I do try to do things myself. I can tell you a nasty story about when I went to buy something which you've already heard. When I asked someone to write the amount how much to pay for a cheque you don't want that story now do you?

*Yes, go on, tell me.*

I went to British Home Stores, and it was when they didn't have those tills that showed the amount on, and I'd been talking to the girl on the check-out about various stuff I was buying and I did say I'm sorry I had no hearing, so when it came to paying for the things I got my cheque card and cheque book out in full view that she could see, and I said 'I'm sorry will you write the amount down for me because numbers are difficult to lipread'. You get teen and T, like 18 and 80, they're difficult to distinguish. I said would she mind writing the amount down so I could write the cheque out and she turned to me husband and asked if it was all right for me to sign the cheque as I couldn't hear. So, we walked out without buying anything. You get things like that. Only last week I went to the doctors and I saw one I don't usually see because I don't like him. He's always chewing, I can never tell what he says. And I said, 'can you turn the computer?' One doctor we used to have when I went to see him used to turn the computer on to plain screen and type everything for me. So I asked this doctor if he could do that. 'I can't be bothered doing that I haven't the time'. You do get that attitude.

They can't be bothered repeating themselves for you or they think you're thick. You know if you are deaf you're daft. That's annoying.

*How do you feel about that? do you accept it?*

Angry. No I don't accept it. I think people should be made aware of hearing loss, that it's not - you're not thick because you can't hear. People have sympathy with people who can't see, people who can't hear they haven't time for a lot I think. I think someone once said that you can close your eyes and imagine being blind and how difficult it could be for you. You can't close your ears and imagine deafness so they don't understand so I think there should be more awareness made of deafness and how to handle it with people.

*How do you think deafness compares with other disabilities?*

I just said it's a misunderstood or little understood disability and I think as I said there should be more done about it. I wouldn't like to lose my sight, I enjoy looking at sights, the trees, the fields, I love reading, but I would like more done to inform people of deafness. How to react with them. You'll get someone, if you say 'I'm sorry, I've no hearing, would you repeat that please' and they'll turn and go round and shout in your ear. Which is no good whatsoever. You have no way at all of lipreading, when they're shouting in your ear.

*That's a stereotyping really, they think all deaf people are the same, not making any effort to find out what your real needs are, is that so?*

That's right. That's true.

[10:40]

*At this time, how do you feel Duncan was coping? Was it an effort for him? Do you feel it was sort of putting him at any disadvantage?*

Duncan has coped very, very well. He has his own health problems, as I say he's had double hip replacement operation just over 18 months ago. He's full of arthritis. He's now got emphysema and nebuliser four times a day so he's struggling a lot, we're always together and

if I can't follow something he'll tell me. He learned finger-spelling which helps us both and he uses it a lot. He had an operation a while ago on his face, on his ear sorry, and it's affected a nerve in his face which puts his mouth slightly off one side, so he's not exactly easy to lipread, so that's one reason he uses finger-spelling a lot. We cope together.

*What about friends? Has it affected relationships at all with your friends a lot or can you still maintain a good number of friends?*

I think some friends we've kept, some we've lost to a certain extent because as I say they don't use Typetalk, they don't like somebody listening into what they're talking about, so some friends we've lost or mainly lost I think we've got other new friends through the hearing, through LINK Centre for instance, through lipreading classes, that we did start going to before this finished in Bradford, so yes I still have some good old friends some I've lost, some I've got new ones.

*So, that's good you are still making new friends you feel you've got that ability and you're not getting particularly isolated or cut off to any great extent.*

No, I'm not cut off. I believe in getting out and getting stuff sorted out and getting out and about it if you like I think if you sit at home feeling sorry for yourself then you're stuck. You're on your own. That's bad.

[14:05]

*You mentioned a couple of incidents to me but in general do you think people will modify their behaviour to help you? Were those incidents isolated?*

After so long nearly 12 years I think you know we're at a stage where we're set now, this is it, we're here. I still talk to people, like I've been talking to the waiters and stuff here, and they've been sociable and having a laugh, and I do that wherever.

*After you lost your deafness, after you lost your hearing, how long was it before you accepted the word that you were 'deaf'? Did you do that fairly quickly?*

I'm still praying that, you know, me hearing will come back but I can't say I expect it to. I think really after 12 years I've got my life now. Obviously a different life to what it was, but you know we've still got a life.

*Your hearing loss was quite sudden, and the doctors verdict was quite certain, but you still thought you may get your hearing back sometime?.*

No I said I'm still praying after all. God can do anything. It's not impossible that what doctors can't do God can do. I'm still praying. But I've accepted the way I am now.

*But you didn't have a period of time really hoping, thinking that it just might happen?*

When I first went in hospital as I say I didn't know. I was told by Mr. Raine that as far as he was aware the hearing nerve had gone, nerves. It was a few weeks before it was finally sorted out. Yes they were definitely gone and there was nothing they could do about it.

*What about travelling and shopping, how do you get on with things like that?*

Okay. Can I interrupt a second again. I did tell you a story yesterday about the butchers - sorry that was to be an interruption. The shops you go to nowadays are basically supermarket things so you go in, pick all your stuff up yourself then just go to the till, hand over a cheque card and that's it. It's not like the old shops where you ask for things and you know -

*Do you have any trouble at the tills though that people still keep asking you things and you're never quite certain what you're being asked?*

Most of the - the shop I go to is a farm shop. So most of them know me and they'll explain stuff to me. And as I say most tills nowadays show the amounts anyway. But with a cheque card it's not absolutely necessary to see the amount. It's not like having to write out a cheque.

*What about travelling. Do you travel on your own a lot or do you take someone with you?*

My husband drive's so we would tend to go places together. I do occasionally if he's not fit I do occasionally go on the bus, but we've got a bus pass so you show the bus pass to the driver

and he gives you a ticket, it's as simple as that. Occasionally I have gone somewhere on a bus where I didn't know where to get off. I said to the driver when I got on, 'I need to get off at such and such a place, but I have no hearing, would you mind waving when we get to that stop?' And generally they're pretty good at it. Although add admitted that it isn't often I go somewhere on my own where I don't know where to get off, it's only happened very occasionally and they've managed all right, they've let me know OK. As I say generally we go by car.

[End of Track 3]

**[Track 4]**

*Pat you've told me about your doctor writing things down for you. Will other people do that for you as well apart from your husband?*

Yes, people will write things down for me. In fact, sometimes they'll write rather than speak to me and if they speak clearly I can follow a lot of them, so sometimes it's annoying that they're writing. But, they're helping me, so fair enough. And about the doctor, the doctor that we had used to clear his screen and type things for me, one of the doctors we have now can't be bothered. He said he hasn't time for stuff like that. He can't be bothered. He'll speak to Duncan and explain stuff to him. Duncan has got to the stage now where he won't let him. He'll say 'no, speak to her, tell her', because if the doctor tells Duncan and then I have a question when we come out, like for instance 'how long do I take the tablets, can I take them with the other tablets?', questions like that, Duncan won't be able to answer me. The doctor would have been able to. So, that's why I'm trying to get the doctor to communicate with me. One of them is bad at doing this. The other two are reasonable. So I try not to see the bad one as much as I can.

*Do you find this more with strangers, that strangers just don't want to know?*

Some people are, I think maybe they've had something to do with people with hearing loss, some people are all right, others will just say 'I'm sorry to bother you' and walk off. It depends on the person I suppose and as I say how they maybe related or they may be close to people with hearing loss and know how to cope. I don't know. The thing that annoys me is when they say 'never mind it doesn't matter'. We think why the bloody hell did you speak in the first place then? Sorry.

*Do you have any escape from deafness or is it part of everything that you do?*

I love me books. It doesn't matter about my hearing I can enjoy my books. I also have an allotment, a garden at home which you don't need hearing for that. When I was going out for drives I love looking at the country. Fields, trees, you know. We have a wood outside our back garden, it's a bluebell wood. So, it's nice seeing things like that you don't need hearing with that. I do enjoy embroidery when I get time but I don't seem to get a great deal of time

to see to that. I miss very much miss music. I still have lots of me old records and I used to go to musical shows, well every year at least. I miss that and I miss music a lot.

[04:05]

*What effect has it had on your self-esteem? Do you still feel valued as a person?*

I don't know how to answer that. To a certain extent, yes. I mean, I keep mentioning church but I must admit the vicar keeps telling me that, yes I am part of the community and yes I do things that other people can't do, like for instance I'll type up things if he's busy and like sowing the seeds but you know people do sometimes tell me 'you've done well with that' and it helps. . Other times it makes you feel that they didn't think you could do it because of your hearing loss so it's swings and roundabouts.

*You've worked hard to move on with life. Do you think society could have helped you more?*

I think as I said before I think more should be told people about hearing loss. It should be more open if you like. People tend to try and hide it. Let people know about hearing loss, how they can communicate with people with hearing loss by speaking to them clearly and as I say as I said before Typetalk and stuff like that. Let them know it's not a mental thing if you like, you've still got your faculties you just need more attention to speak if that's the word, more - speak slower, teach them to speak slower and clearly.

*What about conversation? Do you feel that it's difficult, now, that you can still communicate but you've lost that spontaneity. Do you feel that's a big loss or doesn't matter too much?*

It does matter yes because the one to one conversation is one thing but if you're in with a group or even just, for instance if myself and my husband are with one other person those two can have a chat and you can't join in, I do keep asking my husband 'what were you saying, what were you talking about?', but he can't be telling me every single word that's been discussed. I try to make sure that he has sometime to have a natter with people but it's not easy and sometimes you do feel left out.

[07:31]

*You've no lipreading help where you live. Do you have any contact with other people who are hard of hearing or deaf?*

I did go do lip-reading class in Leeds, the train times and walking to the college and such you're talking about an hour each way to the college and back, at least. It got awkward when Duncan got bad with his arthritis and breathing so I've had to stop that. I do go to local resource centre, once a month; they have a sort of general meeting. It's, you know you sit and have a cuppa and a natter and it's OK, it's handy to be aware of the place, if you like, in case you need anything. Like, for instance, they can sort out a new telephone for you if your minicom breaks and stuff like that. I do go to other groups but nothing to do with hearing loss. I go to Easier Access once a month which they try to as the word says try to get easier access for all disabled people, but then disabled tends to be thought of as people with physical disabilities, walking and such. So I am pushing the hearing disabilities thing.

*You met other people at LINK who had hearing losses as severe as you have, was that the first time you had contact with people like this?*

Yes, I think it was to be quite honest. As I say, my mother had some hearing loss age-related thing. Although having said that we've been in and out of ENT hospitals since the sixties, I have had some contact with people with hearing loss. But it's been for a couple of or so days or so and that's been it, so, not regular contact.

*Did you feel any benefit from that though, talking to people to find out their strategies and how they cope and swapping information and so on?*

Yes, swap stories, 'oh yes, I've been there', that sort of attitude. It does help. And I have actually kept in contact with some of the people I've met at LINK.

[10:57]

*What single thing has been most helpful to you in your deafness do you think?*

In one sense I think it's brought Duncan and I closer together because he worked and I worked, different jobs, and he loves television I love books, I do watch television

occasionally but we always go places together but we've had to be there for each other more. Me for him because his walking and breathing disability, him for me because of me hearing loss. So, perhaps thinking about it, it's brought us both closer together. As I said, I've met people at LINK and we still keep in touch with people so I still have some good friends.

*What single thing do you think has been most unhelpful during your deafness?*

People's attitude to deafness. If you're deaf you're daft.

*So this stigma attached to it as well, you feel, have you found that?*

Yes. Very much so.

*Have you ever felt embarrassed, needing to apologise?*

I don't feel I need to apologise. If someone starts talking to me and I will say, 'I'm sorry I have no hearing would you mind repeating that?' But, I don't feel that I need to apologise for being deafened because you know it isn't something that I've done wrong. Embarrassed, yes. Like with that do with the woman on the till and somebody else waiting to be served. I did tell you about the do with the bus but I'm not going to repeat that now. No, doesn't matter.

*Is there any time that you've been left feeling sort of frightened or scared?*

It's not easy crossing a road, especially a busy road. I do tend, if I'm on my own I do try to get away from a corner so that I can see both ways. That can be frightening. I think worse than that is perhaps a supermarket car park because cars are coming from all over and you don't know where they're coming from.

*Have you ever felt at any time like giving in, it's all got too much for you?*

I suppose I must have done at sometime but I can't particularly think of any instance. I'm not one for giving in.

*Is deafness restricting your plans for the future now at all, is it still getting in the way?*

No, I don't think so. I'm 67 next. I think anything for the future I've already got sorted out if you like. No I don't really know enough to answer that. I mean obviously as I said before I miss going to films and stuff, that's plans for the future that I would like to go and see this that and the other and there is no point. I know they have stage script and stuff like that but it's not the same as listening to the films, listening to the music sorry.

*Do you think your character or personality has changed due to deafness, in other words has it changed you?*

No, I don't think so. I might possibly have got a bit more impatient but I've never been full of patience especially with ignorant people, so no I don't think it has changed me a great deal.

[16:58]

*Do you think your lifestyle has changed? Would you have been doing other things if you could hear well?*

I don't really know. As I said, I mean you're talking about late fifties when I lost my hearing. You'd just about sorted your life out by then and what's happening and what you're going to do. No, I suppose there are things that I would have liked to have done that I can't do. I mean, you go to these, for instance, houses like Edinburgh Castle, take that for an instance, and they have guided tours, I can't do that. Things like that that you can't do. But if you start dwelling on stuff like that you're lost. I'm just trying to think now about this lost thing. I mean obviously you think 'oh I wish I had managed to do this and I wish I had done that', but time goes past and you get over it you forget about it, you know.

*There is not a certain amount of acceptance though, are you accepting things because you are deaf or do you feel there are things you would have liked to have done if you could have?*

There are times when I think I'll find out about something and think 'oh well I wish I could have done that' but then it comes to everybody things like that whether you're deaf or not. I wish I could have done something. Whether it was when you were young or before you lost your hearing or anything. There are always some things that people wish they had done. And

I suppose I'm like that.

*So how would you describe yourself now? Are you happy and contented or wishing for changes?*

Obviously, I would have preferred not to have lost my hearing. But seeing as I have and there is nothing to be done about it I've accepted it. That's it. I make the best of it.

*We often learn from experiences in life, even bad experiences providing we survive. Do you think deafness has strengthened you in any way?*

I don't know. Maybe it's given me a bit more patience with other people but I don't know to be quite honest.

*You mentioned it's brought you and your husband closer together so it's had some benefits. Pat, you've spent the last one and a half hours talking to me about something that's been a major part in your life, how do you feel about that now? Do you think that's brought you any benefits?*

Well as you mentioned just now yes in one sense it's brought Duncan and I closer. But then we both retired about the same time, well I had to retire to look after him anyway, so whether we'd have been closer together by both being together longer, more, sorry, being together more or whether the deafness is - wait a minute. Whether we'd have been closer together anyway or whether the deafness is part of it I can't really say.

*Talking is a therapy. Have you enjoyed talking about it?*

Talking about deafness?

*Talking about your history of deafness and your experiences.*

I have discussed how I lost my hearing with people. You get that especially if a couple of deafened people get together, you discuss yourself and how they coped and how you coped

and I wouldn't say I enjoyed talking but perhaps you get some consolation and some help from each other. How you've coped and how they've coped and you know,

*Pat, thank you for talking to us. It's an interesting story.*

[End of Track 4]

[End of recording]