



Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Jim Hudson
Interviewed by Ann Thallon

British Library ref. C1345/59

IMPORTANT

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Interview Summary Sheet

Ref no: C1345/59

Collection title: Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Interviewee's surname: Hudson

Title:

Interviewee's forename: James Harrison

Sex: Male

Occupation:

Date and place of birth: 1934, Glasgow

Date(s) of recording: 20th June 2009

Location of interview: Holiday Inn, Washington, Tyne and Wear

Name of interviewer: Ann Thallon

Speech to Text reporter: Carina Raglione

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: 27 min.

Additional material:

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Interviewer's comments: The second section of the interview was not recorded although there is a full STTR transcript.

[Track 1]

Hello, Jim. For the record here, this is Ann Thallon interviewing Jim Hudson on Saturday, 20th June 2009. Our speech-to-text reporter is Carina Raglione. So Jim, just to get started, can you give me your full name and when you were born and where you were born.

My full name is James Harrison Hudson. I was born on 21 September 1934 in Glasgow.

In Glasgow, which part of Glasgow?

I think it was New City Road.

That was back in 1934. What are your early memories?

My early memories were the beginning of the Second World War. I remember getting a toy soldier's outfit and I put the helmet on. This was my response to the war effort. I remember the Clydeside blitz, and we used to go to the air raid shelters, and I could see the flashes and hear the bangs as the bombs exploded, and on one occasion, when I was in the air raid shelter at the school I attended, and this was through the night, there was a sudden piercing whistle, and it was discovered the following morning that a bomb had come through the infants' class of the school, and had it exploded, the chances are that you wouldn't be interviewing me this morning, because we would have been gone. Also what I remembered - it didn't occur to me at the time - also I remember at that time, and looking back, that people in the shelters would start singing some of the old war songs, "Roll out the barrel", "Run rabbit run", "Kiss me goodnight sergeant major", "Bless them all, bless them all", then you would hear the draw of the bombers and then they start singing "Nearer, my God, to thee", "The Lord's my shepherd" and "the old Rugged Cross". It was perhaps indicative. People felt that their lives were on the line. Following that, I was evacuated to Troon for two and a half years.

[03:24]

I will stop you there a moment. I will take you back a little bit. There we were at the start of the war, and you talked about the Clydeside bombing, and can you tell me a little bit about your family? You were part of a family at that time.

I was an only child. My mother took one look at my screwed-up, prune-like face when I was born and sacked it. “That’s it. I’m not having any more”. I didn’t have any brothers or sisters. I never really had a family, because my parents died when I was young, and I didn’t have any siblings, or I didn’t have any family, so I was on my own.

How young were you when your parents died?

My father died 1945, and I was ten years of age then, at that time. He had only one leg. He had lost his leg in World War I, in the battle of the Somme. He was in the Royal Scots. He passed away. He was only 52 at the time, and I was a teenager when my mother passed away. She was only 58. They both died with cancer, et cetera. So I was on my own.

You were on your own?

From there on out.

You were talked about primary school age, in the bomb shelters and the bomb going through the infants’ classroom. Then you said that you were evacuated. Was that when your parents were still alive then?

They were still alive then. The people I stayed with in Troon also became the surrogate parents. They had no children, so they lavished a lot of love on me and so on. I think they would have liked to have kept me, but my Glasgow parents weren’t having that, you know.

You were in Troon from the age of ten?

No, no, from the age of six to about seven and a half, eight, something like that.

You have memories of that time in Troon?

If I was naughty, my Troon mother used to say to me, “If you don’t behave, we will send you back to Glasgow”. I can remember I got fed up with this, and I had a bag and I opened up and there were 30 pennies in it. I took the pennies out, and I went around to Ayr Street in Troon

and got the Glasgow bus - six years of age, mind you - got the Glasgow bus, paid the fare all the way to Glasgow, and then got a connecting local bus. I was only six, and they had messages I had maybe gone to the cinema, and there were messages on the cinema screen, "Have you seen this lad?" And so on. The police were involved and so forth. When I got to Glasgow, my Glasgow father contacted them and let them know and so forth. At the age of six, I found my way from Troon back to my home in Glasgow. Of course, I gave everybody a fright. You know I got hauled over the coals for that.

That is an amazing story for a six-year-old.

I was always fairly independent.

[07:20]

At this point, did you go to school?

Yes, I went to, first of all, the primary and then what they called the higher grade in Troon.

Was that --

If I lived there long enough, I would have gone to the Marr College, but I wasn't old enough to go to the Marr College.

What was this higher grade you were in? Was it a special class?

No, just ordinary. There were other children. There were lots of children evacuated and so on at that time, to places like Troon and Ayr and Girvan. I suppose other places as well. Most of the Glasgow children, I think, seemed to be evacuated to somewhere in Ayrshire, whereas I discovered, Dundee children, they were evacuated to Blairgowrie and places like that.

Did you make friends at school in Troon?

Oh, yes.

You had some company?

Oh, yes, I enjoyed my chums. You had adventures. Of course, you were at the seaside, so you obviously went down to the shore a lot and built sandcastles and all the kind of things that children do. I was actually in Troon the day my father died. I was down playing in the rocks when a lady that I called Anne, she wasn't actually an Anne, she was the sister of the lady that I stayed with in Troon, she came down to the rocks and told me my father had passed away.

You were ---

I was having a holiday with them. I was ten years of age. The link with them remained as well. The people I was staying with, they died as well, when I was a teenager.

[09:28]

What effect do you think that had on you, losing your parents and these other people you were close to when you were so young?

I think, largely, these early experiences were very influential in my eventually training for the ministry. Having lost my parents, obviously, the grieving process kicks in, and at first I was inclined to, you know, ask questions like, "Why should this happen to me", in my particular circumstances, when I didn't have any other family. Eventually, I began to think, "Why shouldn't it happen to me", as distinct from anyone else. I found that my faith and other Christian people were a great support and influence at that time. I began to think of other people's problems, and the problems of society and the world in which we lived, and that became redemptive, because it set my perspective, and I began to ask, "What can I do to ameliorate other people's problems and meet other people's needs?" It was at that point I felt called to the ministry, and I began to train and take theological training and so on.

Jim, what age were you at then? You were ten at the end of the war.

I was 21 when I started training for the ministry.

Can I take you back just a little bit. After your parents died, you went to secondary school then, did you?

Yes.

That was in Glasgow?

In Glasgow.

Then in your late teens, you felt that you were drawn to the ministry?

That's right.

[11:43]

Can you tell me about your training then for the ministry?

My training for the ministry, I started theological training, and after three years I graduated with a diploma in theology. Then I became minister, surprisingly in Sunderland. Then following that, I went to the United States, and I did an arts degree and a bachelor of divinity degree

You did an arts degree and a bachelor of divinity. And this was in the United States?

Yes, I had a church in the United States and I stayed in the United States for four years. My wife, who was a trained nurse and midwife, she became registered in the United States and she worked as a nurse in the States.

We are racing ahead here, Jim. You are mentioning your wife now. When did you meet your wife?

I met my wife - I was filling in at a church during the summer break in Lanarkshire, and we used to have a Friday evening when young people came together. She was one of these young people. She was doing general nursing training at that stage, and, back then, it was

quite a thing to invite a young lady out, you know. It wasn't like today where they are dodging around. You thought about it long and hard. You didn't just jump in with both feet, so I thought about it for several weeks before I asked her out, because the one thing that was difficult, you didn't want to be rejected or turned down, you see. I did that. I went and I said - you know, I was very formal about it. Then we walked out together or something, something to that effect. That proceeded, and she graduated in nursing with what we call in Scotland RGN, which is the same as SRN down here, registered general nurse. Then we were married on 3 July, and this 3 July is our golden wedding. We decided on 3 July rather than 4th, as it was Independence Day. We have been together now for 50 years. Isn't that remarkable? My goodness, you would get shorter time than that for murder.

Fifty years. That means you were 34 when you got married. Is that right?

No I was 25.

I beg your pardon. My maths is absolutely terrible. You were quite a young man when you got married.

Yes, I was almost 25. I think I was 24. I was 25 a couple of months later, something like that.

That was around about the late 50s, was it?

1959 we were married.

Tell me, Jim ---

Then after we were married, my wife did her midwifery training and became a midwife. That was in Sunderland. That was very interesting, because sometimes the expectant fathers would call up to get the midwife, you see, and they were so excited, they would say, "Tell the midwife to come, my wife is delivering" and they would bang the phone down and you wouldn't know an address. There was one instance where there was a lady who there were complications and they had to send for an ambulance. It was a time when the ambulances had a fixed partition between the people in the back of the ambulance and the driver, and they had

to come around and open the back door. That was in Sunderland. There was a banging on the partition, and the ambulance driver stopped. They came around, opened the back door, and the husband jumped out and ran away. The baby was on his way. He disappeared around the corner. It was very colourful and very funny. I used to enjoy it. I loved it when she was a midwife. It was so exciting, you know, some of the things that happened. We have been together for 50 years. I have four daughters. That is why I looked so oppressed in my house. Two of them were born in the United States. One of them was born out in India, and the youngest was born in Scotland, in Dundee. We were missionaries in India for several years, my wife and I, before returning to Scotland.

You have been around, Jim.

I have been around the block a few times.

[17:40]

How was your hearing at that point, Jim?

Fine. My hearing, I don't think has ever been acute. When I was young, I had problems catarrh and sinus problems, which I still have. When I was a laddy - I used to have to go to the local clinic to have my ears syringed, because they were infected and discharging. It was before the days of penicillin, so they couldn't do too much about it. My understanding is that because of the scarring, it produces calcium, and it holds the equipment rigid, and when sound strikes, it is not vibrating as it should, and that is where the hearing loss comes in. When I was coming up to retirement it was becoming difficult, because I had a large congregation in Dundee, the West End of Dundee. As I said, I was Chaplain at Harris Academy, which is the largest school in Dundee. I was finding it difficult to follow debates and I kept saying to them that both together was around 100 people, so when debate was going on, and it was increasingly difficult for me to follow, and that was hard for me.

It was difficult to follow to hear what the Harris Academy pupils were saying.

When I took a class on the odd occasion, that wasn't so bad, but when I took assemblies, I was doing the talking. Maybe too bad for those doing the listening, but that wasn't quite so

bad.

You said that your hearing was never really acute, and you explained about the difficulties you had when you were little, and it gradually got worse.

Gradually got worse.

Were you aware of it getting worse?

Pardon?

Were you aware of it getting worse?

Over the past ten years to fifteen years I was aware it was making life difficult.

When you were in your late 50s and you were aware that your hearing was causing you difficulties, can you tell me a bit more about that? What sort of difficulties? You have talked about the Harris academy's pupils, what other difficulties did you have?

It was very difficult to follow what people were saying, if there was discussion going on or debate, or there was cross talk going on. When I went to the presbytery, I was finding it difficult to follow all that was being said, et cetera. I was beginning to mishear what people were saying, and maybe getting the wrong end of the stick. Sometimes it was funny. I was visiting a man in Dundee, and what I heard them say was, "My six wives", and I didn't know whether to look at them with sympathy or envy with six wives. I said, "Really, have you been married six times?" There was an expression that came across his face, "What do you mean I have been married six times?" I said, "You just said six wives". He said, "No, my ex-wife". Sometimes you would get the wrong end of the stick. Another one in a similar vein was last July. My wife and I went for a cruise on the QEII and it was due to be sold to Dubai and it went there last November. I was commiserating with the crew - the young lady said to us one afternoon, and I was commiserating with her, and she spoke to me. I didn't really hear what she said, but I assumed it would be along the sentiments that I had been expressing and when she finished I said, "Oh, that is a terrible shame". My wife leaned over and said, "She just told you she was getting married in January and she's not coming back". Maybe it was a

terrible shame. These are funny instances, but there must be times when you have misheard where it has consequences, and you are unaware that you have misheard. It doesn't come to light - there must be times you respond to somebody and they must go away thinking, "That was an odd thing for him to say", because what you have heard is different from what it was that they said, and in interacting with people on a day-to-day basis, it is socially unacceptable to ask people to go on repeating themselves, so often you are smiling and you are nodding and you are hoping you are getting it right, because you don't actually know what they are saying. You maybe have some idea of the subject under discussion, but you are not actually hearing clearly what they are saying.

[23:40]

Jim, can you tell me, how does all that make you feel?

Sometimes stressed. Sometimes frustrated. I don't think I ever get angry about it. You know, my nature is such that I make light of it, I make fun of it, but I am aware that sometimes it has an isolating effect, both on the part of hearing people who get fed up and irritated, constantly repeating - particularly people close to you, and you begin subliminally to isolate yourself, because it is easier just to be on your own. Basically, I think, I am correct in saying I am a very gregarious person, I like people. I like to be among people, I like people around me, but now I am more relaxed and more at ease when I am on my own except when I am with people. The exception to that is when I am in a congregation on a Sunday. I seem to function extraordinarily well at that point, but then I am doing most of the talking. As you can have gathered, there is nothing wrong with my tongue.

You have described that very clearly, Jim, the way it has made you feel, and it has changed your personality. Is that fair to say?

No, I am not aware of it having changed my personality. I think I have always been this way. I think the Glaswegians are like that, it is in their nature. I think it comes out of the industrial revolution because of the hardships that people experienced. It was a way of coping with hardship. I tell all these funny stories now. I always have told funny stories, but I do it now repeatedly because it is a way of coping. If I am doing the talking and telling funny stories, I am not straining, struggling to hear what somebody else is saying. It is not that I like to listen

to other people and hear what they are saying, I do, I like to listen to other people's experiences, but I can't always follow.

What helps you when you are trying to communicate two ways? You say that you tell lots of funny stories, but when you really need to hear what other people are saying, how do you manage to do that?

Generally if it is one to one, like now, in a quiet room, I can pretty much follow what is going on and I will take people aside or something of that order, but when I am in a situation where - like last night in the dining room with all that background noise, I couldn't follow what anyone was saying in that set of circumstances. I suppose, fourthly, in my profession, if I am dealing with human need and problems, I am usually dealing with it one to one, therefore, if I am giving pastoral support and guidance, it is one to one. When I go to the presbytery now and I go to a committee, I can't tell what is on the agenda nowadays, I can't follow. I go to the presbytery to remember that I am a Presbyterian.

Jim, we are going to take a little pause for now.

[End of Track 1]

THE REMAINDER OF THIS INTERVIEW WAS NOT RECORDED

Right, Jim. I would like to hear a bit more about any sort of help you got with your hearing. Can you tell me when you first went to get help with your hearing? What happened?

I actually went to get help about 25 years ago, but apart from being supplied one hearing aid, I tended to get by without it. Latterly, I went to the audiology department in Ninewells, and there was a specialist called Dr Irwin who is a specialist in hearing aids, et cetera. He was always very supportive and helpful, and I still go to see him from time to time. He obviously can't do anything else for me, but he let's me go to see him from time to time. The audiologist there, Liz Ross, was particularly good and helpful. She is now lecturing audiologist trainees at the Queen Margaret University. Liz asked me to try and get a group going in North East Fife. My wife made them for me, posters - she is much more artistic than I am - and we put them in the libraries and the post office and got the community worker from Newport to assist and propagate it, and my phone number, and I never got one call from any deaf person.

Let me clear this up in my mind, Jim. You went to Ninewells Hospital near Dundee?

That is in Dundee.

And the audiologist there was very good, and she suggested you start a group near where you live in North East Fife.

I attempted to do that, without success.

What were the posters saying?

Nobody - there was just nothing. There was no comeback; there was no feedback, which suggested to me that the vast majority of people with hearing problems or who were deaf preferred not to acknowledge it or admit it, and they keep it hidden. Of course, it is a hidden disability.

Did you keep your hearing loss hidden?

Initially, I suppose I did. But latterly, I was quite happy to publicise it. Going back to Liz Ross, it was she who suggested I come to a meeting - I can't remember her first name, is it Jill Knight with LINK. There is somebody who works with LINK, one of the staff, her second name is Knight, and she held a meeting at Ninewells Hospital and Liz Ross got me to go to that.

It was Liz Ross ---

That was initially where the link was established with LINK.

The link was established with LINK. So tell me about LINK then.

Well, eventually I went to the residential course with LINK, my wife and I. We obviously found that very helpful and helped to get a lot of things into perspective. The course was excellent, and so on. When that finished, I wanted her to put something back into the situation. I agreed to be a volunteer, and I made a standing order out to contribute to LINK every month and so on, which was an expression of appreciation on my part for the interest and support that they showed and, of course, I have been with LINK ever since.

You are saying then LINK, the organisation LINK, which is for people with an acquired profound hearing loss, they gave you a lot of support?

Yes.

And the audiologist gave you support. Did you get any other sort of support?

Not really. I don't have any - there is a group that meets in the deaf centre at Rosangle that sometimes I am invited to, but it is a very loosely structured sort of group and the meetings aren't very frequent. It is mainly for people with cochlear implants, but somehow or other, they invite me. I don't - apart from me, I don't think there is anybody - maybe one other person that goes - that attends that group sometimes that has a connection with LINK, and that's about it.

But LINK has been your main...

LINK has been my main contact and support as far as my hearing loss.

How does your wife - what is your wife's name again?

Alison, with an E.

How does she cope with your hearing loss? How does it affect your relationship?

I find that very difficult to assess and judge, because I think she feels stressed and irritated at times with my hearing loss. I think those who are close to you - I understand that, at a subliminal level, it becomes a matter of survival, and when you are living with somebody with a profound hearing loss, really, I think it gets to you. Constantly, I feel that she is getting on to me about it, one way and another. You feel guilty about it, you know. I think in some ways she copes well with it. Other ways, I think she finds it a bit of a trial, you know. She comes and if dinner is ready, she comes and taps me on the head. I don't like it, but she still does it, anyway.

Have you told her you don't like it?

Yes, but that doesn't make any difference. Also, she will say, "You have to look at me and watch my lips". And I feel the family are getting on to me all the time.

These are your children as well.

Sorry?

Your children, your four children, are you saying they get on to you?

Yes, I think to some extent they find it a bit of a trial as well. It means that they don't speak to you as much any more, you know. Obviously, it is a waste of their time calling me on the phone, because I can't hear what is being said over the phone, although I have a G-mark

phone that I bought from RNID, and recently I got a mobile, and I can text, you see, but I don't receive many texts from them. It is mainly the mother that they speak to, obviously, because she is the one that can hear and answer the phone, et cetera.

You mentioned feeling guilty in some way.

Yes, you feel - it is difficult to describe. You feel that you are getting a row a lot of the time and possibly they don't mean that, but that is how you feel about it. You get annoyed with yourself because you are in this existential situation, and you can't do much about it, you know.

The communication is difficult?

Yes.

And you use text phone, but is there anything else you can use to communicate with your family, in particular? Is there anything else they can do?

I do. My daughters, their birthdays and so on, I take them one at a time out for dinner. That gives them the opportunity to converse, because when the family get together, I don't follow what is going on. When I talk about consequences, I married my youngest daughter three years ago. I took her along to the Blyth Hall at Newport, and I thought we would get caterers in. They didn't like the chairs. In 24 hours we had graduated to The Crieff Hydro, which is one of the better hotels in Scotland. Of course, the prices were pretty steep as well. I thought this was my daughter's idea. Of course, I am paying for the whole of the wedding, so I am groaning outwardly and groaning inwardly at what this is going to cost me. It was only a few days before that I suddenly discovered it wasn't her idea at all, it was my wife's idea, but somehow I had missed that, and, mind you, a father of the bride, you can't do much about it, you have to go with the flow, otherwise it would seem unseemly. But the point I am making, here was something with significant consequences and I didn't have a correct impression as to what had happened and how it had happened.

Exactly, Jim.

You know what I am saying?

That is a good example.

The church people, I am mainly with them for an hour on a Sunday, and I get on fine, although I always think with the hymn singing, I am starting the last verse when they are sitting down, which is quite funny, because I can't always see the speed. I know it varies. Some Sundays I hear the tunes quite well and other Sundays I don't hear the tunes at all. I know the tunes, but I am not hearing them, and I just hear a noise, you know. I suppose because they seemed to have enjoyed my minister - I use humour a lot in sermons. They seem to enjoy it. They tolerate me very well and put up with that, and they don't seem to mind, but I think those who are close with you and have to contend with you and interact with you on a daily basis, it's very difficult for them. They get impatient at times. Sometimes they show a considerable degree of patience and other times they seem not to. That is how I feel. Maybe I am misreading the situation.

Is there anything that can help these people that you see a lot to make things better for you, not just your family, but the people that you meet through your ministry?

I suppose if ever they came to a course, or something like that, if all of these people came to something like LINK's residential course, that might help them to be most sympathetic. The fact of the matter is if you are blind, which is a terrible affliction, and I wouldn't like to be blind, you provoke people's sympathy. If you are deaf, you provoke irritation. That is just the way it is.

Are you saying that if the people could go to that residential course that you went to, they would understand more?

I think that would increase people's understanding.

It is more difficult to understand the hidden disability of hearing loss, than maybe it is for people to have some sort of an idea about sightness.

If people are blind, that is very obvious, but if people have a hearing loss, that is nothing

obvious. They look okay. People get fed up being asked to repeat themselves. It makes conversations stilted if you are in a group and there is a cross-counter of conversation, and you are not hearing somebody and you say, "Can you repeat that, please? Can you say that again?" Socially, it is not really acceptable, so you pretend a lot of the time that you are hearing them when you are not. I had a man sat down beside me on the bus a couple of weeks ago, and he kept chatting away to me, all the way along, and I wasn't making out half of what he said, and I am nodding and smiling. I don't know if I am getting it correct or not, and I don't know if I am getting it. I might be nodding when I shouldn't be, et cetera.

You find the residential course with Hearing Concern LINK helpful. That was about three years ago?

That's right.

Why did you travel from north-east Fife to Eastbourne?

It was in Edinburgh. It was contact with a Liddell centre in Edinburgh. I didn't travel to Eastbourne. One thing, perhaps, I ought to indicate is that I get terribly stressed now when I have to use or receive a telephone call. When I have to make or receive a telephone call, I get really uptight, and I try to avoid it like the plague, because I just can't hear people at the end of the phone, although I have a G-mark phone with amplification, I now mainly go through type talk, but even that has hiccups far removed from a normal telephone conversation, because you get in touch with type talk, you dial 18001, and then you have to use the local prefix, even if it is a local call, and then it comes up on your screen, they are making contact, et cetera. Then, for example, the other day I called and then it said, "If you want to leave a message" - there was no reply - "If you want to leave a message, speak after the tone". I can't hear the tone. I am not sure when to speak. You know, I am lost.

This is with type talk?

That is with type talk.

Which is set up specially for people like you.

Yes, and this is coming up on the screen, "Speak after the tone". I can't hear the tone and I don't know when to speak. A couple of occasions I have had to put the phone down, get back in touch with them, and tell the operator I can't hear the tone. And we have to go through the rigmarole again. It is funny sometimes to an extent. You have got to say - when I speak, I put the VT button on on voice and I speak and then when I am finished, I say, "GA", which means "go ahead". I put it in voice and the person speaks into the phone and the typist comes up on the screen like you are doing just now, Carina. Then that says "GA", go ahead when they are finished speaking. When you are having a normal conversation on the telephone, the conversation comes to the conclusion naturally and you say, "Cheerio. Bye-bye. Hope to see you soon", or whatever, but with type talk, you don't want to appear abrupt. So maybe the conversation comes to an end and there is, "Cheerio. Byebye. GA", go ahead, and they say, "Cheerio. Bye-bye. GA", go ahead, and you carry on and on the blooming phone and then when you finish, you say, "SK, SK", which is stops keying. It is kind of a stilted and unnatural thing. An instrument you have used most of your life without second thought has become a real obstacle to me and a real ordeal and I will ask my wife as much as possible, and I am always afraid it might be an undertaker, it might be a funeral they are trying to arrange, and there isn't much scope for a lot of delay in that, especially if it is a cremation. They have got to get it organised as quickly as possible. I am always afraid it is an undertaker. So what I do now, the family said to me, "Don't answer the phone. If it is important, people will leave a message". But my wife is away a lot. It is her way of coping. She goes to my daughter's a lot and she goes out a lot, and I am in the house a lot more than she is, and she is the one who gets most of the telephone calls. She is very involved. She takes people out to the hospitals and shopping for community care. She helps with the luncheon club and she is president of the local parish guild. I don't get as many telephone calls now as I used to. She gets lots of telephone calls. If I don't answer it and people leave a message, and if I hear that there is a message and I can't make out the message, I can text my wife where she is, and she can link in to the phone at home from where she is, and she can listen to the message, and then if it is for me and it is an undertaker, she can get back to me.

So you have worked out a system to make things as good as they can be with the phone?

As good as they can be with the phone, yes. Inevitably, even people in the church, they kind of stop calling. It has to be something like a funeral before they can be bothered to call me in the first place, because they know. Before I retired, as I say, I had a large Kirk session and so

on. There was one elder whom I was very friendly with. My wife reported it to me. He went to my wife one day, so she told me. He didn't say it to me. He said, "I don't bother to speak to Jim now because he doesn't hear what you are saying". If that is how he felt, how many actually people feel like that. Maybe they don't verbalise it, or say it, but there are many people, and that is how they feel, so they stop speaking to someone that's deaf. And to be fair to other people, you begin to isolate yourself too, because of the stress that you are under, and you get exhausted. I get exhausted. I go to Gregory lectures at St Andrews, put on by St Andrews University, and recently, there was a senior theologian, he was a distinguished theologian, and I went to hear him speaking about the interface between science and religion, and I never heard a word. You have got all of these - it cuts out a great deal.

There are things you are saying you used to enjoy doing that really you can't do now. Is there anything, Jim, that you do do now that you couldn't do?

Sometimes - I have had quite a few letters published in the Scotsman. I got involved in the abortion debate, euthanasia, humanism, and atheism when, you know, they write the letters, what disturbs me about humanists and atheists, there is a very hostile note that comes through in the letters, and I sometimes write an apologia from the Christian point of view and try to put things in a more positive perspective. I suspect that some of these - they are quite welcome to their opinion, and their views, but I don't see why they have got to be so hostile towards the church and towards Christianity. Sometimes I try to provide answers that take the sting out of that. I suspect that some of these people have maybe had a bad experience with the church or something like that, so they have got a chip on their shoulder. They are not just expressing an opinion, they actually have hostile feelings towards the church or Christianity or religion in general.

You mentioned way back at the start of this decision, Jim, your faith helped you come to terms with losing your parents so young.

Yes.

Has your faith - is there any relationship with how you are dealing with your hearing loss and your faith?

No, that hasn't affected my faith in any way. I think it is still strong as ever it was. Sometimes my theology has undergone certain subtle changes, you know? It hasn't affected my basic faith in what it is really fundamentally about. I am constantly trying to proclaim that, so far as preaching is concerned. So many people think the church is a building. Yes, there is the church building, but the church is really the people. It is a fellowship of the people coming together and showing care for each other and getting involved in service, both in the church and the community. Again, due to background and so on, I have been involved with the homeless and with others. I am sure that is why I went out to India, because I was concerned about the poverty and so on of the third world. I think that must have rubbed off my kids, because one of my daughters and her husband were medical missionaries in Malawi for a while with the Church of Scotland. It kind of passes down the generations. All my daughters are in people situations, you know. One is a nurse, one is a social worker, one is a lecturer, and one is a teacher, so they are all - we have all been involved with people. None of us have been engineers or anything like that, which is just as well. I am hopeless. Even when I come to a hotel like this, I have great difficulty trying to operate the remote control to get the television on.

But you are coping with the technology of your hearing aid, changing the batteries and coping with the hearing aids?

Even that, I am not sure I am as competent with my hearing aid as other people are. Sometimes I put them in and they are still whistling, and I don't hear the whistle and things like that. I think some people are much more skilful in their use.

What do you do about that?

I just do my best. I don't know what I can do about that.

But you keep going back to your audiologist.

Yes, I go back to the audiologist. An example now, like, yesterday, I wasn't hearing too well at one point. When I took the hearing aid out, this one - it causes your ear to suppurate. You get moisture in your ear and sometimes it blocks the tube and that is not operating effectively. I don't seem to be always be terribly aware what is always happening. I don't know if the

battery has run down. I sometimes I take it out and I find the tube is blocked. So it hasn't been working, it is stuck in my ear, with no point.

You haven't been aware it wasn't working?

I have been aware that it has been hard to hear and then I discover it wasn't working because the battery had run down, it was blocked. Of course, other times when the battery is about to run down, it goes beep, beep, beep. I don't always hear the beeps, so I don't realise. Sometimes it is on my ear, and the battery is dead and I am not aware of it.

How long do the batteries last?

It varies: a week, two weeks, sometimes two days. You know, it just varies.

That must be difficult.

You know, I did discover, very interestingly - my wife was away for a weekend, maybe with one of my daughters, maybe a group; she organises things and takes groups away, and so forth. She was away for the weekend. The Sunday morning, there was nobody I had to listen to, so I didn't put the hearing aids in and I was halfway to Monikie, where I am doing the locums, 15 miles away, and I was halfway to Monikie and I realised I had forgotten my hearing aid; I had left them at home, and the gentleman who is acting as beadle, that is the word we use in Glasgow for church officer or sexton, he came up to me. He put his mouth right up to my ear and spoke to me. I heard much better than I could with my hearing aids, but, of course, people couldn't be constantly coming up and talking directly into your ear. Obviously the equipment is working to some extent, and, as I say, I heard - these things, they amplify, but they don't clarify. It doesn't mean to say because it is loud what you are hearing - sometimes on a train or something like that, I have to switch them off, because there is so much noise, and it amplifies all this noise and sometimes the people speaking in the background - it is not volume that is the problem it is clarity.

Tell me, Jim, do you have tinnitus as well?

Yes. I found out my balance is not as good as it was. I think that might have to do with your

hearing loss because your balancing mechanisms are partly in the ear, so my balance is not as good, but that might be due to my age as well. Who knows?

Is that worth going to find out about?

I don't know how you would measure that. I don't know how you would measure it. Is it your ears or your age or a combination of both?

You see an audiologist. Do you see a doctor as well?

I don't go to my GP for this, you know. I don't go to the GP very often. I would go if I had to. I am going to the GP at the moment. I seem to be having problems with my skin at the moment, and I am getting warts. I don't know what is causing them. I am going to get these treated with liquid nitrogen and so on. It is probably just an age thing, I mean, you get liver spots and things like that. It is like a car, you know, the older you get, then the motor begins to stutter.

Jim, you are still working. You are talking about age here, but you are still working. You are a locum in a church every Sunday. What is the future of that? What is going to be happening next for you in your life?

I have been locum here for almost six years, which is a long time. Locums last for a year to two years at the most while they are looking for a new minister. I have been locum here for almost six years. They are about to join with another congregation. I am stopping a week on Sunday, but I am starting at the local united free church in Tayport at the beginning of August. I was guest preacher at their service on Good Friday. I don't have a Good Friday service. As a result of that, the Kirk session at this church has asked me if I would do continual pulpit supply, not locum, but pulpit supply. If are you a locum, you are handling the pastoral situation as well. If you are doing pulpit supply, you are just preaching on a Sunday, end of story. You know, I am a Church of Scotland minister, not a united free minister, but, you know, who cares, as long as I am on that pulpit.

Jim, that is a great story, thank you so much for telling us. I know there is a lot more you could be telling me about, but we are going to stop there. Are there any final thoughts?

I would just like to say thank you for your patience and for your kindness and listening to all that verbalisation. My loquacity is only exceeded by my verbosity.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege. Carina and I have both enjoyed it. Thank you very much, Jim.

[End of interview]