



# Speaking for Ourselves: *An Oral History of People With Cerebral Palsy*

Bill Hall

Interviewed by Philip Mann

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## Interview Summary Sheet

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**Tape 1 Side A [Track 1]**

*Yeah. OK?*

Yes.

*Hi, Bill. Good to see you. I'm glad I know it's you, from the old days at Scope.*

Yes, we worked hard in Scope, [talking together] didn't we? We did our best.

*We did, yes. We did. Right. Would you like to tell me something about your early years?*

Well, this is now, as you know, January, 2005. I was born in 1936, the oldest of a family of six: me from a working-class [family], to put it mildly, very working. I don't think my father was really able to work and hold a job, because he wasn't too well. He wasn't properly nourished in those days, you know. I mean, what are you thinking about? How heavy do you want me to go? [Beeping noise in background.]

*Just tell me something about... Can you remember things about your schooldays, for example?*

The first that I feel is important to I, as a person with disability: I am a person with disability, not a disabled person. You actually see the disability first; you miss the person, so that's one of my sort of things that I think I was brought up with that attitude. I think it was a very trying time for my mother and father, especially my father. [Phone rings.] Sorry about that. [Rings again.] They'll know it's me anyway.

Yes.

I think it was something that must have been a great shock to the parents in those days, for their first son to have cerebral palsy, especially a working age when there

were no facilities like they have today, such as mobility aids and allowances. The social aspect was devastating, and looking back, because of what you're saying, it made me more aware, it made me think back. I think my father said to me in later life, 'If there was a God, he was a cruel God who gave him a son that would never be able to look after himself,' cos that was the thing in those days: if you were born with cp [cerebral palsy], you weren't expected to be part of the community, you weren't expected to live. In fact Dr Douglas says I would never reach my teens, and I would be a vegetable, and I would be there all my life: so it's something that I remember – the rejection of my father, as a young man, as a kid. For example, I remember crawling (I couldn't walk then, which is natural, I crawled mostly between things), looking up mostly wanting him to hold me; they just walked past. Now, I'm not blaming me father, and I'm not trying to find fault in either, but that sort of time was a time of not being able to understand, and no such thing as either The Spastics Association, what it was later on (Scope as it is today). So I'm delighted that there is some support today, as I began to get older, and sort of expect the two worlds, where you had a father who felt as if 'my son's warped' and a mother who wraps you in cotton wool, [laughs] which is a female instinct, because that cord never breaks in my opinion, irrespective of what anybody said, who sort of made a sharing with her, spoiled me, and my father who says, 'Get out there and do your own thing.' But anyway, these are things you think about later on, although you're not aware at the time.

*Can I just stop you there? Would you like to tell me something about your relationship with your brothers and sisters?*

Yes, I was just coming to that there. [Creaking of chair.] Yes, of course I would. I was the older of... As time went on, we had a brother. I was three year old when I had a brother born. We lost one after our Jim. I had another brother, three year later, when I was six, and I had a sister when I was nine, and then I had two younger brothers later on, you know, so I was the oldest of six. And I'm a very lucky man, to have such a circle of love, who: 'Our William which is William, whether he had a disability or not.' Being the oldest of the family, with the Scottish tradition, it's something, you

know, that it's difficult for people to possibly realise but the relationship between me and my family (as in altogether) has been wonderful over the years, although I have lost two of my good brothers, one this year. This knocks you back a wee bit, naturally, but you expect a person with a disability to go first, especially an oldest, but in this case, I didn't. Schooling: I don't know if you're interested in that?

*Yes, and just going back to your relationship with your parents: do you think it had any bearing on your mother's relationship with her husband, you being a disabled child? [Siren noise in background.]*

I definitely think is the case. I think it affects the relationship because a person with disabilities demands a person especially, you know, needs so much support. Possibility then I was probably incontinent, and I had a lot of medical needs, which, we use that word

*[Talking together.] Mm. Mm.*

now, but in those days it was something... I think in my opinion, it must affect anybody's relationship, because although we're a male chauvinist, I think the male is the weaker sex and, I surmise that my mother mustn't be able to give him the same attention that a normal woman in those days would give him because she had care of a son who has a degree of disability, like I had.

*Tell me a bit about your grandparents and relations, and your parents' friends; how that was affected in your life.*

My grandparents: I didn't really know them because my granddad died. He was Irish: Patrick O'Donnell. We lived in Quarter [a village near Hamilton], I was led to believe, just a two-bedroom house, you know, hole-in-the-wall type thing. Very little facilities such as toilets etc. they have today. Regarding the relationships with, I mean I can't really, you know... I think, as a person with cp, when you look back, you're a late developer so you can't remember a lot of the things a so-called 'normal' person

would, you know. At six years of age I went to a special school, which most of us did. I can remember it so important, it was. That would be 1942, when my mother carried me down in her arms, onto the bus. It gave her what they call 'respite care' now. [Laughs.] It gave her a break to look after the rest of her children, and this was so important that we allow the parents time to look after – if they've got other children – their partner, or their husband. You know, it could be vice versa. But I remember the bus and they had a wooden seat down the centre, and a wooden seat up either side, and brown curtained-type windows, because that was the War, but no glass [laughing]. So you sat there, you went down to school. It was a new world, it was frightening. Something that's stuck in my mind, going in to this special school, going down the hallways. You know, the bus came and picked us up, and the bus dropped us off.

*Do you think you got much of an education at the special school?*

Education is a dream machine, as far as I was concerned. Education is a flat tyre. I mean, you weren't expected to... I was led to believe that I would get a job in the cinema, or a cobbler, not being aware you still needed education to do that. Now whether this is because, at that time, I may [have] had learning difficulties, or I wasn't properly assessed to assess my needs, I don't know, but when I look back, the three things I was good at was taking Virol [a tonic], saying prayers... I mean, they were two o' them, they were the main things, you know. School was a farce, in the sense of the word. You developed some social skills because a lot o' us had different types of disability, as in physical-related and emotional needs, which are referred to, rather than 'mental illnesses', you know.

*Mm hm. Do you remember doing any out-of-school activities?*

No, there was nae.

*Clubs or anything like that? No?*

Eh, no. After I left school I was involved with certain things, but not during school. You sort a tolerated at school and you just sort a 'Och well,' it was just, you know. It was talk about... called 'tokenship' now.' [Talking together.] You know, I mean?

*So what age did you leave school then Bill?*

I left school at 16.

*And you'd been at special school?*

Yes, where education was no.

*Was there any emphasis put on your expectations about going into work?*

I think they'd seen a potential in me that I didn't see. They sent me to what I call 'The 16 years of age and the Royal Scot from Scotland', where I was born in Hamilton, to the Egham, Surrey – it was a government training centre, to assess my needs. I found it difficult then, and still do, to use a pencil, because ma limbs and ma brain don't work together. Ma limbs are too slow, [laughs] and my brain's too fast,

*Mm.*

so it was incompatible. And it's so easy to move into the comfort zone, and just say, 'I'm not doing it, I'm not trying to do it,' rather than make more effort, and in hindsight that's what was happening, you know?

*Mm hm. So, basically, did you have any leisure pursuits, or not?*

Leisure: I was very lucky being brought up being part of a family. I wasn't brought up with them, they brought me up and I brought them up, being part of a large family where equality was a norm rather than an exception within the family unit. I decided that I wanted to play snooker. You know I was a typical knock-kneed person: typical



cp, with one ankle going up and the one going down, and I just went and played snooker. There is one thing during the school years that I would think that you should flag up: I had an operation in 1948. This was at 12 years of age. At that time the cure was, for people with cerebral palsy, to pull their legs apart and lift up their feet. So, you'd to get out of the... in Scotland, you 'ad to [be] put on the trolley, and get outside to the operating theatre. [Laughs.] And I mean, it was barbaric when you think of it,

*Mm.*

and I woke up of course, with my two legs

*Mm.*

apart, and a big bar in the middle,

*Mm.*

and two 'stookies' [plaster casts] right up to the thigh,

*Mm.*

which, under spasms, it was really not a very comfortable time. Cos like a lot of other people, I believed that this operation'd help me and I'd be able to work with me brothers and sisters.

*And did you think it did you any good at all?*

No, they said it was a complete failure,

*Mm.*

that I would end up in a wheelchair, and never be able to walk again.

*Right.*

I didn't. This wasn't the case at that time,

*No.*

because when I went to school, two of my friends had muscular dystrophy,

*Mm.*

and I had the operation, their wheelchair, I pushed my own wheelchair, till I began to get my balance back, and walked with a stick and carried on then, you know.

*[Clears throat.] I think we've touched on this a little bit, but would you like to tell me something about what you consider your social class was within your home environment?*

Social class: I would say very working class, very little money, had to make do because my father... what d'you call it?... wasn't trained. He was a labourer, you know. And my mother was a mother, and it was a sort a... if you could find work. And it was a minimum of wages and at that time, being a Scotsman, his pleasures: drink first probably, in front of our needs, you know.

*Mm. Do you think that if there had been more money in the family, it might have helped you at all?*

No, I think the reverse. I think because of the circumstances, it bonded us all together more, and created something that I feel very strong about today: be grateful for what you've got. I mean, not 'grateful' as in a big grateful, but be more content with what you've got rather than climbing mountains and, you know, looking for things. I mean, for example, my home is a man's home and I'm very content with what I've got. I

think this happened, I think this was the case. I mean, I can't say if money would have give a bit more help, because I wouldn't know, I didn't have money.

*No. I'm just going to stop there and call Chrissie in, just to check that everythings going all right, Bill.*

Right. You're the boss.

*[Shouting off mic.: Chrissie! Break in recording.] Yeah, ready. OK. I just want to go back to talking about when you weren't at school. Did you, do you have any friends other than your brothers and sisters?*

I was part of the community because, leaving school, somebody made me a wooden barrer: [barrow] four wheels and, you know, and a sort o' upright, which gave me the [ability] to get around. And being part of a big family, I was (just in Scotland) called 'Willy' rather than 'William', you know, 'Willy'. And I was just part of the community. I went down to play snooker, just at 16, desperate to get into the hall. By that time I was slower and snooker played a very important part in my social skills, and my drive to survive because I was playing against ordinary people.

*Did you ever move house, or did you stay in the same house?*

Oh, my mother was always moving house.

*Right. That would be interesting.*

And I was thinking at this, discussing it with my sister. I tried to think back, when my mother had a house that had no steps, and I can't remember. I reckon, during my bringing-up time, apart from the first house up until I was about six or seven years of age, every other house had either stairs going into it or stairs going up to the bedroom, because, 'Our William is our William'. They never had that attitude, or they weren't aware of my needs. I was just William and [laughs] I had to climb upstairs on my

backside, or slide doon them. But at that time I was like an eel, you know? You'd come downstairs front-wards, going like that with your hands, just to come down. It was just, it was all improvisation and all... That was the accommodation. I was brought up 'normal' as such.

*Did you go to church or anything like that?*

I was very religious-orientated at the time. My mother and father at that time, one was a Catholic and one was a Protestant, and the rest of the family, you know, because of when they were together, [rustling noise] we were... The rest of my people were at the Protestant school or at the Catholic school, but because I was at a special school – which had mixed religious denominations, where you had a half an hour each day to go to your particular belief, which I think is a very good idea – but if there were any questions with the parish priest, I was the one that was always put in the front to ask him. I seemed to have an input related to that, you know.

*Tell me a bit about when you got to be a teenager, and when you saw your siblings making relationships with girls and boys. How did that affect you? Tell me something about that.*

Well the thing is this: I brought up my main thirst at the time, from leaving school until 20, 21, playing snooker, just nothing special. You know, one or two girlfriends, nothing heavy, nothing involved. It was just something that was there. When I was 18, I had my first pint, which is a tradition. My father bought me my first pint, which still carries on, that tradition, and I went into the pub and played dominos, because I love dominos, and I love playing snooker or pool, so therefore it was nothing so important. During one of my operations after school... I had the second operation of my life, and The Lanarkshire Spastics Association took me out for a day out in a bus while I was in hospital, and a girl called Wilma Lawson at the time [had] cerebral palsy herself. I can remember 'er because it was unique for a person, in my opinion, to get out and go on a bus, and they hit me a day out, and that sort of planted the seeds of doing voluntary work for the then Spastics Society. I was always been involved with the... I

think that created a campaigning aspects of my life. I was Vice Chairman of the Lanarkshire Spastics Youth Club, and used to go there, and we developed a lot of my people with disabilities around me. We developed the social skills: some good and not so good. We liked for a wee dram [laughs]. You know, it was something that was developed along those lines until I, like everybody else, happened to meet a lovely lady, as in Sadie, who had polio – walked with two sticks, the old-fashioned crutches, with the arms over it and just two poles, basically. Polio, with callipers. It was a Polio Club outing actually, we were all invited and I went and, as you know, the man is supposed to do the chasing but sometime the woman stops and you catch up, [laughs] and this was a... oh, I mean, it was a wonderful feeling, to realise that we were going to develop a nice relationship, and which we did around about 1958.

*How old were you then?*

Twenty-three. Sadie was 30. At that time there were no such a thing as facilities, as in access, or in aspects of independent living. You were just a person that may need help or not, and it wasn't considered a done thing for people with the degree of disability, as me, walking with one stick or two sticks at a time, driving an invalid trike, the three-wheeler invalid trike, and Sadie had one too. And we developed a relationship, and did the same things as everybody else did. I don't think, at that time, society thought we should be doing it, [that] we should be in love; and what happens if we have children? Who was going to look after them? And, you know, a great thing of fate, what's meant, but we got married in 1959. Again, it wasn't the thing a lot of people were considered, 'Oh, is not that terrible?' I mean, that was my impression at the time. Different from today's world. But we got married, and afterwards we had to stay in my mother's room, which at that time, everybody did. We didn't have a house of our own, we stayed in my parents' room, and we had three children about four-and-a-half year, you know. I asked the doctor then what the position would be, because Sadie had polio and I had what was considered 'spastic' then, I was a spastic [scared?] of our children having a disability. He said, 'You have a slight more chance than anybody else,' but considering none of them's hereditary, he didn't see any reason why. And our three children that were born were born normal, and this is something

that we have been very proud of over the years. Again, people used to come in, 'Oh you've got lovely kids!' They used to look at the kids' legs to make sure, and at that time that wasn't the done thing: looking at poor wains's legs, to see if they were normal. They kidded on that they were looking at other things, but Sadie and I used to smile to ourself. Sadie was a lady of courage. We weren't aware of the responsibility we had, but we loved our children.

*Were you still living with your parents?*

No, we gradually went into private accommodation in Glasgow, which is 13 mile from Hamilton. We had some, but eventually we moved back to Hamilton into a prefab. My mother stayed in Hamilton, and my brothers and sisters all stayed in Hamilton, so it was lovely for them as I was the first one to get married, and the first one to give them nieces and nephews, you know, they were all dolls, and they were so proud to be uncles and aunts. Again, the disability didn't come into it, attitude-wise. I was William. I was their brother, William, 'Our William', and we did this. And the prefab, in my opinion, it was ahead of its time regarding access: not access, like today,

*Mm.*

but taking everything else into consideration, it was a very happy time, and the willingness of people to help us. But, it wasn't Social Services then, it was a Welfare Officer, and the [Hamilton] Council, cos it was something they had never experienced; where a couple wi' the degree of disability we had, should even think of getting married. So it was an opener for everybody, and we never thought of us two as disabled. Our attitude was, you know, a male and a female: so, I mean, that was just the way we developed and we were an ordinary couple. In Scotland, which is natural, the Council became [aware?] of the needs of people with disabilities regarding accommodation, and after moving to one or two houses, we ended up in something very similar to this, which was user-friendly for my good lady and I at the time, and which was far ahead o' its time. For example, we had the 'monkey-pulls' in the toilet, hanging from the ceiling, and the monkey pull in master bedroom, and the toilet in the

bathroom/toilet. There were additional heating because they reckoned that people with disabilities needed additional heating in the toilet so, working with the professionals, which I surmised as OTs [Occupational Therapists] etc, I think they did a very good job.

*So when did you come back from Scotland, to live in England?*

I fell out with Sadie, [laughs] which everybody does. I fell out with Sadie, approximately '71-ish. We had a wee bit of a dispute, and I decided to come to Corby because my sister was here by then, she'd moved, my wee sister, and she had moved to Corby, and I came to Corby in 1971-ish. I thought that was it, Sadie would stay up there. [Coughs.] But Sadie landed with my three children in 1972, off the Patton's bus. Not really any accommodation. [Laughs.] I don't know if it was irresponsible, but she seems as if she says to her children, 'You want to go and live with your dad?' and the children said, 'Yes,' they wanted their dad too, and their mum.

*How old were they then?*

I think William would be about eight or nine: so they'd be sort of eight to 11, with the youngest, William, and Marie's the girl, and Arthur is a boy: he's now 40-odd.  
[Talking together: Inaudible.]

*So they -*

They're all over 40 now.

*So they came to here,*

They came to Corby.

*to live with you.*

No, they came, Sadie came too, and

*Right.*

we had a lovely house and the best year of my marriage that I can remember. It was wonderful year at Corby, as again the Corby Borough Council made every effort to accommodate us – you know, it provided ramps to get in the ground floor, although our bedrooms were upstairs. Sadie, when we found out she was pregnant with the first y'un, I suggested to Sadie, 'Right. Maybe you shouldn't try to walk, hen. Get into the wheelchair,' and she went into a wheelchair then. She used to do her work on her legs on the floor, well you've seen it yourself, but her legs were under cos she just sat on her, and that was mainly where she did most of her work: all her own, though we had care at home: 'home help' nowadays.

*Did they help you with the children?*

No, it wasn't that type of support. It was mainly back-up for domestic support. Our children were mainly controlled (and I mean with a small 'c'), as in responsibility, by us. We were the people who decided what we considered our children's need. We had improvisation, which was natural. I couldn't take them out to play football, neither could Sadie, so it was a... You weren't aware of the responsibility we had, or the needs of our children.

*How did the children's friends accept you and Sadie?*

How the attitude to -

*Mm. To you and Sadie.*

Well, ma children have said over the years, 'People used to say at school, "How do you get on when your mum and dad are disabled?"' and they used to say, 'Just the



same as everybody else.' You know, it was a sort of norm. They had never had able-bodied parents.

*Mm.*

They had an able-bodied granddad: 'Dae' that we called them then, Scotland, it was a 'Dae' rather than a granddad, and a gran, which they all lived within two or three mile. And they'd open door, and that was just the way it worked. I mean, we brought up our children to the best of our ability.

*And have you got grandchildren now?*

I have seven grandchildren.

*Do you see a lot of them?*

Oh yes, In fact there are only five of them live in Corby, and one lives in Northampton, another one lives up in Scotland. I'm 'Granddad Wheels' with my great grandchildren, I have also four great grandchildren. Sadie passed away 13 year ago.

*So, when Sadie came back with the children, would you say you made a go of the marriage then?*

Well, it lasted about a year, a year-and-a-half, and then we decided, rightly or wrongly, (I don't whether it was wrong or whether she was right, if only we all think of only which is the right idea, and which is the wrong idea to do things) but we did split up, and I went back to Scotland to try to build a life. I kept chucking back and forward. We got divorced...

**[End of Tape 1 Side A]**

**Tape 1 Side B [Track 2]**

[Someone in the background. Inaudible.]

*OK? OK, so we were talking about you were flitting from Scotland to here, and you divorced your wife,*

Yes.

*and Sadie died 13 years ago. Did you keep in touch during that time at all?*

I felt that, well, as again, it goes back to the so-called 'normality' attitude that both Sadie and I had. Because we were disabled that didn't mean to say we didn't have our disagreements, that we shouldn't split up. So like everybody else, we decided that divorce would ruin the relationship. But I did say to my children (my children stayed with their mum, while I did a bit of wandering), 'But remember one thing: both your mum and I love you. You'll see your mum's faults, but you won't see your dad's, because he'll no be here.' And I think it was something that planted the seeds in the future, because we had a very good relationship as a divorced couple, the future, you know, up until (that was approximately '73 when we divorced), we had a good relationship. For example, Sadie used to say, 'Is your dad alright?' and vice versa; the children came to see me, 'Is your mum alright?' and there has never has been any divide between us: we're a family and both of us loved our children. I think this is something that... Course I had my sister here and my mother here in Corby then, and I kept moving back and forward from Scotland to Corby, in different houses. [Laughs.]

*So did you meet anyone else after Sadie, then?*

Because my educational background, I decided approximately '83-time-ish; the '81 [United Nations] Year of the Disabled if I can remember right, that I needed some education. I went to local college for basic education, which I think had a great impact on ma development, and not to be the best but do your best, as in the sense of the

word. I found out the use of a typewriter, as an alternative to long-hand. I'd something that was compatible with my brain, you know, and I could sit like that, and I think it was a great co-ordinating thing for a person with cp, to use a keyboard where the brain and my limbs were working together, so it had great benefit to me. But, irrespective, education is a wonderful thing, especially in my case where it wasn't available, but you've got to find a reason to use it. If you develop these skills, if you just leave them... So, I ended up Chairman of DIAL, DIAL is Disabled Information and Advice Line, [Disability Information and Advice Line] which eventually I was a Director of it. And this is where I met another volunteer lady, round about '90-something: you know, late '80's or '90, and we got married. She had a slight limp, a wee bit younger than Sadie, [laughs] but I can't remember, I mean it was a different type of class. Chris was more middle-class to put it mildly. She showed me that your tie and your socks have got to match, and how to use a spoon, and I'm not talking about that thing: we didn't know what spoons to use, but there's a difference between using spoons and using spoons when you go out, for example. I would never go out for a meal now, and certainly a pint, at the very least, if we're lucky it would be, even if I wanted a spirit, it would be a glass or a half-pint. So therefore it lasted about approximately seven year and I think the families of both sides, you know, the difference of our class took its toll, and again there were no harm. We divorced and I love my one home to be a home. I like to come in at my home, as you know, or may not know. This house was developed by the housing association. Corby Borough Council, after we divorced, gave me a bedsit which did not serve my long-term needs, considering my possible deterioration of my disability, taken' into consideration as it was the cerebral palsy. So therefore, working in partnership with the... what do you call it?... Bedford Pilgrim Housing Association, [Bedfordshire Pilgrim Housing Association (BPHA)] and local OTs and Care at Home, and management of the builders, etc., we sat round a table before I moved in here. This is what we'll call it. 'What do you think?' I said, 'It's no good. It needs altering,' and they altered it there and then, and this is the end, and they've copied this idea as they developed other houses, so it's example of how important that service providers and service users work together, and empowerment, equality and aspects of independent living.

*Just to finish, to go back to where we started, Bill – when we spoke a lot about what was called then ‘The Spastics Society’ and what’s now called ‘Scope’, what do you think of Scope now, and do you think it’s improved, or do you think it’s not going the right way, or, tell me something about that?*

I think Scope is a bully. It’s a wonderful idea on paper, who believe that we will give people with cerebral palsy the training, self-development etc., and have their needs provided, I agree with them. I believe that when I first joined, our Scope was approximately ’74: well maybe a wee bit later: it was ’80, ’82, ’83: I had great hopes; it was then ‘The Spastics Society’. We had an organisation called Alpha [part of the Spastics Society], which I thought served our needs brilliantly. It was an organisation that encouraged people with cp or people with disabilities to work together, develop their skills, as in a slip road so that they were able to move into the main motorway, to become part of our Executive Council. I think it allowed certain development in a far superior way than it is today. I felt part of our Scope then. I was Chairman for a year of Alpha. I was part of ‘National Alpha’, and I was very proud to be part o’ that. Scope gave me a lot of confidence and ability to say what I believed to be right, but provided I didn’t overstep that ground and ask why they discriminated against people with cp. They talk of equality but they don’t really practise it. I’ll give you an example. We can all pick faults if we want, but Honorary Membership was an example which they decided they were gonna provide honorary memberships to certain people, and you had to be nominated by two members of Scope: which is fair enough. I live out in the sticks, as you may or may not be aware, and I don’t even know who’s a member of Scope per year. I’m not in the mainstream now, so I get my local MP, I had what d’you call the head of the local borough council, and I could get more of them to nominate me from that for an Honorary Membership, and they refused to accept the nominations. I took them to task for discriminating, that they could make use of that – a local communities thing that enhances Scope – but they don’t want to get off their backside in London and come out to see what’s going on. We are the service users; we are not the service providers. Scope was built to serve our needs, to enable us to live, and be proud, not to be ashamed or feel guilty or grateful on the needs that we may or may not need, in our lifetime; and it should be

from the cradle to the grave: not discriminating against older people with cp. This is why this project, in my opinion, may encourage other people to speak out, and you can use any words I've said, either as part of a discussion group anywhere. I have no hang-up – I say what I believe to be right. I like to be wrong. I would like if Scope come along and says to me, 'You're wrong,' and tell me why.

*Thank you. We're getting nearly to the end of the interview now. Is there anything that you feel that you've not spoken about that you want to add, Bill?*

I think Scope, as an older person with cp now; our Scope is only relatively young. We've never had older people to do research and development in the past, and when the medical needs kick in, and the social needs fly out, and the very inadequate information available to help local authorities to understand our needs, in the way of either social needs, medical needs, or prescribed drug-type therapy, where we can... I mean because, whether, in my opinion, I've no hand-up regarding the needs of other people wi' other types of disabilities. I think we're all the same: hands up if you're normal, but I think Scope is, Spastics Society, the name doesn't matter to me: I'm neither proud or ashamed of me. [They?] should concentrate mainly on our needs, and the pride of partnership of other service users, but I think the needs of people with cp, especially people in outlying districts out in the sticks, and especially the carers, because if we don't care for the carers, the carers can't care for us.

*Thank you very much Bill.*

**[End of Tape 1 Side B]**

**Tape 2 Side A [Track 3]**

*Now, it's 12<sup>th</sup> April all ready. Bill, we're just waiting for the leader tape to go round. There we are; I think we're recording now. So Bill, you were born then in Scotland, but what part of Scotland were you born in?*

I was born in Hamilton. Can I suggest something here, which if I was listening, I would just sort of say you could, you know, thingummy: I'm sitting here in the year 2000... Is it working?

*No, I'm just seeing where your microphone's disappeared to, Bill. Oh, that's it. It's disappeared round the corner there really. [Rustling noise.] Hang on, we'll put it on that side; there we are. [Inaudible.] The microphone at the front.*

Because you can always edit the -

*There you go, that's it, yeah.*

I'm sitting here, in the year 2005, cerebral palsy, born in Scotland, but now living in Corby, Northamptonshire. That's in, of course, Great Britain. I was born 1936, I'm now nearly 69 years of age, wheelchair-bound as my disability creeps in, and other aspects, making me think back to the days (which doesn't seem that long ago, but it is quite a wee while ago) when my experience that I can remember as a person with cp [cerebral palsy], which, at that time, you didn't know what a spastic was, because that was the name in those days in Scotland. When they come down here, and where I felt as if I had two parents, I had a mum and a dad like everybody else, which we called them 'me mother' and 'me fether', that was the Scotch word then. In hindsight, I feel now that my father could not accept that his first child had the degree o' disability I had, so he become very resentful towards me, and through no fault of his own now, it was just circumstances in those days: a young couple getting married, (they got married in 1935), and I was born in 1936, so it was something that I think my father found it very difficult to adjust, and later on in life his comments were that, 'If there a

God, he's a cruel God that gave [me] him a son that had disability, and would have to struggle most of his life.' Of course, like most of the people that's born, you have a father who's authoritarian, that was a thing in Scotland, and the mother who would cuddle you, [laughing] to give you everything you needed, so in a funny way, as I grew up, I realised the importance of two types of being brought up: one wi' my father who felt resentful of me having a disability, and possibly because of the demands that I needed from my mother to look after me, so probably he was [laughing] a wee bit jealous in a funny way, and I think this is important.

*So, the resentment that your father felt; how did that manifest itself then?*

Well, I can remember it vaguely: if I wanted a cuddle, which all boys want cuddles from their dad, and he would sort of kick you out the bed, you know. Don't want to. Pish [push] you out of the road, [out of the way?] or, wouldn't pick me up in the street cos he was either ashamed or he was, you know. Just small parts of your memory that you relate to, and that. Of course, when I was two and three years old, I had a brother – John – who passed away within a year, and then I had our Jim: that's my brother Jim. He was born in 1939, who has just passed away last year: so therefore then we had two [in] our family. So I think that helped, but through the adult life has grown up you're not aware of it at the time, but I think the importance of tomorrow's world that we're aware of people with cp (cerebral palsy), the guilt of not being able to contribute to their family as an eldest, because they're unable to work: I think this is so important that we aim towards giving the people the right type of training, and try to find a job working in partnership with their families, to see if this can happen.

*Take me back, Bill, to your home town then. What kind of size of town was it?*

I was born in a sort of a wee village called the Quarter outside Hamilton. That's in what we call Lanarkshire in Scotland then. I think Hamilton would be possibly the size of Kettering, you know; a town. All the aunts and uncles were there, so it would be quite, I mean at that time you never thought of the population because you only knew your street [laughs]. So we came from, to put it mildly, I wouldn't even say 'a

working class', because my father was unable to work most of the time; so it was mostly what we called 'the means test': bringing up, where you were very grateful if you got a pair of shoes.

*So your father's work then: what was that, when he was able to work?*

Well, he was actually a labourer. That was all the type of work he ever did. He was, I think, a reasonably clever man, but I think the lack of opportunity then, and the War: well he'd tae [to] go in the forces.

*This was in the [talking together] First World -*

This was in the 40, yes: round about the later thirties, early forties.

*So had your father then been in the First World War?*

No, the Second World War. He was, he was born in 1914, so therefore he was approximate 22 when they got married, and my mother was 20, so we come up through there: the sort of born in 1935. So from then until the War, it was struggle.

*Because obviously then there was economic depression in the pre-war years. In the years leading up to the Second World War, there was in some circumstances, not a lot of work about.*

[Laughing.] There was not a lot to eat about! Especially in Scotland: you know what some of the food we got, we hadn't Macdonald's and we hadn't some of the convenience food either to have or to prepare it.

*And so were you aware of forms of assistance being available?*

No, never. This thing is this: no, I was a burden to my parents, but they loved me so much, you know, my mum especially, you're not aware of the needs of things you



wouldn't... that we've got today, such as the allowances that can able the parents of today to look after their children. There were no such a thing, if you were ill, you'd to pay a shilling for the ambulance, and because of the type of support that I required, it meant that I actually had to... [laughs]... they'd to do without, to provide support for me.

*So what sort of housing circumstances did you live in, Bill?*

At that time, it was just an ordinary house cos I've never been treated disabled, as in attitude-wise, my mother especially, and she was a bit of a gypsy in a sense of the word: she was always moving houses, but that was simply [?] upstairs, and I think in a way I was like an eel. I walked what I consider [like] a typical person with cerebral palsy, or a typical spastic, or whatever you like to call it. I was a knock-kneed, with one heel up in the air, and the hands going from side to side. They're your balance actually, certainly your arms, rather than anything you needed. I was the one that had to use the ringer: I was the one that had to go doon and clean out all the fire, so it was something – I was part of the family, and they were part... I mean, it was something... That aspects of the disability, it was normal.

*So how big was the house that you initially grew up in then?*

The first house was, I think, one bedroom.

*One bedroom?*

Yes. A living-room, what we called 'the scullery' then, the scullery, this living-room and a bedroom: so initially that would be the start of it, and that was a close. A ground-floor accommodation then (it's funny when you think back: memory begins to stimulate that) in what we called Morgan Street; and that was in Hamilton of course. It was just norm [normal]: I mean it wasn't considered something that we... we just moved from day to day and survived.

*So, in this flat then, in a small close, a small group, you had just the one bedroom that you all shared?*

Well, I can't remember much about it, you know, because I think people with cp just become alive at five or six, even seven, before they begin to remember, because of the type of condition, disability, they have. My earliest recollections of that was in 1942: going to school.

*So, when -*

There were more.

*What age would you be then?*

Six.

*So up until the age of six then, there was your mother and father, and how many brothers and sisters up until the age of six?*

Well I had (till we lost one) Jim and I was the two brothers: up till the age of six, we had my mother and father, and my brother and I. That was the only two then.

*So, just to return to earlier years than that, Bill – what were you told about the circumstances of your birth, I wonder?*

Nothing: and to this day, I've never been told nothing. I think it was just something that happened, and you were there: I mean...

*Do you know whether you were born prematurely, or - ?*

I don't know. I know my mother was the youngest of a big family, and she may [have] had a weakness which may have contributed towards my disability, but it was

something that was never, ever... and the doctor said (they telled me later on) I wouldn't live; just leave me in a corner – I was gonna go 'home' for want of a better word.

*So what advice then did the doctor give to your parents?*

Just leave him. Feed him; don't mean neglect me, no. Don't let your expectations come on that he's going to grow up and be a man, and gonna be this and gonna be that. At that time, it was just; you know, that was it. I don't think in hindsight, I think over the years I've not only had a physical attribute to a disability, and I think some time the emotional side o' life as a person with cp related to a black and white world, you know, such as, you either switch off [laughs] or you're firing, you know.

*So where were you born then, Bill?*

I was born in my granny's house, which did nae even have a cooker. They've cooked everything on the fire, or the big grills. I mean, that was a toilet outside (1936), part of a loving family again, all my aunties and uncles, but it's the first time they'd ever experienced anything like this, and they told me later that I just lay in a drawer; as in a drawer of clothing, put the cushions in it and a wee pillow, and that was my bed. And, 'I hope he's all right,' you know. In hindsight, when you think back, I think that's what came along.

*And what were you told, you know, later, about the reaction of your parents, the reaction of your relatives, and your grandparents and others?*

Well, my grandparents died, my granddad died at 51. We called them ma 'Dae': [phon.] cos that was the Scottish word for granddad. It was your 'Dae'. My Dae' O'Donald, he died at 51. I don't even remember my granny, so they must have died pretty later on. I just found out on the web, because modern communication aids now, I've had some of the things. I mean, basically now when you look back, I just existed, you know, and I wasn't expected to do anything. It was just, in that day and age, with

the environment after the war and lack of facilities that we have, we just make do. I mean that's...

*Money then was, you know,*

[Talking together.] Oh, money...

*from time to time, pretty tight then?*

There wasn't such a thing. [Laughing.] I mean, it was survival. It was nae only I, but probably the people around, well where we lived, but because of my disability and my needs, in my opinion, it must have cost a wee bit more hardship, because they couldn't very well, [put?] their disabled son out in his bare feet. Maybe his brother, [laughing] but no him. So I think the great thing about today's world is we have the allowances to enable people with disabilities to live a reasonable, normal life.

*Taking that neighbourhood in Hamilton, Bill, your father was a labourer; what was the work of most of the people around?*

They were lucky if they got a job at all. There were no such a thing, you know, it was: if he was working for a wee while he was lucky, and when he went into the army – it must have been around '37, '38 – he ended up with a bad stomach, so no only physically, but medically, he was never really able to do a job or hold a job. And there were no back-up like they have today, or support like they have today.

*So your father then joined the army in about 1937?*

He was called up.

*In 1937?*

I think it was round about that. I mean, I can vaguely... Mind it was before '42 anyway.

*Right. And so, when you think of your father, how would you describe him?*

In context... I love him. I didn't love him then cos I couldn't understand it. It taught me some of the most wonderful things in ma life. I don't know whether it was with cruelty or lack of... I don't know an answer to that, and my mother, another Ann, she was an angel. And that's one thing we've got to be aware of (especially from a man's point of view or a boy's point of view) my mother taught me how to care for people with cp. She taught me how to care for me, and she cared for me, and I think this is something that's in your life: when you see your parents struggling to try to please a partner or a husband, and look after a son or a daughter whose demands on you, through no fault of their ain, can probably have devastating effect; at a most difficult time.

*And where you were living, that was all on one level, was it?*

The first house, yes. We moved into another, what we called 'a new house' later on, you know. But going to school was an experience.

*So where you lived then, Bill – the houses: were they rented then?*

Yes, it was Corby, it was Hamilton Borough Council. It's always been rented accommodation that we'd been able to get.

*What are your memories of visits by officials?*

Never: none. We got on with the sheer problem as my mother and father's problem. It wasn't... if you were seen you were lucky, [laughs] but you were never, you were never listened to. You were just there, and that was it.

*Take me to the front door, Bill, of where you lived in this downstairs flat. If I opened the front door, what would I have seen?*

It was a close. You know, there was somebody else across the road. I think I can remember I had to go out into a close, into the pathway, and it was all older houses all around us, you know, people living in the close, you'd normally [have] four people living in a dead end sort of street. You know, the council you had was at the bottom of the street, with all the dirt flying all over the place, and where they emptied the bins and things like that. So I would say it was (which I would consider) a low-demand area.

*And if I looked down the street, what would I see?*

Environment-wise: damp, grey, and nothing bright. You wouldn't see nothing like you see today. You'd just see a sort of grey, and look up (if you were looking down that way) to your right you would just see a big wall, which was a big gate for the local council. Or if you looked up, you would see the barbers', where they used to come and cut you, and a wee shop, and a lady, I don't know what she did, but she used to sit outside her shop, and she was a wonderful old lady at that time. She used to just, you know, she came up to you, would speak to you and things like that. It was right... we seemed to be in a sort of dip. The roads was reasonably flat, it wasn't as if I was in a hill, you know, but environmental-wise it wasn't what I would say, 'a very suitable place'.

*And if things were moved in the street, or delivered to the door, how would they be delivered?*

Well we had a wee grocer's shop, which was called 'Jenny Donaldson's'. That was just a wee corner shop today, and that's where I would imagine my mother got most o' her food. It was'nae delivered as such, it was just a matter of she just went round the corner (the wee shop was at the corner of the street), where she went in and got the messages to enable us to live, you know.

*And so, as a family sitting down to a meal: what would be a treat?*

[Laughs.] Oh well, compared to today, well, I mean one of the things (I still like it) is porridge: and tatties and mince. I mean, if we were lucky we had a cup, if not... I'm making this awfully morbid in some ways, but it's not – it's just facts. Sometime we had a sort of glass jilly [jam] jar that was our tea (we filled it up and had the tea), and piece and duke [phon.] we dipped our piece into a, you know, thingummy.

*This is bread?*

Bread. And it was'nae a bad life. It was a loving life, you know, because we shared and cared: we did. I mean my mother; I don't know how she managed it. And we always had aunties and uncles, I'm sure they used to [help?] my mother because in Scotland at the time it was what they called 'a mixed marriage', because my mother was a Catholic and [laughing] my father was a Protestant. That's worse than what they've got today, the mixed marriage, with culture of Corby's, the culture of [what] we've got today. It was very difficult for the two of them, not so much for they two, but for the families of either of them who were both very bitter in their own way, you know, regarding who was right and who was wrong and their religious beliefs.

*So, in growing up, Bill, how aware were you of different households, different religions: Protestantism, Catholicism?*

Religion-wise, I was lucky because I was at special school where we only had half an hour each day; it was a community school. We had a half an hour each day on religious instructions. I was brought up a Catholic, but I went out and played wi' all the Protestants because they were my pals. [Laughs.] And I never thought, I mean, nobody ever thought that. And in our school we had two sides: we had the physically-disabled and we had people wi' emotional needs (not to such a degree of danger, but what we would call now 'learning difficulties'), and I suppose everyone o' us at our

school had learning difficulties but that's something... Religious bigotry was among the adults, which was disgusting.

*So when you grew up, and when you were a young person, you're saying that you were very much aware of what religion a person would have?*

I was made aware of what religion my aunties and uncles were, from either side, and what they believed to be right. Because I was at special school, I was never moved around, but my brother (as in our Jim) if my mother and father were together, our Jim went to the Protestant school, and if my mother and father split up, our Jim went [laughing] to the Catholic school. It was horrible for him, you know, and our Jim was brought up a Protestant. But him and her loved one another, they still do love one another, although he's dead, it never came into it, it was never part of our... as in a family.

*So, in growing up then with your brother: what are some of your memories of being with your brother?*

I only hit him once in my life, and it broke my heart, cos I'd no right lifting a hand to him. I have a temper and I swung something and it hit him, and him and I sat there [laughing] together, crying. I mean, I had other brothers and sisters, you know. I ended up an oldest of a family of six – in fact seven, because we lost wee John – but it was something we'd never do: we'd never speak back to my father or my mother. I never spoke back to ma mother once in my life, and I was wrong, completely. I don't know what it was, but I was wrong. [Laughs.]

*So, you went to school then (you were saying) first aged six?*

Yes.

*What led to the decision that you should go to the school that you went to?*



I don't think I'd any choice. I don't know, it was something I was just sort of told, you know. I wasn't [was?] told, 'Other people are going to school,' so I had to go to school: and the bus came and picked me up. I'll never forget that day. Some things stand out in your memory. In my mother's arms, at the corner of Morgan Street: they put me into the bus (it was John Duncan's of Motherwell). We had the canvas windows [laughs] and a wooden seat up either side, and a sort of bench-type seat up the middle, you know, there were things we could... we all sat facing each other basically, and that was my experience for a number of years: going to school. It was an annexe of an older school that just had been adapted to suit, you know, special school syndrome, what it was then.

*So the vehicle that you went to school in, Bill, was that then some kind of converted vehicle then? Do you think?*

No, it was just an ordinary bus. It was just an ordinary bus because there wasn't such a thing even as a wheelchair. Yer had what I would now call 'a nine-L' wheelchair – my first wheelchair – and that's the one with four small wheels, and you couldn't propel yourself. It's like a pram actually. No, we had no wheelchairs, we 'ad nothing, we just had to 'shuggle' [phon.]. You know what that means – just swing from side to side, as I gradually begun to walk.

*So, various people were picked up from their*

Yes.

*neighbourhoods, as you travelled to school?*

Yes, we were taken to a school called The Woodburn School, in Hamilton. I don't remember much about the school as such, you weren't encouraged, and you weren't motivated into try anything, you were tolerated again. And I wasn't the only one that seemed to be that way: it was just like I said, what I consider, I think it was respite

care in a funny way. It gave my mother time, and my father of course, to do their own thing, and they thought, 'Oh well, William's away to school. That's good.'

*So how far was Woodburn School then, from your home?*

I would say it was about three mile, but we'd to go round other parts of the town to pick up other people; you know, it wasn't only I, it was other people.

*And from your memory, Bill, what do you suspect were some of the other disabilities of your other pupils?*

Asthmatic, heart conditions, there was two muscular dystrophy. And at that time you weren't aware of the difference: what a heart condition was, what asthmatic was. The only ones who were disabled was the people who had to walk... sure they had to walk with a stick, but I wasn't aware that there [they?] had a disability too, so it was something that, you know, you never thought of. I couldn't really say that it was something you were aware of.

*So, the school itself was attached, was it, to another school?*

Yes, it was attached to another school. Big, in my...

**[End of Tape 2 Side A]**

**Tape 2 Side B [Track 4]**

*I'll just ask the previous question, Bill: so the school itself then was attached, was it, to a bigger school?*

It was attached, as in buildings, but that was all. We weren't allowed to go near them, or they weren't allowed to go near us. [Coughs.] 'The Beales' was a different gate going in, and it was a corner, you went in that way, and the rest, the so-called 'normal school' which was St John's, was round... it wasn't a grammar school, but it was something sim [similar], you know, people were encouraged, but we never mixed. It was something that wasn't the done thing.

*So the age range of...*

[Coughs.] Excuse me.

*The age range of pupils at your school: what was the sort of age range?*

At that time, I wasn't too much aware of it, cos at Woodburn (that was the name of the school we had) we weren't there that long until we had a big new school built, you know, and they moved us all to a big new school. And I think, if I can remember right... actually... I can't remember too much about Woodburn, because at the age of 12 I went in for my first operation, and when I come out after, in fact, I went to the new school – Ochenrae – so a lot of the people in Ochenrae, you know, had been frae Woodburn. I don't know what they did wi' Woodburn after that, but it was built like a... it was just a big brick wall that went round. 'We'll keep them in; we'll no let them out.' [Laughs.] There wasn't a sort of, you know. I don't know if other special schools are all built the same, but it was just a sort of big, large building that went right round, and...

*So, having done the journey to school, Bill, the journey on the first day; what are your memories of your first day at Woodburn?*

Fright. Not only frightening but it was like a journey to the unknown: the first time I'd [been] away from my mother. And I remember, you know, in the bus going up the driveway to the school, and it must have been maybe the early summer or spring, because the trees were all dark, you know. You had to go up a sort of a...

*Sorry, Bill. What we'll just do, if that's OK, Bill, it's just... [Break in recording.] So what was your emotion, Bill, on your first day at school?*

I remember distinctly being put into the bus, and I remember the type of canvas windows, and having to sit, maybe it was away from my mother for the first time in me life, and going through the long driveway in the bus to school. I can't remember much about after that, whether it's what happened much, you know, in the two or three year, and that would be 1942 time, approximately; so '43, '44, '45, '46 and '47. Nothing seemed to stand out in my memory much there, you know.

*Having completed that journey, p'raps on that first day, going into the building: how would you describe the building?*

I can't remember going into the building. I can't remember whether I was carried in, I know I'd to go on the bus myself. I can't remember whether... I must have been able to walk at some way or some time, I wasn't wheelchair-bound then.

*And how would the teachers be dressed?*

I can't remember there at the particular time, but I remember them when we come out of school. It was a type of uniform, a sort of... same as teachers; 'Miss this' and 'Miss that', or there wasn't a type of... They were teachers and you were learned, which I think was a wonderful thing for that. We knew our teachers.

*So would they be wearing gowns, or...?*

No, just some [thing] very similar to nurses, but not a nurse's uniform. They had a dress code, you know, it was a dress. Everybody, every teacher, had the same sort of colour on.

*So would they be mostly women then, or...?*

Yes, there were no men to my knowledge. I can't remember any men. I mean a teacher was a teacher, and that was 'Miss this' and 'Miss that'. I mean, we had nurses later on when we moved to our new school, and we had nurses on the bus, and I had a nurse called Nurse McFarlaine, which is something. We'd moved into the new school, we'd got new buses, supplied and run by Lanarkshire County Council, so...

*And, travelling just those three miles or so to school, was it unusual for you, or indeed did you travel at all otherwise, other than going to school?*

No, as far as I was concerned I had that narrow circle, and even at the school... in fact up until I went into the hospital, it was just sort a... you were nae signposted, you tolerated, you lived within that narrow circle, or there were no sort o' moving-on type thing.

*So most of the time then, otherwise, you lived in the immediate neighbourhood where you were?*

Where I lived. It was something... and, I mean that school was a great aspect, in the sense of the word, because at the age of 12, while at school, I went into the hospital and had my first operation. And it was then, I was a guinea pig on what I've learned of it now, but they lengthened ma tendons at the back of my heels and the back of my legs, and you opened up with a spiker, with bars between your legs, and so most people with cp... Well I was very tight round there, because of the way I walked, as in the typical thing, so it was really, to put it mildly, rather a discomfort. But there were no drugs or nothing like that then, enabled you to go round and that was just another... it was like a journey, the way you didn't know what was going on.

*So, in going to school, Bill, was that your first major contact with other children, with other disabilities?*

Oh yes, it was the only contact I ever had with other people with disabilities. I'd never had any. I didn't think there were anything wrong – I had nothing wrong wi' me!

[Laughs.] I mean, I was just like my brothers, you know, and growing up I was normal. I wasn't even somebody with a disability; it was something that just part of life. I didn't think as a kid, I never thought any different. I s'pose in hindsight it was just because everything was a new world, everything was new, it was something I'd never experienced, so...

*So you saw yourself, did you, as somebody who walked in a different way, but that was it?*

I thought I was walking the same as everybody else until it came to a kerb (as in pavement): and then I couldn't get down. [Laughs.] So then I had to get down on ma knees and crawl up, and then stand up and walk across the road, and reverse the other side. I mean, it was small things like that that you're not even aware of yourself at the time cos it's normal.

*And this was particularly steep kerbs? And if this was the situation, when was it, do think that, you came to a realisation, if you did, that you had as we would now call it 'a disability'?*

A condition, or disability. I think when I went into hospital in 1948, that was the first time I ever realised I was different and there was something wrong with me. I mean, that was the first time, and I begun to become aware that I was a person: I wasn't just something, you know? They'd passed the parcel. And the operations, based on their interpretation; because I was a guinea pig, and it's rather amazing in that world then compared to today: they put me on a trolley, and pushed me along a veranda outside, to the operating theatre. [Laughs.] A hospital called Stonehouse, in Lanarkshire, about

15 mile from Hamilton, where they put me into a trolley, and you were pushed outside, because they didn't have the same link-up today as they had then in hospitals. And, I mean, I just went through it, and was part of... I don't know what it was part of, but it was... oh sorry! But it was something.

*What are your memories, Bill, in the time preceding the operation, of the discussions about the operation?*

It was never discussed with me – my parents decided that ('Jump out that window!'). I loved them and they loved me, and my mum especially, so it was never my question, and my mum's judgment: it was just... that was it.

*So they were offered the option of having the operation: this was 1948 then,*

Yes.

*the very beginnings of the National Health Service,*

Yes.

*and so do you remember at all visits to the home by doctors, or in the lead up?*

[Talking together.] Nothing on that first one, I don't remember anything. I think that my parents, especially my mother, thought that it was going to enhance my life and I'd be able to walk with my brother by that time, who was then three-year-old... So I'd be able to walk wi' my brothers, but I had to...

*So, aged 12, before the major growth years as it were, had your walk changed then, as you'd grown through childhood?*

Up until 12 I didn't even know, you know, how I was... I wasn't even aware of how to walk, or how I was walking. Things changed after that, I must admit.

*So, you were up on one toe, and -*

That's if I can remember, you know, after '48. And when they decided after the operation that it had been a complete failure, they gave me a wheelchair. They decided that I would never walk again.

*So you said earlier that you felt – later, in retrospect – that you were a guinea pig: what led you to believe that?*

Well, I think it was later on in life when they practically did the same operation, but by this time I was 18, 20, and I had a choice then – it was my body. I had decided by then, and they involved me in the preparation, and they made me aware of what was happening, so that's why I believed I was guinea pig in the previous operation: it was a completely different hospital, different personnel, different ways o' working.

*And, in 1948, from p'raps from your observations since, do you suspect then that surgical knowledge was at an early stage?*

I believe that, specially when people with cp are working with their parents come to the age of reasoning, an idea of what they're doing: I don't know whether I'm right or not, but I'm not very keen on this conductive education, in the sense of the word, that if you're not going to work with me, to help me, I can close down, and you can cut me to pieces, and it wouldn't make any difference. Now, I don't know whether this is my opinion as a person with cp. In that age group, working with me both physically and emotionally, I think there could be great moves made forward to encourage us, because our condition, stroke disability, is part of our... [Phone rings.]

[Break in recording.]

*So the operation, Bill, you had aged 12 you described 'as a complete failure'; so afterwards, then, it was that you used a wheelchair, was it?*



Well I went back to school in a wheelchair, and there were two other cousins (two other people, not my cousins, but the two cousins) – Willy Cook and Willy Freeland – who I know now, but the two had muscular dystrophy, which is hereditary, and we just couldn't do much for people like that because there was no sort of test like they have today to find out. But I didn't feel out of it because there were three of us that owned a wheelchair at school, but I'm pig-headed and stubborn, and I ended up pushing the wheelchair, and gradually got a wee bit of balance back, and carried on.

*So in the immediate period after the operation, then, was it because you were building up your muscles, and...?*

No, I just didn't realise what I was doing, which I think most people with cp, it's a built-in survival instinct we had in those days because we had to survive. We weren't sort of, in a funny way, there weren't the same assistance today, so you couldn't use the comfort zone: [laughs] you had to get out of it, in my opinion. And I had the responsibility of my young brothers and my mum and father and, you know, although I wasn't aware of it, I had to be as independent as possible.

*You described being taken out of the hospital to get to the operating theatre: [pause] what are your views, or indeed your other memories of that first time in hospital?*

Well (apart from in today's world) it was highly unusual to realise that you had to go outside covered up, of course in a trolley and moved from one building to another, outside. But the most frightening bit, in my opinion, was that horrible mask being put over my face, because of the type of disability I have, which in my opinion creates a, you know... And there were no drugs to calm you down: you were just, you go to sleep, [laughs] and that was it. And the gas was just put directly over your mouth then, and that was a horrible experience. I remember the 'burrs', you know, the sort of circle, but that's about all, and then I woke up with the spasms, my legs lying open and...

*So your legs were in plaster then, and...*

Straight out: just like that, wi' a big bar in between. It was separated – the bar, a bit – it was, what do they call it, just two feet I would say, maybe two-and-a-half feet, and just held your legs completely open, and your ankles were pulled right up, and your legs were straight. See, before I went through the operation, I couldn't straighten my legs, and I couldn't pull up my ankles, and I couldn't hold my legs open, so they reverted – they put everything in the one basket, and they put them all together, and pulled you, turned you upside down, outside in, in the sense of the word.

*But different tendon operations.*

Yes, that was then, that was the way it was done.

*How long were you in plaster?*

I can't remember too much, but I would say six months, seven months at the most. Because then, you know, it's mainly hearsay after it. Although I remember going to hospital, but my mother told me, 'They, William, said you would never walk again,' because she was so proud when I was beginning to walk again. She says, 'William,' she says, 'they said you... and look at you now.' You know it giving me a wee bit of encouragement.

*And so, in that six months or so, were you away from school for that time?*

Well, we had education but in my opinion the type of education I had; I was not doubly devalued, but I'd no expectations. They thought, or everybody seems to think you were be a cobbler; or a, what do they call it? A operator in a cinema – if you could get up the steps, that was your vocation in life. They are not aware of the need for education in either of those jobs, or the co-ordination between the brain and the limbs, which is my type of condition I have.

*So in hospital, then, was there any kind of education or schooling?*

I remember a teacher doing something, but very little. I mean, one of the most important things that we had at our school was taking Virol [a tonic], saying prayers, and making rugs. I mean [laughs] there wasn't such a thing as a... you know. I mean, religious instructions and exams, I was the one that they used to put in the front because I could say the prayers [laughing] as well as anybody. And the rugs, and of course the Virol was something but you weren't expected, and you didn't feel as if, you could achieve anything in life, so you were more inclined just to sit there and go through the motions.

*So, at school then, were there different ages of people, in the class? What kind of numbers of people were there at the school, first of all?*

I can't remember too much. I would say we had about 20, and I think most of them, you know, had been in the new school when I become aware... were in the regions from 13, 14: you know, up to 16. And at that time we left school, everybody else left school at 14 and 15, but the special school left at 16.

*So 20 or so people in the class?*

Yes.

*And what sort of numbers of people in the whole school?*

Ooh, I couldn't tell you that, I haven't a clue. I mean, I couldn't... my concentration... you didn't pay attention to detail because it was part of the educational system. As I said already, [laughing] it was more respite care, to take you away for a couple of hours, to give your parents a break, you know.

*So the new school then: you were at the old school, you had the operation, you were away for six months or so, and then you returned then to the new school.*

Yeah.

*Were all the pupils then from the old school at the [talking together] new school?*

Yes, yes. It was the same, we were just transferred in bulk, plus other people, you know. I think they amalgamated another school too, but it was the same people. It was my class then, as was my class when I left school. I can't remember too much, but I can remember one or two.

*And, you know, you stayed in that same class for the different lessons?*

It was the same, like you were in that same class all the [time]. The only time you went to another class was for religious instructions, because it was no different – it was all the same: education was education, religion was religion, and that was the bottom line. I mean there were none of this what they've got today with...

*So in any of the studying or work that you did, Bill, do you remember any particular subjects that you liked more than others?*

I think in hindsight that my brain was working but my body wasn't, and it was never encouraged, cos the two things... I was very good at then was the 'arithmetic' as I called it then: not decimals, because we didn't do that. Mental arithmetic, we just couldn't pick it up like that, or the times table: I mean, that was about the only thing. Regarding English, because of the co-ordination and the type of disability I have, my limbs and my brain didn't work together, where I didn't have to write down times table, and I didn't have to write down mental arithmetic, and we didn't have the technology we have today, so it was a sort of...

*So, in learning the times table, how would you learn that?*

It would be basically just the teacher up there, and everybody was, just, you know, 'Two one's are one: two two's are two, twelve sixes are [laughs] seventy-two,' whatever: you know what I mean – it was just everybody sitting on round, you know, everybody was very seldom, I think now and again you'd to write it out, but...

*And what was the appeal of arithmetic in particular?*

I think it was fast: it was faster than English. I love English, God forgive me, being a good Scot, but English knowledge, you know, and the written word has always appealed to me, but the lack of education, this was devastating to a lot o' us then, I must admit.

*And with arithmetic, there was a right answer, and there it was, a number as an answer.*

Yes.

*In writing, how would you write? What would you write in, and how would you write things?*

I would just... it was all capitals. I never understood the difference then between, you know, small and large, capitals, and this and that. I never realised that, even to the day I left school, it was something either I didn't want to do it so I switched off, [laughs] or... You're not aware of these things until you think back. Well, I was more interested in Sheila Forester [laughs], who was across at back of the class, sort of something like that, you know.

*So, in writing on a page, Bill, what would you write with?*

A pencil. I can't remember much of what I really... It was something that I think I had a way of switching off, and just sort of putting it back, I don't know.

*Do you remember the name of your teacher?*

What do they call it? Miss Steele was one of them, Miss Grey was another; she was the religious one. Oh, and I can't remember the names of the other few. Miss Dawlish – she was the religious one. I think, you know, the religious side of the school was sort of drummed into you more. The education side of the school; you were sort of left to get on wi' it, but when it came to religion, which in that time [was] the Catholic religion (which I am), it was drummed into you, so it might have been something that should have been drummed into me, [Laughs] both sides; but again, it's, you know...

*And looking back, remembering your teachers, what sort of ages do you think they were?*

They varied from relatively young, as in possibly 25, to over 50. Yeah.

*And, do you suspect that it still held true that a teacher who married then could no longer continue in teaching?*

Well, infant school (what we called 'the infant class'), that Miss Grey was her married name, but I can't remember her own name then. The reason that her name stood out, she was my religious teacher again, although in the school she was, I mean, the school seemed to have this (now, when I'm thinking) certain ages: you'd to move up (whether you'd ability or not) you moved with the age group, and I think she was my religious teacher, but she got married and came back later on. Maybe it was because she had the special skills to teach special needs, I don't know. I don't know if that was the reason, but it's something you didn't pay attention to. I mean, whether they were married or not was out with what you considered, thingummy. I mean, it was amazing, after the operation in 1948, when I become aware that I was different from anybody else – something I was never aware before – and then when I begin to realise that I wanted a say in what I believed to be right, but I was still very cautious, because I had never been asked before, and when we moved up, when I left school at 16, I wasn't interested in a job, whether because I didn't think I had the capabilities or not,

I was interested in a game of snooker, [laughs] and I think this was the greatest education I ever had in my life, as a normalisation, and the preparation for the future life.

*Well -*

**[End of Tape 2 Side B]**

**Tape 3 Side A [Track 5]**

*So you left school Bill, at [talking together] 16:*

Sixteen.

*What year would that be?*

Well I was, what do you call it, 12 – '53-time, 1952, '53.

*Right. And in your early years at school, through the war years: how aware were you of the World War, of things going on around you?*

The only thing I can remember, two things: mainly my fether's [father's] army uniform, his wee hat, and when he got home, his army coat, he got a bigger heed [phon. for 'head'] than he had before it. [Laughs] That sounds... But that is because of the conditions that we didn't have, the minimum conditions that we have today, to support people.

*So your father, then, away during the Second World War, serving his country: where did he, how did he [talking together] carry out his army service?*

He never left England because of his medical condition – they found out after that he had stomach trouble – so I'm not too sure whether he was discharged, or whether he did his time or not, cos you didn't think o' those things at the time. But I'm led to believe, in fact I know he had a war pension later on his life, so he must have been discharged on medical grounds.

*And what memories do you have of the war?*

Very little: the air raid shelter, having to go down under the step for that. That's about all, it's very thingummy.



*So this would be in your second home, would it? Your second house?*

The first home. That was in the first home cos we must ha' left Morgan Street about 1943, '44, and we moved to a new house in Kerr Crescent, Fairhill in Hamilton, which was approximately two mile away from where I originally lived. It was a brand new house. It was a two-bedroom, and what we called a kitchen and a scullery: which we now call a kitchen and a living-room. [Laughs.] It's a different world. But we came along, we lived there and I had a brother called Tommy, who has passed away too. We called him Tucker as a nickname, because his name is Tommy, so we just started calling him Tommy Tucker and then I don't how, we missed out the Tommy and he was always called by the family Our Tucker. At Kerr Crescent, we stayed there for, well, it must have been three or four year. We were lucky, mm: two or three year. My mother was an awful one for moving house. I think the discontent and the thing, you know, we kept on moving around, and we moved to another house which was ground-floor then, in Mill Road. And then I had another wee sister: Morag. She's still here; she lives in Corby here now.

*And in the time that your father was away: apart from home-making, did your mother work outside the house?*

No, she never worked at all. I think my mother physically wasn't... she had nothing wrong with her as such, but she wasn't a very strong person. She was the youngest – I think there were seven or eight, or even nine in her family that survived –in her day, in the '20s, you know, people didn't survive as long as that, but she was the youngest who survived. I just come on there, because I had wonderful support: I mean, time begin to move on there, I think it was 1955, '56. I became aware that they were gonna look at another operation, in a different hospital. It was a Mr Gardiner who was the surgeon, and my mother (my father didn't seem to care one way or another about what I did) decided I'm going to have another go. I was walking with sticks then, you know, but this time it was completely different: I was in control with a small 'c'. Mr Gardiner – I was there in the preparation, I had to walk up and down while he'd taken

photies [photos] of me walking just wi' a pair of pants on, because they wanted to see how my limbs worked, and the preparation was enormous then for the operation. It was basically, as far as I was concerned, very similar type of operation as the first one: the only difference in the second one, I had this thing called 'spiker'. Now I don't know if you know what a spiker is. A spiker is plaster [rustling noise as if demonstrating] from above the chest, you know, just below the... up the drop, but just where your arm and shoulder... and it was right down one side. A single spiker's down one leg and a double is down the other: but in the bed, you've got to have wood and sort of things to hold you off the bed. So you lay on that spiker on your back, down wi' that big... So I mean, it was interesting, to put it mildly.

*What was the purpose of that then?*

Basically doing the same thing: lengthening my tendons. And because it didn't work the first time (because I didn't want it to work the first time) I wasn't aware of it. It's like the importance when we're working with people, whether they're spastics or cerebral palsy, or whatever it is, that we encourage the service user and the service providers to work so much together.

*And the purpose of the spiker: what, being held on the [talking together] on the bed?*

It was two wooden boxes under it, you know, and there's a plaster, and you just, well, you just had to lie there and that was it. I mean, I can't remember how long I had it, because it was just, by that time, my way of life, hospitals. Somebody says to me, 'Are you going into hospital for an operation tomorrow?' It was

*What -*

something I just did it and that was it.

*Was it to keep you still, do you think then?*

Well until it dried, I mean, once it was right round. It wasn't a shell, it was something that went right round your body, so once it dried you couldn't move anyway: you see, and the reason for lifting it up was for hygienic, for the toilets etc., so you had two arms... The first time I ever got drunk in my life was on a single spiker. [Laughs] I was over 18 years of age, you know, but again it was something that was part of Scotland: I suppose it was the research and development of the needs of people with cerebral palsy: medical needs, you know.

*So here you were then, you know: you'd left school at 16...*

Yeah.

*We talked earlier about one of your main interests then being [talking together] the game of snooker.*

Oh, I loved snooker.

*Where did you play snooker then?*

I played it in what we used to call Cadgie Welfare. At that time, everybody had a sort of welfare, or a community centre, you know, where people went, and a sort of focal point, and they'd six tables there. I mean, before I went into hospital for my operation, I got into the snooker hall, and the wee man wouldn't let me in. Mr Collins, Jock Collins his name, wouldn't let me in [laughing] to the snooker hall till I was 16, and he wants to get in, you know, he was. And friends around me were brilliant because I could hardly get round the table then, and playing the snooker with my hands and my brain and my legs had to work together, was one of the best things that ever happened, which goes back to my theory that if we're going to do it, we've got to work together, we can't force it, because people with cp [cerebral palsy] can shut down. I don't know. Ask me how, in my opinion, I could do that – I had to feel part of... together with...

*So it was co-ordinating [talking together] eyes and movement and brain?*

My everything, yes. Yes, that's the snooker bit, but I think... I found out that I've got to want to do it: there's no point in trying anything. I don't know if other people with my type of condition felt the same, or were aware of that, and it was, you know, in hospital a good year. The first experience I ever had with The Lanarkshire Spastics Society was in the hospital during that time. By that time, they had ta'en off the big spiker, and I had shells with the same principle: a bar across the bottom with my two legs straight, but there were no pain this time, and I could get out. And The Lanarkshire Spastics Association heard of me, and they asked me if I'd like to go [on] a bus run: and they would lift me into the bus, and they've lifted me up to the back seat. And there was this wee lassie: she's, och, I mean, her name is Wilma Lawson, and that was my first bus trip I ever had in my life. It was wonderful, and that's why I've got a sort [of] another reason why I love to give, do, everything I can for people with cerebral palsy, and other types of disabilities, you know.

*So this was, p'raps on a Sunday, or something like this?*

I can't remember what it was, but they took me back to hospital [laughs, talking together] so, I went -

*Where did you go on this trip?*

[Laughing.] I haven't a clue, I can't remember. I'd liked to, but it was something that stood out – being able to get away frae the hospital – because one of the things I had, a young man, I could be very content. I sort of could... Somebody says, [laughing] 'Sit there for five years', I was more apt to just, you know. I never created discontent within myself because my expectations were nil: although I wasn't aware of it at the time. But at the time that operations came along, The Lanarkshire Spastics eventually played a big part in my attitude and lifestyle, you know, to life.

*So, in saying you were in hospital then for the best part of a year, or*

Yes.

*a year or so, in various different forms of plaster – first of all the spiker, and then a [talking together] reduced form of plaster and so on.*

Aye, aye.

*This then to, what, to train the tendons, to hold the... How long were you in plaster for then, for that period?*

I can't remember the particular things, but I don't remember the struggling as much when I come out. I think what it enabled me to do... there were a wee bit more balance – I was able to stand for a fraction of a second without moving, you know. I didn't use a stick then, and I always [felt?] the Big Yin's [The big one: God] been good to me, there's something up there that always gives me that sort of help when I need it, and I just come out of the hospital, I seemed to carry on a wee bit more aware of social needs. I'm becoming aware of the social needs, and of the need... the words I use now is 'motivation': not so much medical needs, but social needs and motivation, and, because my father was very politically-orientated, as in he disliked Catholics, and disliked Tories. [Laughs.] He married a Catholic, but these are things that he... and I've said that because that was the type of life that we had. My father was a political animal, in the sense of the word. He was the first Chairman of the Lanarkshire... sorry, Hamilton Ackie's Football Club. That was a football club there.

*Hamilton Academicals: is that the club?*

Yes, that's right. So therefore it's installed in me, that sort of political attitude. As growing up, you know, as I was beginning to come along, it was a very interesting time, in the sense of the word, as I became aware of how I was different. My mother would sit me in that big chair: 'I'll get your dinner son, I'll do this son, I'll do that,' and not want me to move. My father says, 'You get up and cross the road when you

want: if you get knocked doon, that's your problem,' and by that time I had two brothers and a sister, and yer sister was only young, and he still had that horrible bitterness regarding me [dog yelping in background] – and I'm going to say this, it's not to make out my parents were good, bad or indifferent, but it's just so's that if it does happen to anybody else in the future, to be aware it can be a norm, and it's not because of the want to hurt us – but he come wi' a wee drink, and he come in with the three packets of crisps, and gave them to my brothers and sister, and said, 'That is for everybody that works for it,' and I'm sitting there with a stick at the time, you know, and it was devastating, which caused hell, to put it mildly, in the home. At the end of the day, he was on his knees begging my forgiveness, you know. This is not to make out that I'm a martyr in any way, but it's to make people aware that because of the conditions that they had to bring me up, and because of the stress etc., and the lack of support (which we need to provide support for parents and friends of people with cerebral palsy), so's that they will never go down that road, and even if they do, people will understand what's happening. But I was lucky; I get two pathways in education. I get the love of my mother, and the discipline of my father, so both of them I think makes me what I am today, for good or bad, or what other people consider I am: I can't judge that.

*So, from what you're saying, your parents didn't have any contact then with any kind of agency, or any kind of organisation that knew about cerebral palsy?*

It begin to creep in, I don't know how it worked out, we had a Mr Arthur in Hamilton, who was a social worker, right. If you wanted something, you went to him and naebody else [laughs] and he was the person who eventually, at one time, got me into making trays. [Laughs.] 'You come into this place, and you sit in that chair at that de', and you do all those trays.' It was something to do rather than doing nothing, so I think it was... Other than that, the only time I had any support in any way was from The Lanarkshire Spastics Association. In my opinion, the first positive effect was The Lanarkshire Spastics Association. So, I mean, after the hospital visit, then I begin to get involved in around about 1957, '56, '57-time with The Lanarkshire Spastics Association. And so that was something, because they gave me a lot. I'll disagree with

– though I’m not gonna say that this is healthy, and I’m not talking The Lanarkshire Spastics – but other service providers within our Scope today, but sometime you’ve also think of the wonderful work they do, maybe not to please the individuals, but the overall policies.

*And so, when you [were] in the period following your second operation, out of hospital, out of plaster, after first a year in hospital: did you then have physiotherapy?*

Oh no. [Laughing.] You just had to try: ‘I’ve got to walk, cos I want my game of snooker.’ I wanted back at the snooker hall, and by that time, you know, I’d begun to realise I was reaching the stage of a man and you were eyeing up the girlfriends, which was healthy. And end of ’57, ’58, I met my wife, [talking together] and...

*So you were walking, were you, [talking together] initially with stick?*

Wi’ a stick, yes. I walked wi’ one stick and then I walked with two sticks.

*And mostly, apart from dealings with The Lanarkshire Spastic Association, most of your social contact then, was that at the snooker hall, or... ?*

Apart for the family, I had wonderful aunties and uncles, and I had wonderful support from them. I was their golden boy, you know. I had four or five aunties and two uncles: my Uncle Harry, who gave me a shilling every week [laughs] so I didn’a get from him yer ken, I got it but from my Aunty Mary, you know: that was on me mother’s side of the family. I had my father’s side of the family; it was a wee bit different, in the sense of the word. The religion was always a sort of barrier between them: you know, they tolerated one another; not my mother and father, but my aunties and my uncles from either side. My Uncle Angus was a Gospel Hall man, and he was a wonderful man; he says, ‘William, would you no like to come to the Gospel Hall?’ I said ‘No, Uncle Angus,’ I says, ‘I’ve too much respect for other people’s belief’, and that’s my philosophy today even: I respect other people’s belief completely.

*So Gospel Hall was a form of Baptist?*

It was a sort of Baptist-type thing. I wasn't aware of what it was then, but that's what it is, actually: Baptist. But there were no barriers put in my place, as I grew up regarding religion. My father turned me to my mother to instructions and all that, and decided he had enough, and which was his choice, in that way.

*When you were a child, Bill, money was tight, and your father not always in work: do you have memories of family trips out or holidays at all?*

No, as a kid, no. I had a wonderful contented feeling of sitting on a pavement wi' a dog called Bob: and that'd be between the two operations, it'd be about '43, '44, because I was a content... I had demands I didn't want to do it, you know, I just was... I had a lot of love around me. I got more than I gave in the sense of the word. There was always somebody coming up and say, 'D'you want a piece William? D'you want [to] have a biscuit?' [Laughs.] I was a lucky man, and we just survived it. I mean, they were put by a man and he made me a wee barrow, and put four wheels on it, which I could walk around the street in Mill Road, and have a bit of time with the dog, before I went in for my second operation: which I think helped when I went in for my second operation.

*So, you -*

One of the neighbours, he just made a box, just like a chair – a wooden box, basically wi' a wee seat, two arms up the side of it, wi' a bar across it, and he painted it all and he made it look lovely, and I could walk with that.

*Did you walk behind the four-wheeled?*

I pushed it: so I'd always something there, I'd always somebody there if things were rough, but I was so stubborn. I mean, I must admit, you had to improvise; you had to



move forward rather than look back. I mean you couldn't go; you couldn't 'a lay back and just took it. I think it's, you know, something, and then when we got married that was 1959. Our first child was born on Princess Margaret's wedding day, and it was rather interesting. Sadie was polio. I don't know how, if people put us together because we were disabled, or whether it was as I fell in love or whether it was the physical aspects of marriage that appealed or, I don't know, cos I think the woman leads the way. [Laughs.] The man hasn't got much chance, unless things have changed.

*So how old were you, Bill, when you met Sadie?*

I was married, Sadie was 23, and I was 30. There was a great buzz then because Corby, Hamilton Borough Council (the County Council) had never even envisaged where two people with the degree of disability we have, would ever get married, or have a family, so it was a spanner in the works. [Coughs.] You know, they, all at once, 'What are we gonna do? Where are we gonna house them? What are we going to do for people like them?' And, because of my stubborn nature, I used to chat among... (in hindsight I don't know how I did it)... if I seen a Councillor's door at that time, we had... If you were a Provost of a town, you had the big lamp-posts with the columns, I don't know if you ever seen them; so if I'd seen these big lamp posts, I chapped the door and said, 'I need help.' I fought for accommodation, Sadie brought up our children. I think this is where the team-work come in, in the marriage. I think this was good, but attitude of the public then was so different from today.

*The Provost being the equivalent, broadly, of a Mayor, but...*

Of a Mayor, yes.

*how did you meet Sadie?*

It was a polio outing, with Polio and Spastics Society. [Laughing.] We didn't have the fancy name of Scope now they have. The Lanarkshire Spastics Association and the

Polio Fellowship got together and we had a bus, and I was in the bus, up the back seat, sitting, and this lovely black-headed woman at the front. I went doon (because I could walk then) in the bus, you know, and to Sadie, 'Will you not sit beside me?' so that was it, fatal attraction. And it [she?] was eventually a wonderful mother.

*And how long did you know each other, before, then you got married?*

I would say, just over a year. We never let the grass grow under our feet, we just, you know, we had three children in approximately four-and-a-half year, five year.

*So Sadie came then, did she, from the Hamilton area?*

She came from the Lanarkshire district: she came from Uddingston, which is roughly about eight mile between Hamilton and Uddingston, see.

*And so at that time, when you first got to know Sadie, was she still living at home then, or - ?*

Yes, she was still living at home. She walked with the two wooden crutches in those days. It was just under your arms [rustling noise as if demonstrating] right up under your arms. They looked like a brush turned upside down basically, with two callipers. I didn't have, I don't think, I had a calliper but I didn't like wearing them. I just liked to push out my... rub out my shoes with scurfing [laughs.]

*So wearing callipers Bill then, on and off: how long had you been wearing callipers?*

I couldn't cope with them much. I must admit they give me more restriction than anything because they deprived me of that balance to lift my body. I had to be... it was too much of a structured-type walk, which I couldn't cope with.

*So was it something then that you wore after the second [talking together] operation?*

[Talking together. Inaudible.] Yes, I had them after the second operation for a wee while, but I never lasted long with them. I wanted back into my pig-headedness, stubborn nature.

*So just take me back, Bill, to the time then: you'd had the second operation, you were out of hospital, beginning to walk again. What were you doing then, during the day at this time?*

Well, I was just basically at a day centre. I never considered myself suitable for, or capable of work. I don't think it was something that anybody else ever offered me, or I just, you know, it was in hindsight: 'Why create discontent when there's contentment,' sort of thing. 'Well why are you trying to climb a mountain when you'll never get near the top?' sort of syndrome, you know. I can look at it now and think along those lines. We had our three children, the first one it was very difficult in society in those days when people used to come up and say, 'Oh, he's a lovely boy!' and they looked at his legs, to see if they were all right, looking like it's the fly like, you know, because with Sadie wi' polio and me – cerebral palsy – and course our three children are perfect, but the society then was a different society to today. They didn't think that people with disabilities should get married, or should have any emotions. It's not our matter they didn't think we shouldn't do it: I don't think they knew how to cope with it. I think that was it because, once we were married, and once we had the usual room, staying in a couple of rooms, we were offered a prefab, which was very suitable in those days. You know, it was something [they] put up during the War, after the War, to accommodate people, and they had wide doors and, you know, Sadie, by that time, when she fell with our first child, I suggested she go into a wheelchair to prevent any damage to our child, which she did. And that was the way we, she, brought up the three children was with the prefab.

**[End of Tape 3 Side A]**

**Tape 3 Side B [Track 6]**

*So, in being at the day centre, Bill, where you were, that was in the neighbourhood, was it?*

It was. I was driving in by trike, you know, it was only about two mile away from where we were, and I just, don't ask me, I just seemed to get there and get back, you know. You had to make do most of the time with what you were [given?]. I mean...

*So, you'd met Sadie, and you were beginning your courtship with her: what was the reaction then of people around and about to that?*

Oh, devastating. Not only from the people, but from my parents, from my mother and from her mother too. My mother never expected me to get married. She thought I would just be something that would be there for her to spoil all of her life, you know. [Laughs.] For her to wrap me in cotton wool which, you know, there's nothing wrong with that. My father had been away then, so... But my mother came out of hospital, to see us getting married.

*She'd been in hospital, had she for a while?*

Yes, she had TB [tuberculosis] at the time. She came out of hospital. Well you know TB was something like cancer is today. It's something that seems to take the weakest link-type people, you know, people that having their upbringing and their food, you know, the...

*And, your father had moved away, had he by then?*

Oh my father was always moving away and coming back, that was part of what seemed to be his life-style: and my mother had to bring us up and, you know, survive. It may sound... It was a wonderful upbringing. We never took one another for granted, we had ter make do, we'd to survive, and we all loved our mother. By this time,

before I got married, I had another two brothers, so this meant I had one, two, three, four brothers and a wee sister so, well, the family was a family, so we didn't really need a great amount outside. Sadie changed our ways when she come in and we got married.

*So when, you know, having met Sadie and being on the verge of marrying her, when you looked back then on your childhood, how did you look back upon it?*

About my childhood? I think it's something, as time goes on, you live in the present and learn from the past, as you build for the future; so therefore, I've been the type that's always thought a wee bit more ahead. I didn't want to forget the past, about the good and not so good. But I was always, at that time, aware [that] we had come into a new world, where we had put Hamilton Borough Council in a position of thinking, 'If this happens again, what are we gonna do for accommodation for people with physical disabilities?' Especially in our case, where there was two, and we had one child at the time, so it put the cat among the pigeons for the first time, I think, in Scotland for the social awareness – aware of the need for independent living, and attitude of life.

*So, in knowing other people p'raps with disabilities at the day centre and around and about (Lanarkshire Spastics Association, The Polio Fellowship): were you aware of other couples and other marriages [talking together] amongst people with disabilities?*

Yes. I think we set off the button, and pressed a button, because there was another gentleman called Michael Murphy who was a spastic (cerebral palsy) and his wife was a polio too. They happened to get married on the same day, in another part of the town, another part of the country, you know, as in another town up in Lanarkshire, and I think because of the meeting of the number of people with disabilities getting together, we became aware of this, we fed off one another. If one had the courage to go out and have a pint: 'Och, if he can do it, if she can do it, so can I,' so I think it was follow-the-leader, and so we developed a wonderful link of friendship and support to

one another. In hindsight, we seemed to exclude the outside world, you know. Not a day-centre-type link: a friendship link, cos they used to come to our house regular and do gardens, and help us to do this, and help us to do that – three or four on their trikes would draw at the door, you know, and it was just a wonderful time.

*At that time, Bill, in your childhood (after the First World War, and then after the Second World War), apart from people at the day centre and other contacts, were you generally aware then of other people around and about with, as we would now describe it, 'disabilities'?*

It didn't seem to matter. I wasn't along the campaign trail. I think when I joined, when I begin to get involved with the Lanarkshire Spastics Association, the attitude of equality... Equality's an attitude of mind in my opinion. We need the tools to do it, but then I begin to think, 'If I can do it, I'm lucky: what about other people?' so then I became politically-aware of the needs of other people wi' disability: family and friends, you know.

*And were you aware of other disabled people, forming relationships, perhaps marrying; whether or not to other disabled people, but were you aware of other relationships that people were having?*

I wasn't, well, I was aware of the likes of my brothers had met: our Ellen, that's his wife for years, and sadly Jim passed away, but Ellen's still 'Our Ellen', my sister-in-law who got married after us, and I wasn't aware of any other types of relationships of any kind. A man and a woman was a man and a woman then, and that was the way it was.

*But, how unusual do you think it was then for somebody with a disability to get married, whether or not to somebody else with a disability?*

I think society was more inclined to put us together because we were disabled, than to allow us to go out into that world and pick the partner that we wanted, or vice versa;

or we didn't have the opportunity or the facilities then as we have today, such as transport, attitudes, etc. I think it was a marriage of convenience; that's a horrible word to use, but I think it was. 'This is the only type of woman or man that you'll get,' in that day, you know. I think this is...

*And in getting married, there was yourself and Sadie, and the other couple that you referred to, there was the reaction of people around and about, but did it then make, for instance, the newspapers?*

Yes. It made the newspaper: 'Mr and Mrs Courage', if I can remember right. 'That Wonder Baby called Arthur: that was *The Glasgow Mail*, I think. That's what it was called then, and it had a big bit in 1960 on that: and again it was something. I was lucky to be able to communicate, or because of the awareness of the need with they had eventually built a lovely bungalow, in Hamilton (not only one, but two or three) to serve the needs and support of people like Sadie and I, and aspects of independent living.

*So there you were, Bill, newly married to Sadie: a wonderful time, for you. How did you feel though about the reaction of other people: the fact that you were featured in newspapers?*

I was just so proud to be feeling normal, that I had a son I could hold in my arms, something I never envisaged or even thought would ever happen, and I think this also applied to Sadie: not because she was very social-orientated in her life, you know, she's been out in the world, a different type of upbringing I think, and we were so busy just bringing up our children. I don't think I had any inkling that I wasn't worried about other people. I still then and still do feel, by any publicity that I get or help, if it helps other people, it's a plus. I've no hang-up to climb Ben Nevis, or do anything because I want to achieve... but by an example of the practical of everyday of my life things, it will help other people.

*So you started off married life in two rooms, was it?*

We had two rooms in a prefab, and we had a wonderful time there wi' our children. By the time we left the prefab we had three children: [laughs] and that's a photie behind me, of the three children. And it was lovely, you know, and then we moved, as they pulled the prefabs down. They moved us into another reasonable ground-floor accommodation, provided garage space up the side for one of our trikes (cos both of us drove Invertrikes which was a three-wheel type vehicle: a Velor two-stroke engine). No central heating. [Laughs.] Kick start some time, I don't know how you're supposed to kick start it, but that was in the days when, you know. It was amazing, the improvisation we had.

*So you'd had this tremendous gear-change of circumstance, from being in your original birth-family home, to then forming a home with Sadie, and then going on to have children. How do you think that you altered your own perceptions of yourself, and indeed of Sadie?*

I don't think it changed my brothers and my sister too much, because I was their big brother, whether I was disabled or not. I know they were into, 'Oh I've got a niece or a nephew,' that side of it didn't change, and because Sadie and I have such an independent attitude in life (we have an attitude of normality, you know). We control, with a small 'c', but not to such a degree to be pig-headed, and we had to struggle because we didn't... The first job I had, no that long, while we were in the prefab, was in a sheltered workshop. That's like a sort of Remploy, government-type place; it was subsidised by the government just for people with disabilities who couldn't work in open industry. I was a machinist, making ladies' hats, but it went to the back... Corby Borough Council were sponsoring that but it folded up, so then I was out o' a job. I've never really been able to work, in open industry for any length o' time.

*This was Corby Borough Council was it, or Hamilton?*

Hamilton. Sorry, Hamilton. I've never really been able to work, as such, all my life. Sadie was a machinist and she did work; but not a great amount because we were



bringing up our three children, and it took the three [two?] of us to do this: or one or the other.

*So there you were, Bill, various times Sadie was working, you were perhaps working as well, but this would be then in the early fifties, I guess?*

No, sixties then.

*Sorry, sixties, yeah. So this would be in the early sixties then, so...*

In the middle sixties both o' us were working in Hamilton. I worked in Remploy for a short period of the time, and Sadie was doing an operation hand, I think it was some other part, and the two o' us used to get in our Invertrike, in the cold mornings and get out to work. We weren't lazy, we were never capable of going out there, and the neighbour used to keep an eye on the children till they went to school, like everybody else, you know, we were normal. We had no legs, but we had arms and we just had to work, to bring up our children, create a normality within our children.

*And, of course, bringing up children – not a cheap process really, quite an expensive process.*

Oh I never thought o' that. If we had it... I mean there weren't such a thing as, 'Can I get my pocket money?' If we didn'a have it, our first priority is our children, to make them... Because we couldn't, because Sadie had polio, in a wheelchair, and I, with my type of disability, we couldn't take the children out to play football, or we couldn't do those small things, take them to places that so-called 'normal' parents can do, so we were restricted. So we had to sort of provide entertainment and love in different ways: I mean...

*And, as a family, did you go on things like holidays?*

Oh no, there were, no, we never. My mother was a great support to us, and even my father, cos my father came back later on in years when wee William was there, just after we got married when we stayed with them, and he offered me his pension to put in the bank for my son. He says, 'William, you're a credit to me,' you know, and it was nice because it did away wi' all the bad memories, and made him proud of his son, probably for the first time of his life, and his grandchildren, you know, he had three. He stayed with us for a wee while before he went back: he stayed up in Hamilton with us, and then he stayed in Corby a wee while with us, because I came in [to] Corby in 1971.

*And, with three grandchildren, and seeing you as a couple: how did that make you feel then, your father's change of attitude?*

I felt pity for him, because o' circumstances. I felt bitter, you know, until I had children of my own, because 'if you've not been there, don't knock it'. You've got to realise the things of bringing up children and that, but I tried to understand him, I think I did understand him, you know, his sense of failure: expecting a perfect son, and his way of dealing with it, because of there were no support. But he gave some wonderful support to his three grandchildren, which will have drew them away, you know, because an old saying, Scotland and anywhere, 'Hurt me, but don't hurt mine'. So I think this was something that, till the day he died, my children were very fond of their dad'e, [grandfather] and they still are, they still think of him. They did a great gran too, cos again I having a disability and three children, my mother made up another notch for, 'My son's normal,' you know, it's the effects that are a great need to encourage people with a disability, in the field of equality, empowerment, is so important, and make them aware that they have a right to be wrong, and we've got to look at things and let them grow up the same as the man next-door, or the woman next door, and provide the additional tools to enable them to do this. We can't leave them out in the cold.

*And, in particular, your father's attitude: do you think that it was difficult for him, was it, to separate his reaction to a situation, and his reaction to you personally, as it were?*

I don't think it was to me 'personally', in the sense of the word, as his first wain. I think if it had been anybody, it would have been... I can't really speak, but I'm led to believe in the animal kingdom – if there's something deformed, they push it to the side, and maybe this was something built in, I think, but he was very proud of me, and very proud of his grandchildren later on in life. So I've no bitterness in my life towards him at all because my grandchildren are his blood, and my children are his bloodline, so I think sometime, when you look for the worst in people, it can eat in, and it can destroy you more than it can destroy other people.

*And as a young family, Bill, in Hamilton, did you feel yourselves to be pioneers, as it were?*

At the time, I don't think we were aware of it, but we were pioneers. In fact we turned society upside down. We made them aware that we cannot put people in boxes; they have a right to live their life and they've both emotional needs and physical needs. I think what we did, we created a sort of awareness in that day, because even when I came to Corby in '71, and they showed me the houses they'd built years ago for people with physical disabilities, they says to me, 'What do you think?' I says, 'They're too big.' 'But we need the space.' I says, 'But they're too expensive to keep warm.' I says, 'Why don't you go to Hamilton and see what they've done there?' They had really the preparation, presentation of the houses in Hamilton and the service providers, all working together to serve the needs of the service users, [it] was invaluable. We had a monkey pull in our bedroom; we had a monkey pull in our toilet.

*This is a pole to grab onto?*

To grab onto, yes, because if you've got limbs like me, wi' a physically-orientated or other ways, it came from the ceiling, it was something that was put in there, because we reckoned to move out and in, off toilets, into baths and that, you needed these sort of support for aspects of safety. I wasn't aware of it at the time: and our toilet/bathroom, that's what it was, they had the thermostat up higher because they reckoned that's where you needed the additional heat; you see. They looked at where they put the fridge, so as it would open in a proper way, to serve the needs with the lower level sinks, with the plugs at the front, rather than up the wall. You know, they really enabled us to live in our community, by providing the tools.

*And at this time, such insight into daily living adaptations that was fairly rare was it?*

Oh then, yes. I don't know who the occupational therapist was then; or the physiotherapist, whoever, but it was first class. It must have been somebody with a great insight. I never met the people who did that, but they planted seeds in my life that enabled me to say who I am, what I want, and why I want it.

*And did you have indeed any ongoing contact with Hamilton Council or other organisations at all?*

The only main one, again in Hamilton, is The Lanarkshire Spastics Association. I fell out wi' my wife like everybody else does; you disagree, we split up, you know, and I came to Corby to live with ma sister. And in 1972, Sadie gave up the house and came to live here too, so, we put the cat among the pigeons. [Laughs.] God, we did. And again the response was first-class. They hadn't what we would have liked, they were aware at this time that other people moved, but they gave us a manageable house in Corby; ground-floor, but with stairs, but we were able to manage them. Stairs wasn't a problem at that time, you know, because although Sadie was still in a wheelchair, she could go up on her backside and have a wheelchair at the top, cos you can't expect a perfect world. So, then I came here and I started getting involved in political things here, because the seed had been planted. 1973, I went to a day centre called Stonehouse. I walked in the door, I walked with sticks then. Bob and Linda Tucker

were the team leaders, Social Services orientated, and it was a pilot scheme, it seems. They said to me, 'Now this is your place. There is no system of referral. You can sit where you want, and you can do what you want.' Now this was devastating to somebody like me cos outside my married life, when it came to Social Services in the past, or day centres, I was told what day I had to come, where I had to sit, and what type of work I'd do, where coming to Stonehouse; it was a new world. It was providing the tools aspects, attitude-wise of equality, and social needs. So I was involved in Stonehouse from '73 to '85, and even '90, and that take a lot of Sadie's time, her and I, up. We called that place of our own, which was so important. I became Chairman of DIAL [Disability Information and Advice Line], you know, and a Director of DIAL UK, but before that, at the time I wasn't aware of it, but you have never got to be ashamed of your weaknesses, but proud of your strengths, and not ashamed of your weaknesses. So I went, in 1983, for basic education, cos I found out that to be able to do something, you need the tools, and this is where I believe the great need for is in assessment. Over a period of time, allowing people with disabilities, 'specially people with cp, to try and fail. I found out that with the use of a keyboard, and then with a typewriter, my limbs and my brain were beginning to go along the same road. They weren't completely compatible, but they were reasonable, so therefore I was able to play a very active part in the community. I was a school governor, the first one in Northamptonshire that was wheelchair-bound. So I mean I have moved very far, taking into consideration my background, but again it's something we've got to do because only fools never listen: and independence is a wonderful thing, provided you don't need help, and everybody needs help, but by even giving somebody something, you get help, and old Scottish saying is, 'To gie [give] is to get.' [Under breath. Inaudible.]

*Yeah.*

**[End of Tape 3 Side B]**

**Tape 4 Side A [Track 7]**

*Bill, tell me about your move to England then. What year was that finally, that you moved?*

I think it was rather interesting, because sometime what's meant's meant, and we're not aware of it at the time. I fell out with my good lady wife, while we had three children, but, like everybody else, it doesn't mean because you're disabled, that you don't have disagreements, that you don't break up. So I came to Corby because my sister was here and my mother was here. I came from Hamilton to Corby, which is approximately 350, 400 mile. And at that time, that was in 1971, I did that journey on an Invertrike; which was a three-wheeler type, two-stroke engine, specially adapted for the needs of people with disabilities. At that time, oh, travelling from... I left Hamilton at two o'clock with a sense of freedom that I was going to England, not even aware of where England was, but only knowing the signposts that I would get there. For those 350 mile, I never arrived in Corby until six o'clock the next morning, and we had to travel on a lot o' A-roads and B-roads, because at that time they didn't have the motorway or the facilities we've got today, and this was in the middle of the Autumn so it was a bit of experience, especially. Although I could walk in a sense, I walked with the aid of two sticks, I wasn't in a wheelchair at that time, and arrived at Corby and I went to the police station, and asked about my wee sister, and the police were amazed that I'd travelled all that journey, and [laughing] I'm not going to say what they called me, it was a compliment in a way, but they called me 'a daft sod!' [Laughs.] But, I mean, that was one of the things that happened.

*So there you were, travelling through the night as well...*

Yes, and at the time, the Invertrikes had plastic windows. They weren't health and safety as they have in the modern car today which, as we're aware, it's 2005, you know, this was in 1971-ish where people with disabilities were sort a... you know, we're given something, and I think in the hindsight we should have been grateful. It was a Godsend cos it was a vehicle that we didn't have any foot controls, and basically the same idea as a motor bike, which enabled I, in particular, to travel from Point A to Point B, which was a big enhancement to my lifestyle.

*And in that year, Bill, in 1971, and as you say, travelling on A-roads, far fewer 24 hour facilities, cafes, this kind of thing as well...*

Yah, it was an endurance test, but at the time I find a lot of people with cp [cerebral palsy] have that endurance: you know, they sort a take it one mile at a time, and this is also on the road to life, not only on the road, but our attitude to life, or my attitude to life. We sort a take it, we are tolerant: maybe a wee bit irresponsible [laughing] in some ways. Well, I was.

*So you went from, what, town to town, did you, with the aid of a map as well?*

No, just the signposts: the signposts that head south, you know, from Scotland (which is north) and I just head to England, south, and just carried on until I'd seen a signpost. I'd a vague idea Doncaster was coming up, near to Corby, which is in Northamptonshire. So when I seen a signpost, 'Northamptonshire' and then 'Corby', I just followed the road. I mean there were no maps that I was aware: even if there was, I was no... [Break in recording.]

*So, had you been to England at all before as well, Bill?*

Never in my lifetime. Oh yes, when I was 16 years of age: but that was a government training centre at the time. Yeah, that would be 1950, '51 I should say, I would imagine, round about then. So, it was something you weren't aware... I mean, after leading a sort a semi-sheltered life in Scotland, coming into the middle of England with a different sort of culture, in my opinion, a more open-type culture and in some ways a more tolerant culture, you know. Cos my mother was here, and my sister was here, that was the link of unconditional love which families, in a lot of cases, have (especially when they're brought up in Scotland). I'm not saying in other parts of the country they don't have this, but the Celts, the Irish and the Scottish, seem to be more family-orientated than other parts, in my opinion.

*And of course, historically, Corby drew people from Scotland for the steel industry.*

Yes, I think, and this is the only information that I had around about the early '30s, because of the ore that was available in the ground in Corby and they needed manual workers, a lot o' people from Scotland and Ireland and other parts needed manual workers, and so they... It must have been rather difficult with the influx of Celts, you know, who just wanted a job and a house, and this is why my sister came here and then my mother came. My sister came and met somebody and married, my mother came, you know, because she wanted to come down here with her daughter, and then I turned up. And I went back for a couple of days but, gradually Sadie (that was my wife) she came to Corby, which in 1972, which was rather surprised [surprising], because, as you're aware on the previous tape, we had the ideal user-friendly house. But she came with the three children, and I was over the moon, naturally, and my wife and my children, we were back as a family unit, and like everybody else, you have your ups and downs. Corby was a different world, in the sense of the word, regarding the needs of people with disabilities. For example, 1973, '74 time, I was made aware that there was a day centre opened in Corby, called Stonehouse. I walked with the two sticks and I drove the Invertrike to the place, and I went in, and a gentleman (the manager) says to me, 'This is your place. There is no referral system. If you need help, we will help you. Other than that, do what you want.' Within the health and safety aspect, this was something unique, because in Scotland if I – or based on what I heard: other people with disabilities – went to a day centre, they were told what day to come, they were told where to sit, [laughs] and you were told what to do. And so, all at once you had a sense of freedom: a responsibility outside your marriage, a responsibility within society, and it was frightening.

*And so the day centre then, Bill, who was that run by?*

It was run by Social Services, as part of a pilot scheme. Not aware of it then, but aware of it now, I think it was in aspects of empowerment and independent living, equality – all the words that we're using now, but we had to develop those skills, working in partnership with other enablers, service providers, not trained to such a



degree to analyse us, but to help us in the practical things, you know, and I think this was a fantastic time in my life.

*So, at this time then, in this particular day centre, was this concentrated on this particular day centre, or was it something that was more widespread around this area?*

I think it was Corby, being Corby with the culture, and influx of a new town. I think they tried it out in Corby, just a pilot scheme to see how would we react to the responsibility of having a say in our own community, or aspects of our community, with support. I think it was developed in other place. We had people coming from all over England then at the time, Coventry and everything, to see how we worked, how we managed the successful 'day centre' as it was called, at the Stonehouse. I don't know how we managed it. We managed it within what a word that our Scope's used years ago was 'normalization'. Being normal. We take the 'dis' out o' 'disability'. We look for people's ability. We gave them pride in themselves. It was something. It was frightening, I mean. I've seen me sitting there and the phone went, and I would shout to the manager, 'It's the Director of Social Services.' 'Ach, well answer it, Willy.' We were given a say: not as a trial, in my opinion, just as a normal person. Your disability disappeared, this was the focus on; 'If you want to be normal, try to act normal. We will provide the aspects of support to enable you to do this.'

*So how different did it feel from what you'd come from?*

Day and night. I mean, we developed Phab, which was an organisation for physically able-bodied and disabled. I was, as time went on, in the early '80s, Chairman of DIAL. I became a Director of DIAL UK. DIAL is Disabled Information and Advice Line, run by people with a disability for people with a disability, and that was only the beginning of that. I was involved with the management committee of Stonehouse, and it gave you a great sense of responsibility, outside the responsibility of married life, which you seemed to take in your stride.

*So, you were able to go on whatever days you pleased, and keep whatever hours you wanted to, were you?*

Well, there were no conditions. If the door was open, you went in, you know, even if the door wasn't open certain of us who were key personnel just says, 'Can I get the key? I want to come down and do some work.' 'Oh there it's...' So there were no staff there, [laughs] you just... I mean, it was the first experience I ever had in the need of the computer, or the use of a keyboard, which enhanced my life enormously.

*This was particularly towards, what, the end of the '70s and early '80s?*

Eighties: in 1983. Because of going to Stonehouse and being aware of the openness, I realised that I had to have tools to enable me to move forward, cos irrespective of what you're doing, you need the tools to do it, and I was aware of the great vacuum – not through any fault of my own, but because of my disability – I lived in Scotland, in the field of education, so I had to go to the local college for basic education.

*Just to return to Stonehouse, Bill, just for a minute – what sort of numbers of people, when you first went, were involved there?*

At the beginning, I think there were about 10 or 12. It developed with three or four buses. Sometimes we had 33 people there. It was basically for people with physical disabilities of working age: once you were, general, if you were over a certain age, although I can't remember anything being put out, you were sort o' guided towards an alternative type of day centre. But it was self-motivation, you know, it was...

*So when you arrived in 1971, how long had Stonehouse either been open, or had been operating this particular system?*

I just happened to be one o' the first. I happened to fall into place, as one of the first people going in to, you know, I was within the first six or eight people to go into Stonehouse. So I'm a new man, coming into the middle of England, a person with

cerebral palsy, or then what we called 'the spastics', which the name doesn't matter so much, to me. The labels can be devastating, it can be horrible, but I was a person.

*And, so were the people that became involved, and as the numbers grew, did people have a variety of different disabilities?*

Yes, I think there was only about three or four of us with cerebral palsy, if I can remember right, but we had all types of physical-related disabilities. Some of us had other types and it was a great sort of approach – we were there to enable people down the ladder, if they had such a stroke disability as MS [multiple sclerosis] or Parkinson's, or other types, we sort a enabled them down the ladder, to not feel guilty of needing help and needing support.

*So, in terms of deciding what your particular individual priorities were, and what you wanted to pursue, how did that actually work?*

Well, it's the first time outside my married life that I had been, it was new ground. I had never come up through Scope: I come up through the community, so therefore the training and attitude of personnel within Scope (or then The Spastics Society) was new to me, so it was a sort a pathway of hope or a pathway of learning. It was something that I couldn't really explain: I had a responsibility, and I had to make use of the responsibility to help others, and for them to help me.

*So being greeted with the opportunity, 'Well here's the chance then to pursue areas of activity, areas of interest, areas of work,' what did you first of all pursue?*

When I went to Stonehouse in '73, and I was interested in DIAL; I'd always been a campaigning type of person in Scotland, very much on the outside, but I was aware [that] to do anything I would have to improve my attitude and flexibility and need some sort o' education.

*So it was in 1973, was it, that you [talking together] went to Stonehouse?*

1983, or yes; '73. So, I mean it was a combination between social needs and independent living, and it was something just... I mean, we had a thalidomide lady there – Sharon – who was brilliant. She had no arms or legs, but her attitude was... And we had muscular dystrophy, we had everything, and we learned to work together, not to judge one another, so to say we had any goal, we had nothing structured. If we went in there, if we wanted to just sit and blether, if we wanted to do anything, there were no sort a 'you've got to do it, you've got to come,' or, 'You've got to come at a certain time, you've got to go home at a certain time,' it was completely flexible, it was the most disorganised organised time that I've ever known in my life. The 10 year leading up to... no eight year, because The Year of the Disabled, as you probably may or may not know was 1981, so because of the focus of Stonehouse, all at once there were organisations springing up, such as Northamptonshire Council for the Disabled, which had a branch in Corby, which I was involved with, and then DIAL.

*So, in going there then, you (in particular) developed an interest in the information needs of people with disabilities?*

Yes, I am, and I'm interested not only the needs of information, but the manner in which to present it, and not be judgmental in gaining the ability for them cos in my opinion, during my term as DIAL, a lot o' times, it was door openers. People came, phoned up for one thing, it was mostly a telephone-type thing – set away, a wee room, a wee coal bunker – but people from Stonehouse come down, the users of Stonehouse used DIAL, and vice versa. People phoned up to DIAL, we made aware of Stonehouse and Phab, and other types of organisations.

*So just to move across to DIAL, then Bill (DIAL standing for Disability Information Advice Line),*

Disabled Information Advice Line, yes.

*and so your first involvement with DIAL then: how did that come about?*

I think it was a bit of a manipulation, for want of a better word, although you're not aware of it at the time. There, we had an AGM [annual general meeting], which now look completely crazy, [laughs] but at that time you thought you were clever (and I don't mean 'clever' detrimental). But there was a man who had been Chair for years, and at the AGM I was voted in this Chair. I didn't even know what an agenda was, I wasn't aware of good committee procedure, so all at once I had a responsibility within DIAL to look at things. So I says, 'Now, what do I do here? I can't do everything myself,' and [it] made me aware that people should be proud of their strengths, but not ashamed of their weaknesses. I had to bring other people in to help me to help others.

*And so the first involvement in DIAL then, was this a local branch of DIAL?*

Yes, branch. The main headquarters of DIAL was in Doncaster, and we had branches throughout Britain, even in Scotland. And we had regional groups, you know, where we met and exchanged hopes and dreams, and it was mostly led by an army of wonderful volunteers: volunteers with disabilities who had been to hell and back within the framework of their disability, so it was something that we all learned enormously from one another.

So, the very first involvement in DIAL then, was that the Corby branch of DIAL?

Yes, and through that I brought in an ex-trade unionist, who'd become disabled – very left-wing [laughs] but was very good. In fact he was a bully. We got a treasurer, we built up legs of the table, and we were considered the best branch in this region, as outgoing and if you've got a successful group or association, organisation, that attracts people, you know. And we built up some wonderful teams: an ex-social worker with MS, a person with rheumatoid arthritis, a person with a heart condition, I with cerebral palsy, and I mean it was amazing. But one of the things that did, that made me aware that people should never close their mind, or their door, to the management of change, it was by using a lot of people. I found it very difficult to use

a pencil, as a longhand, but I found out the keyboard enabled my brain and my limbs to work together, and this enabled me to develop my skills and relax, and the therapeutic value of that, and the understanding from both sides worked enormously to help it. I ended up the Director of DIAL UK, and was very much involved with the argumentative side (cos I'm a campaigner – I don't take prisoners) related to access: especially in venues where a lot o' our meetings were held.

*So there you were then, in the early days, with the Corby branch of DIAL building up the committee, and the involvement of volunteers. Most people then, how would they contact you?*

By phone. It was a telephone number, just to cover, you know, every... There were no barriers, I mean if somebody phoned us from Scotland, the benefactor [?] of DIAL then, if somebody wanted to come to Corby for a holiday they were able to phone the Corby DIAL, and we were able to tell them the local facilities from the point of view of a person with a disability and vice versa, rather than, you know, I'd been in some of the DIALS in Scotland, and met some of my colleagues, when I was going on holiday, (if I was going on holiday, I went up to Scotland) I made it a point to go to the local DIAL: so I mean it was a family thing, it was a wonderful time.

*So, what year was it, Bill, that you were elected Chairman of Corby DIAL?*

I was round about '81, '82 time, and I was there until about '86, '87. I think there comes a time when you've got to step back. By this time, my children had grown up, and had the responsibility, and unfortunately the marriage broke up here, because we eventually got a house, and Corby Borough made every effort to accommodate us – not in a special build thingummy, but the adaptations, as it was a new town it was easier to adapt the later houses than if you had an old building, you looked way back. So I had a nice time, and '85 on, I floated back and forward to Scotland and was a loose cannon, in a sense of the word. Was involved with The Lanarkshire Spastics Society Youth Club round about '59, so therefore I still had contacts when I came here, and then I begin to get involved in The Spastics Society in England.

*And so, in the period '81 to '86 (approximately) with Corby DIAL, beginning to see the development of computers and the facility for information to be held on computers... But before that, let's imagine the phone ringing – p'raps before the times when you had easy access to computers – how would you then answer a particular query? What kind of information sources did you draw upon?*

Experience. We had a library of information in the written word; we had files that was there. In hindsight, there were very limited information. I went through the training initially at DIAL with another operator, a trained operator. My first call I ever got was a lady who wanted to adopt a child with a disability, but this child had to be coloured. And I thought it was a wind-up [laughs] cos it's the last thing you expect to come through. But although I thought it was, I just dealt with as if it was something that wasn't a wind-up, but my way of dealing with that was looking at common sense, which I think is lacking today. I asked permission of the service user in that case, to give me her phone number, and her permission, if I contacted somebody further up, could I pass on the phone number to this person. We acted as a link, in cases. Of course, I contacted the local Social Services, made them aware of who I was, what I wanted and why I wanted it, and I made them aware that I'd asked permission of this particular lady who wanted some help, and they says, 'Yes we will contact the person.' I never heard nothing else, which was... I mean, we were a sort of signpost and link-up, everything that we did. You know, people phoned up, referrals of housing, wanted to know organisations, want to know where they were, how could they get there... There was such an enormous range of activities, and because the vast knowledge, we had about six, seven operators at that time, we were open from 10 o'clock in the morning till about four, manning that phone. Each of us did a couple o' hours. We were all people with disabilities, and most of us were service users at Stonehouse, so we were on call if something cropped up, that we were on call to get advice of our colleagues: it was teamwork.

*And, there you were then. the phone's in the corner, the line's open for business as it were: what did it, in a sense, feel like then knowing, 'Well, hold on: that phone may*

*ring, that person on the end of that phone may be needing any kind of information at all.' What did it feel like in those days?*

I think a lot o' us took it in our stride. We were such a good team. We were aware of the importance of not to judge or try to pass the parcel, cos we understood the meaning of the word 'empathy'. If we didn't want it, would we like it if we phoned up here and somebody try to pass the parcel or didn't try to find out what the real reason for phoning up? We were good at what we were doing, in finding out the door openers, who people'd phone up for one thing, and you'd gradually get to know, and we made them aware that some of us had...

**[End of Tape 4 Side A]**



**Tape 4 Side B [Track 8]**

I think DIAL was an enabling service with common sense, way before its time. I don't know what it's turned out now, what's happened to it, because sometime you just leave an organisation, you're better just, you know... My lifestyle gradually changed, and I must admit I became interested in the needs of people with cerebral palsy, or you know, 'spastics', as we were called then. I was invited to a meeting by The Spastics Society in England. I can't even remember what they were called then, [laughing] all I knew, they were The Spastics Society. Naturally, I think a lot of people have a special interest; well I had a special interest, in people with... [phone rings]. Oh sor... [Break in recording.]

*And, with your involvement in DIAL, Bill, at that time – were there other organisations that had the strong involvement of people with disabilities like DIAL, if you like?*

I don't think there were so many people. I think, at that time, people with disabilities didn't have the tools or the attitude to realise that they had a right to be wrong, and it wasn't wrong, you know, it was something... We needed that sort of... I think DIAL in itself was way ahead of its time, in the sense of the word. We hadn't this obsession for being politically correct; we used common sense. It was very successful in the number of people, because even today people'll meet me in the town and say, 'Well, I'm asking you because I know you: you'll tell us the truth.' So the reputation of being a member of DIAL was a great feather in the cap of a number of us. We had some wonderful individuals who seemed to blend together.

*And what reaction did you get from people when you'd put them in touch with organisations, when you'd given them the information they needed, and when you'd started them off or helped them in their quest? What kind of reaction did you get from people?*

Well, you know, oh there were always people saying, 'Thank you', but we didn't do it for that reason. We were honoured, as a team, to help. In fact, some of the people who started off requesting information ended up being part of the team too, because we were users, in the nicest sense of the word. We were aware of the great need to help people and it was something, even when we went to other parts to meetings and workshops and things within the national DIAL, of encouragement. It's amazing how many people you see at the same stage of disabilities, and the same sort of things, but only different names, you know, so there were a common denominator there. We wanted to be free, and I (as part of Stonehouse and DIAL) had got a sense of that freedom, what we used this, as a team. I mean, in Corby, we had four Directors of Dial UK. I wasn't the only one. We had four Directors who moved up, because we were the prominent group. We were the prominent branch who led the region, you know, and ended up as part of national DIAL.

*So tell me about the structure of DIAL at the time then, Bill. You had local branches, then...*

We had local branches, and depending on the catchment area you were in, or the area you were in such as a region, we had regional committees who used to maybe meet every six weeks in different parts, different branch, DIALS. You know, people travelled from point A to point B, and we didn't have the type of transport we've got today. [Laughing.] It was rather interesting, you never knew how people struggled because of their physical condition, or disability (whatever you like to call it), to the meetings, but it was... I don't think anybody could really explain it, in a sense of the word. It gave people a purpose, and a hope and a dream.

*And different sized branches in different areas.*

Oh yes.

*So where were some of these meetings typically held?*

Well, for example, we had a Leicester DIAL; I think that was our nearest one. We had a Daventry DIAL, which was also Northampton, so they were two that spring to mind. We had a meeting maybe every second month at Daventry, then two month later at Leicester, and then back at Corby and it was based. Although we'd an agenda of items, the main thing was sort of Friends of DIAL: social needs, to take the pressure off, because we were untrained very good social workers. [Laughs.] I think this was the thing. [Talking together.] Very good.

*And what kind of things were on the agenda? What kinds of issues were raised?*

Well we used to always try and do some case studies. You weren't aware of what we called it then, but basically, how did we cope with this? We fed off one another, and we were able to contact national DIAL if there was something we didn't have in the local library, because then we didn't have the technology, and people didn't look outside their, for example, Corby district, the post codes which they are now. Most people, because of their physical disabilities, were in that circle but they still didn't know [there] was there a community centre they could go to. How would they get to this doctor, or how they would get on this bus? What like was the taxis? How would they get a shower fitted? You know. And we had a referral system to the occupational therapist. How would they get a house? I mean, it was frightening now to realise the responsibility and power that we had, and the credibility that we had as a team in Corby, where we could, you know, not demand it in that way, but we could open a door, and we could encouraged people in the field of education to be involved, you know, in their local... It was something wonderful.

*And people coming to you then, making enquiries, were there different stages, I suppose of those enquiries? People were perhaps making the first enquiry, were they? Or, indeed, had they circumstances where they'd been trying to pursue a particular point of query, and hadn't got the information they needed?*

I think it was word of mouth and reputation. When somebody may come in and wanted a wheelchair, and people like myself would be able to say 'Don't go for a 9L'

and, as you know, 9L is four small wheels, like a pram, you know. The AL is a self-propelled wheelchair, that's easier to get into a taxi, and easier to do this, and they were able to send their referral form at Stage One, because they didn't want to admit they had a disability, and we may encourage them to come to Stonehouse, to meet their friends, to make new friends, and be involved in another aspect of Stonehouse, where the social needs were developed. And maybe then the disability deteriorated, so they needed other type, more personal support, which we did not go into, personal support in a sense, but we usually knew somebody who did. For example, our local contact within what we call now 'the PCT' [Primary Care Trust?]. You know, we linked people up without taking their sort a' pride away from them. We wouldn't be involved in, you know, anything too heavy.

*And, when you were involved locally with DIAL, and then regionally, and then became a Director of National DIAL: what did that feel like, for you?*

I don't know; I took it in my stride. I don't know whether it was because it was something new, so I didn't realise what I was doing, or whether it was because of my background, as my father had been a bit of a political animal, in a sense of the word. For example, tonight... God, he's away home, he's dead but he'd sit up all night, listening to the wireless, which I'll be sitting up all night. Well, [laughs] it isn't the political arena, you know. I think it's something I would just have to be in the right place at the right time, and it sounds big-headed, to enable me to help others. And I couldn't say that I was... I've never been the type or look to climb a mountain. Maybe this was why I wasn't the type who wanted somebody to pat my back and say I'm great. [Laughs.] I would rather either somebody say thanks, but I'd signify it that way, thanks, but I mean this was my way, I'm not saying it was right. So therefore the responsibility was good. I also helped my wife, because her being a polio and in a wheelchair, I think it gave her a wee bit of push because our children had grown up and, as your children grow up you [they] need you less, so Sadie 'ad a purpose, developing. She went to Stonehouse too, although she was never involved with DIAL. Sadie had polio, and I think it was something that gave me (I could have used it, maybe I did unintentionally) contacts with local personnel, like counsellors, etc., and

we were asked, often, about problems or suggested things related to the need of access, because in those days we didn't have such things as the Disability Discrimination Act, which as we're aware now is a wonderful thing, and it's an attitude of equality that enables us to ask, 'Why not to get it?' We didn't have the Plan M, [Part M] Building Regulations which, based on information I have today, it means all new buildings must be accessible not only for people with disabilities (as in physical disabilities) but it also enables young mothers with children, so if they please people like myself, it enables the rest of society to treat us as people with disabilities, rather than disabled people.

*And, there you were then, Bill, as you say, coming relatively newly to England and travelling around, different involvements with DIAL. And you referred earlier to... at this time that you found that, partly to help you with this role, was the need to have some extra classes, extra tuition?*

Oh, I needed the tuition. I mean, you had to, you need your stimulation to waken up your brain a wee bit in the field of education. So the only way that I could do this, in my opinion at the time, was go in '83-ish to basic education, because at school, education was at zero (as being at special school, as I mentioned earlier on).

*To get... what was the name of the programme again?*

The basic education at a local college, which we had to make sure that it had access: [laughs] as a student with a disability, you know, we were all grouped together. Some of us were disabled, physically-related, some of us had emotional needs – I don't like the word 'mental' health, I think it's a horrible word. Emotional needs and physical needs are different things. But anyway, I was very apprehensive because I thought I was the only one that was unable to use a pencil or write, or understand some of the basic things within education, but all at once I found out that other people [did], and I think this made me aware of the meaning of the word 'empathy'. I developed some sort of skills on the computer. I found out my brain worked better with a keyboard than it did with a pencil, so I had to get the tools again. We had to raise money within

DIAL to get a computer, and training in the development of the use of the computer. A lot of us still weren't very keen on the computer, because we had been successful using common sense. So the age gap then: the computer was a toy, where in today's world it's a necessity.

*So...*

It was just something that happens: nobody knows why, in anybody's lifestyle at the time, what's round that corner.

*So this was 1983, when you first took some extra classes?*

Oh yeah.

*And particularly in what? English was it?*

English mainly, because we had to formally write a letter and how to do a report, you know, and the Treasurer, it was his job with different people, but you still had to an idea of correction of certain aspects, as Chair. And I mean you'd still encourage as a team – we used to go to courses as a team, even computer courses, and each o' us would learn different aspects of what we considered our needs, and the part we played in our team. For example, we had a gentleman who had MS [multiple sclerosis]. His speech was very bad. We had to record the information, for statistics and for funding of all callers, with the caller's permission. We couldn't just say, so we had to keep a record, and we had to be accountable. There was a gentleman who was unable to do this because of his degree of disability, as in MS, so we had a tape recorder and he taped everything, and somebody else edited it and logged it, writing just on a sheet. So therefore, you know, where one of our team had a weakness, the other one had a strength. This was the great thing that stemmed from the wonderful place that Stonehouse was, in a number of ways.

*And, so previously in DIAL, you'd had files and you'd had information sheets and printed information, I guess, in the main - ?*

Yes, we had.

*And, going to classes, and learning about English classes in particular, and then learning about computers: the keyboard these days, I suppose, is so every day, but take me back to the first time, Bill, that you sat in front of a computer. What was that like?*

Wonderful. It happened at conference, or a workshop within National DIAL, which one of our co-ordinators – it was a lady who was doing work experience, and what we call ‘a community programme’, you know, you retrained the unemployed at that time, and she became the co-ordinator with this local thingummy to DIAL, and she had some tea, and she says, ‘Oh what’s?’ I says, ‘Wait a minute, can I do this, and do that?’ We used what we called ‘Ability’: now was it just Ability? I think it was just Ability: that was the name of the software at the time, and a Hercules black and white [laughing] we’ll call it ‘screen’. Och, I don’t know the technical side of them, in my memory it was, and you could put it in a mobile phone probably now, but it was a door-opener, it was something that we just had, and it gave me confidence too. Later on, when I begin to drift away, or want to step back from DIAL, or had other commitments, and want to go back to Scotland for domestic reasons, as in family break-up, so I had to step back a number of things, and it just... I mean honestly it was a time there where people were given the opportunity to make a mistake, without having to be cruelly conditioned or told you were wrong. ‘We will help you to help yourself,’ and I think this was very important. Stonehouse in itself eventually become a social worker’s nightmare, because we didn’t know who run Stonehouse, whether it was the staff, whether it was social workers, or whether it was the service users, because we were all a team. [Laughs.] And we had some wonderful social nights out, where everybody was the same. We’d get drunk some time; terrible people. I mean there were a few relationships developed, but it was nice. Some lasted, some didn’t, but that was the thing. But Stonehouse in itself began to deteriorate, and I began to

become a wee bit older, and as I drifted away from Stonehouse and DIAL, so you move on – this is where the door opened within The Spastics Society.

*And, just to return to Stonehouse, Bill – if people had choice of what they wanted to do, how was it then that, for instance, activities were organised? How did they decide on a particular day? ‘Well, look three people want to do this, two people want to do that?’ How could it be that they were actually able to organise things?*

It was the best disorganised things. People, just five or six, says, ‘We’ll need to do some knitting for our fun day,’ or, ‘We’ll need to do a couple of shelves,’ or, ‘We’ll need to run the tea bar,’ or, ‘We’d like to go out at the weekend for a social night out.’ Maybe something, not so much drinking. We were able to just ask the manager, ‘Can we book the bus?’ and he says, ‘Provided you’ve got a voluntary driver that’s working, you know, that’s got a clean licence or unable to do this.’ There wasn’t such a thing as a MiDAS-trained driver then [Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme]. It was a good enabler, and most of us were more able to get out and in a bus ourself, even with a lift. It was a risk [laughing] when you think today, but that’s what it was. It was something we just, if we needed to do it. But if there were an Open Day, we all worked together. If there was something, the garden was needing doing, the ones that were able either brought their family or they did something, or you could never really say. If there was a special project coming up or something, on the house, we all worked together. I mean, there were 20 to 30 people a day, at Stonehouse.

*And what’s the driver... MiDAS?*

MiDAS-trained driver is a terminology now, that you must be trained to enable a person into a bus. So if he’s a wheelchair user, or some sort of vehicle user, and you must make sure this is politically-correct within aspects of health and safety.

*And, we should just refer earlier as well, in case people are not clear – today, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2005: Election Day as well, [laughs] we should say. OK, so in 1981 then, we had the International Year of Disabled People.*



Yes.

*What are your memories of that particular year, I wonder, Bill?*

It was an awakening, because we had a man called Cecil Petie, who would be...

*Mind the wire, Bill.*

(Oh sorry)... Who would be in his eighties. He's dead now. I think he would probably... he had, what do they call it? Spina bifida, or something similar. The legs were small, wheelchair bound. He'd been through the forces and done voluntary work, you know, because of that he decided to stand for the Council for the Disabled that year, with his headquarters in Northamptonshire (that's where I am now), with branches in different areas, such as Corby, Kettering, Daventry, and other parts of and Northampton itself. Although we were individual branches, autonomous in their own right, the mother sort o' group was Northamptonshire Council for the Disabled. And so the main impact on that year, was awareness of the needs of people with disabilities, kind of over and above the norm. I mean it was a national thing, it was splattered all over the place, you know.

*And how do you spell the chap's surname?*

Petie (it was French): P-E-T-I-E or something like that. I'm not sure.

*That was a United Nations initiative; the International Year of Disabled People. What longer term effect do you think that that had?*

I think it begin to make people less ashamed of being disabled, and made them realise, 'If I want to be treated normal, I must start acting normal. I must not expect everything to be handed to me.' I think we got a sense of freedom, and a sense of equality, and we felt, well I felt in control (with a small 'c') as part of a team. But I've

always had that sort of attitude, being the oldest of a family of six: brothers and sisters, who weren't people with disabilities, were just my brothers and sisters. They weren't disabled, but whether they were or not, it was irrelevant. But, I think this broadened the school, it enabled us to look from the shire, to link up with other people with disabilities, family and friends, and with the link-up between DIAL too, so all at once I was a very busy person. I think I was married to the vol [voluntary work?]. I think this, in a way; we've got to be very careful that we don't overstretch ourselves.

*And your involvement, Bill, at Stonehouse and DIAL, and the Northamptonshire Association for the Disabled as well –*

Yeah.

*all of that then, how did that reflect and change the perceptions that you had of yourself?*

I begin to realise I was a person; that I was the same as anybody. You know, I was the same as my brother. [Laughs.] I could request support, for either myself or for other people, so therefore the attitude of the disability begin to disappear. I could ask for something, but I didn't have to be told what to do. I couldn't get everything I wanted, but it made me aware that I had a right to ask for things, and people had to tell me why they couldn't give me it. You know, it's like a young child that develops the skills as a kid, but whereas people with cp are conditioned, that which I call 'people with disabilities' who were born with a disability, they're full board: where people who become disabled later on in life, are bed and breakfast, [laughs] you know. That's a phrase that has a humorous line: that makes people... There is a need for both sides, because some times people with disability who are born with it (the full-board ones) have never realised anything else, and they just think the world owes them a living, and they need the bed and breakfast ones to come in and say, 'Look it's your life.'

[Phone rings.] Who's that?

**[End of Tape 4 Side B]**

**Tape 5 Side A [Track 9]**

I think what happened within Stonehouse and DIAL, and in other organisations, you build a team up around you where you delegate and develop, rather than culture control. So the team around you want to take over, and you've got to know whether you want a break, or you have a change of direction, and I think this is so important with people with disabilities, who have been given or made aware of the responsibility they have within their community or any other community, realise there's a time to step back and bring in new ideas with new hopes and dreams of others. I think this, although I wasn't aware of it at the time, is what gradually happened, because of the confidence I gained within Stonehouse and DIAL, and other organisations, I moved back to Scotland for a number of reasons. And then gradually I decided... I was back and forward, back and forward, but I think the time came when I had to settle in Corby, cos your disability deteriorates and you've got to call a spade a spade.

*And so, at the height of your involvement in Stonehouse and DIAL, and other organisations, Bill: in a typical week then, what sort of extent of involvement were you having?*

[Laughs] Frightening. Probably five days a week. It wasn't all at DIAL, a lot o' it was at Stonehouse because the meals were available there. You'd other things, and you wanted a wee break, you had to... If somebody was on duty in the DIAL office, you didn't sit on top of them, you got out the road, but you made yourself available. I had use of a Nippy (which was called a 'Nippy' at the time), and I'd stopped driving an Invertrike, and the Nippy which was basically a box, which was very similar to the three-wheeler-type-thing, where you could use a lever and pull down the back and slip in with your wheelchair, and pull it back up, and it clipped in, and you drove away on a motorbike. So it was ideal for small things and the link-up. You know, it's amazing when you think back: I mean, in the eighties and the nineties, because there were a lot o' these small things that you don't realise that you changed. And '72, when I came here, I was back and forward from Scotland with thingummies, and in the 1978, '77, I

had my first grandchild: notified in Inverness, where I was there at the time.

[Laughing] '77 – the year Elvis Presley died. I happened to be in Inverness, and I got a phone call, and it was something I was very proud of, like all grandparents.

*Absolutely. So you were living in Inverness at the time, were you?*

Yes. Everybody seen the potential in me, except me. I was told in Inverness, 'See, if everybody ever finds that right road for you, my God you'll blossom,' and, you know, it was a government sort of sheltered workshop/accommodation type-thing, and a number of other people with disabilities there, a lot them younger than I was, male and female. Again, it was another door-opener with lack of barriers, and it was nice. But again I was homesick for ma family, who'd then settled in Corby, and [the] partner of my daughter gave me a row, and that means he told me off. He told me that I had no right being in Inverness: my place was down in Corby with my children. Again, I had the three-wheeled Invertrike, so I drove from Inverness, which is away up, nearly in the Highlands of Scotland, to Corby. [Laughs.] By this time, it was '77, '78, they had motorways: they had the A1 via Doncaster there, some motorways, although you were not allowed on the motorways officially, with an Invertrike, you know on a short burst, we did it. We shouldna did it, but we did it. I must admit, I had to stop off at my brother's in Blantyre, which is about a hundred mile from Inverness, near Hamilton where I was born. And then I came back to Corby, and gradually got a house on my own, and then that is when I begin to stabilise things, and I could really find a niche. I was aware that I would never be able to work, as I thought as I was, and I worked as such being employed in the routine day-to-day sort of thing. I needed that flair, I needed that drive, I needed that responsibility: thus the voluntary section enabled me to live, and it was right up until... well, still going.

*And, so you were for a time in Inverness then, [clears throat] and when you were travelling or living for a time in Scotland, after your original arrival in '72 in Corby: where else had you lived in Scotland, when you returned periodically?*

I lived in Glasgow for a six month, in the hostels in Glasgow, which they were all suitable access. I must have been one of the few people that was allowed into the manager's office, because o' my honesty and outspoken respect, you know. I respect them and I've always been treated with respect in that way. I was a loose canon in a sense of the word, although I were not aware o' it at the time, but I was trying to find something that I didn't know what I was looking for. I think this had nothing to do with my disability. I think the disability played a part in it, because of the condition. In my opinion, people with cerebral palsy, you are restricted both physically and emotionally, so therefore you're sort a hesitant to go beyond that invisible barrier.

*So, spending time back in Scotland, various lengths of time, p'raps: Glasgow, Inverness, how did you find attitudes in where you were staying in Scotland, compared p'raps to what was going on here in Corby?*

There was a difference I think, in my opinion. People with disability overall are tolerated in Scotland, where they're nearly accepted in England. [Laughing.] I think that's the definition I would make. Probably, maybe the role has completely changed today, but I think, in my day we were tolerated, we were seen and just to be guilty or grateful, end of story. But in today's world it's a different thing, and I think I and a number of other people in Corby have contributed towards that, and purely because of the experience and the knowledge that we gained while in my time at Stonehouse, especially Stonehouse: DIAL. A book was written about Stonehouse, called *A Place of Our Own*. You may find this in a library. They had changed the names, but it was just a record of the individuals, so it might be something that you could link up with this, certainly.

*And, in your time, in particular at Stonehouse, and in your travels and contact with other disabled people through DIAL, and other ways: were you aware then that the model of Stonehouse was taken up widely?*

I think they got a fright, they got a massive fright. Excuse me.

*It's OK. [Break in recording.]*

That's if it was taken up.

*Yes.*

I think part of Stonehouse, the attitude, it became a frightening thing for the system because of the cut-backs etc., and the policy of charging people to go to Stonehouse. I think what happened, and it was mentioned to me by the manager of Stonehouse, what they'll do, 'We'll start making it awkward and charge people to come here, thus creating a low demand,' and then they'll close it because it's not used. So his words came true later on, but in one funny way it was good for the people who were there. They realised, though Stonehouse was a wonderful thing, they had to go out into that community, rather than make Stonehouse their home. The community was their home: you know, and I think this was something that we had. Gradually, as I left Stonehouse (I can't think of much more) I had a lot to... And DIAL, you know, when I come back in the '80s, I met my second wife and got married again, but we had no children, but I think that lasted about six years. But it was a different lifestyle. I believe now that like goes with like. She was very much what we call 'middle class' and in the families, which happens in life, but she had a slight disability too. We were very happy, but the marriage broke up and I moved more than 12 year ago, back, basically, to square one, because my first wife had died by then, my children had all established their own sort of lifestyles (although they were for living in Corby, and still are, with their own families, you know, their children and their partners, or whatever it was), and so I had to move back to basics. I was in a bedsit: so that the pendulum swung right round, from being a service provider to a service user. I [coughs] in no uncertain manner, but because of my reputation and work that I did before, established contacts. Turn it off the now, please? I've got... [coughs. Break in recording.] Well, I think it's something that during my time at DIAL I'd met a nice lady, who had a disability. Both of us had families from previous marriage, but we decided to get married around the beginning of the '90s. We moved out to the village, what I found very difficult to cope with after being used to town life, and the

facilities. Anyway, after about six year, our relationship broke down. It's something I'm not proud of, but it's something that seems to be... I'm more [laughing] inclined to like my freedom, or whatever it is, and I think this is something whether you're disabled or not, people are... you know. But anyway, the great thing was, because of the contacts I had and the previous experience (excuse me) with DIAL, I was able to say to the head of the department in particular, who I was, what I wanted, and why I wanted it. Thus, I ended up in a bedsit – a one-bedroom house. By this time I was wheelchair-bound, able to stand up with difficulty. It was a limited mobility such as that, but I had a bedsit. I think I was there about two year. It wasn't in a very desirable area, but during that time I was asked if I would be prepared to be a school governor. In my opinion they wanted a symbol of the wheelchair, rather than the... So I ended up Special Needs Link Governor, and we had a special needs conference at a weekend in Derby, sponsored by one of the national banks. Me being me, not taking nothing for granted, related to access – not what other people say is access, but would encourage anybody to contact, and find out what the facts are, so's that they can make their judgments before they go to any venue. I contacted the organiser and says, 'Is the place user-friendly?' They says, 'What do you mean?' I says, 'Is it accessible for a wheelchair user? My name is Mr Bill Hall, Governor of blah, blah, blah, this local school.' 'Oh but, but, but.' They had to change the venue. Anyway, this was an interesting aspect because what happened before I become a school governor, and where I was living in one of the villages, I had learnt to drive with an automatic car, passed my test first time. And it's great, what technology can do. As some people may or may not know, it was an automatic gearbox: two levers were pushed onto the pedals, which was push-and-pull, which enabled me to drive without the use of my legs, which I couldn't use anyway. So this enabled me to open another pathway of hope, and my management of change in lifestyle, where I was able to go to the conference, I was able to be involved in the school governors. But I found it difficult as a school governor, because I never knew [what] a normal school was. [Laughs.] Coming up through the special school syndrome, it's something you've got to be aware of; your own capabilities in life. Although other people think you should be able to do it, you've got to look in the mirror and say: 'Well; I could of learned it,' or, 'Well, I'm not willing to learn it,' and I decided it wasn't something that was suitable

for me. So, this is while I was in this bedsit which was damp, it wasn't very suitable, and it was a low-demand area for rented accommodation, and they decided to offer me a house with the local housing association, as in the house I'm now in, because they didn't have the means to look after my long-term needs, as a person with a disability, living alone. So what they had to do was find out a way, so what we did do: they set up a meeting with the local occupational therapists, home care, senior management for BPHA [Bedford Pilgrim Housing Association], a number of other agencies in the care on the community...

*What is BPHA, Bill?*

It's Bedford Pilgrim Housing Association: sorry about using abbreviations. And this was the type of management with BPHA that could make decisions: so we all sat round a table, and they showed me maps of this, and the site agents and everything there, they showed me maps, I said, 'Look, I'm not in a... You tell me what you're going to consider offering me,' and they decided that this house would... they considered [it] suitable for my needs. My access to my home (although it's a two-bedroom bungalow) was at one side, and where my car was to be parked was at the other side of the building, so I made them aware this wasn't suitable. [Phone rings. Break in recording.] Ready? Right. I think it's so important that we create a communication in the field of planning for the needs of people with a disability, related to aspects of independent living in their own home, in the community, not only for the sake of the person with the disability, but for the sake of the carers. An old friend o' mine during DIAL's time said, 'If we don't care for the carer, the carer can't care for us,' and the more independent that I as a person with disability are, the less stress it puts on my family. But to enable them to do this, I need the tools, and I was very lucky because I've got a big mouth, that the senior management people, right across the board, asked me to sit down and say who I was, what I wanted, and why I wanted it (related to my long-term needs, as a person with disability). This was payback time, in a sense of the word, of all the development I had at DIAL, as in Stonehouse and at Scope (or The Spastics Society), that enabled me to express myself properly with these people. To feel that feeling of equality.



*So you [they] had a plot in mind, did they? A site for the house? [talking together. Inaudible.]*

It was a plot at the time and they said to me, 'This is the type o' house that's going, that we think would suit you.' I must admit, it had the wide sliding doors, a plan for low-level cooking facilities, etc. But they thought they made me aware that access to my home and where my car would be were on different sides of the building: and me being me says that this was not adequate, because a person with disability, or in a mobility problem as I had, would need more support from personnel. So therefore, for a person to carry stuff, and live independently, such as shopping, to their own home, round about, wouldn't be adequate. You'd need to have the door, and the parking bay married up: thus what's happened, and this was even before the plans had been finalised. So because of that, they were able to sit down and discuss my needs in front of me.

*And was this before as well, the arrival of regulations that could have helped inform expertise?*

I think so, yes. I think the Plan M was just the sort of loose, plan type-thing, although having said that, every house in this street – well, 99 percent of them – we have 134 houses here, and I think there's only two of them or four of them, at the most, got steps. Every other one is all ramped. So it means I, as a person with disability, although my house is suitable and I can have the freedom to move out and in mine, I'm not excluded from my friend's house, because they also have ramp. But it's not built along the same ways as a group of people with disabilities, as a group of people who cater for the needs, of the less able, within that framework.

*And what do you think, Bill... the young lad in Hamilton, when you were at school... Imagine yourself in that situation: what would that young lad (yourself when young) have said, when seeing yourself in this situation? The involvements you had, and speaking as you do about issues: what would that young lad have said?*

It's something, you never think, as an individual, but my family are very proud of me. And I am proud of me, in the sense of the word, that I can live as independently as possible, within the framework of my needs. I think this [was] something that was so important. During that meeting, previous to the house being built, they said to me, 'Now is there anything else that you think you need?' Now this is 12 year ago, right? This was about, what do you call it, '93? 1993: round about then. And they said, 'Anything else you think you would need?' And I'm saying, 'Oh here, the old soldier's: if I put down three points, they'll give me two or one, and I should be grateful.' [Laughing.] Maybe being a wee bit cynical, because away back, past experience; people with disabilities should be seen, not heard. And [laughs] all at once they were listening, and it was frightening and daunting; it was at the time. But anyway, they asked me to give them a list of what I believed I would need, and because I had the computer, or... yes, I had the computer then... I was able to put a list out that they were able to read. If they'd asked me to do it in long hand, I wouldn't have been able, they wouldn't have been able to understand it. You see, with the wonderful aspects of a spell-check, grammar check, and a keyboard, it enabled me to be normal, such as yourself. [Laughs.] Anyway, they asked me, and so I put down a list of 28 things. I can't remember them all, but I'll give you the keys of... and I actually got 27 of them. One or two things I think maybe was a wee bit thingummy, but they did change the house around. Access to my home is next to my parking bay: not only for I, but for friends who now come to my home who have a disability, so therefore my social skills have not been deprived. I said that people with a disability would need extra plugs, that every plug in the house should be a metre high. There should be no light switches, it should be pull cords. As this house was specially designated for a wheelchair user, some that could be a small man or a big man, so the pull cords were easier to click on. I said we needed double phone lines: we needed double TV aerials, because a lot of people with disabilities spent their time in bed, watching television. We needed extra plugs in the kitchen, because of all the cooking, for safety, would have to be thermostat-controlled. And I've an enormous amount of plugs around this home. I even had a peephole suitable for a wheelchair user in my

door, and lights, and everything. It has enhanced my life enormously, thus enabling me to concentrate on other aspects. Are you all right?

*Yes. Sorry.*

Other aspects that I never dreamed that we could have. For example, because of the deterioration of my disability, I had to stop driving because the concentration, and I was driving too slow on the motorway, which is commonsense: stop, or you, thingummy. I was concerned, but I made the decision that I had to be responsible and take this decision, but because of that, the local voluntary bureau, group, office, gave me a try on a scooter. Now a scooter is an electric-type small thing (pavement-type scooters) that enables people like myself to go from point A to point B, where we can move in their own home, and get out within a radius of maybe 10 mile, 20 mile return journey. So thus, I had the sense of freedom, and I have now used my scooter more than ever I did, cos driving can isolate you, it can make you unsociable. The scooter made me aware to meet some o' my old friends, and make new ones: develop my communication skills. By this time, I had drifted away from a lot of the structured voluntary work such as DIAL, Stonehouse, and other things, but was still on call for a number of things, such as Access to Taxis, and special meetings, access-related to buildings, etc. A lot of the people who were involved in the '80s, '90s and that, have all died, because a lot of people with disabilities don't have the same life span: a lot o' us go very quick. But I seem to be a stubborn old sort, [laughs] who refuses to lie down, and knowledge and experience has been invaluable. Where does it take it from here, or what else you would like to know? I think I would like to tell you some time, if we required, about the part Scope played in my life, and what I envisage for the future needs of people with disabilities within their community, and organisations like Scope, and others. That suit you?

**[End of recording]**