



Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Sue Harwood
Interviewed by Stephen Beal

British Library ref. C1345/31

IMPORTANT

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Interview Summary Sheet

Ref no: C1345/31

Collection title: Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

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| Interviewee's surname: | Harwood | Title: | |
| Interviewee's forename: | Susan Jane | Sex: | Female |
| Occupation: | | Date and place of birth: | 1959, Dorchester |

Date(s) of recording: 13th March 2009

Location of interview: The City Inn Hotel, Bristol

Name of interviewer: Stephen Beal

Speech to Text reporter: Georgina Ford

Type of recorder: Marantz PMD660 on compact flash

Recording format : WAV 16 bit 48 kHz

Total no. of tracks: 1 **Mono or stereo:** stereo

Total Duration: 51 min.

Additional material:

Copyright/Clearance: Open. © Hearing Link

Interviewer's comments:

[Track 1]

This is Stephen Beal. I'm interviewing Sue Harwood on Friday 13th March, 2009 for the unheard voices project in Bristol. The speech-to-text reporter is Georgina Ford. Welcome, Sue. Could you please confirm your full name.

Susan Jane Harwood.

Could you tell me your occupation, please.

I'm a receptionist in a hearing aid shop.

Could you tell me the date and place of your birth.

12/8/59 Dorchester in Dorset.

Mother's occupation and father's occupation.

My mother was a school secretary and my father worked for the Southern Electricity Board.

Going back to your childhood, can you remember your grandparents?

My grandparents on one side died when I was 4 but I can remember them. On the other side I only had a grandma that I knew.

Your earliest memories of your accommodation, your parents' house or flat can you share that with me.

I was actually born in the bedroom where we lived. I was a home birth and I lived there all of my childhood until I left home in 20s. So it was a very special place for me.

Happy childhood memories?

Yes, we had a very happy childhood. We weren't rich. I mean, we didn't have a car or lots of material things but I had a brother and a sister and we did lots of things together although they were very basic things like going out for walks or picnics, going to the beach and things like that.

Have you any brothers and sisters?

I've got one sister who's three years younger and a brother who's three years older.

Did you get on well with your brothers and sisters?

I got on well with my sister when she was very tiny because I was a little mother to her but once she started getting a mind of her own not quite so close and I've never really ever got on with my older brother.

*I think you get rivalry, don't you, sometimes. School: did you have a close school to you?
Were you close to a school or travel to school?*

No, we lived in walking distance from our school. I went to an infants school, then junior school and then a senior school.

Did you like school?

Yes, I have got happy memories of going to school, yes.

Did you do hobbies at school, after school sports?

I was always very, very sporty and I actually represented the school in athletics. So I really loved all those kind of things.

Did you have a healthy childhood?

Yes. Touch wood I've always been very, very fit and healthy, yes.

Did you excel at education?

No, not really. I failed my 11 plus. I was never really expected to pass the 11 plus although when I did go to secondary school, I did quite well and they said that they could try and get me a place at the grammar school but I was very, very happy in secondary school education and so I was much happier being at the top of one school than maybe struggling, you know, with a grammar school.

And your parents what sort of line of work did they do?

As I said, my mother was a school secretary and my father worked for the Southern Electricity Board.

Did he enjoy his work?

Yes, he was always very happy going off to work, yes.

Was he with the electricity board, was he an electrician or ...

No, to start off with he was a meter reader and then later on, because of ill health, he actually worked in the offices.

[05:18]

What sort of leisure and hobbies do you have now?

I still really love to keep fit. So I go to aerobic and step classes and I like to swim, I love to go walking out in the countryside and I like to read as well. And sort of the craft and I like to make things.

Obviously living in a beautiful place like you do do you get time to walk down in Weymouth or near Weymouth and go in the water at Weymouth?

Yes. Actually my husband works in Weymouth so – but he's still fine about going to Weymouth at weekends even though he goes down there every day of the week. I really love to go down there out of season rather than when all the holiday makers are down there.

Can I ask you are you religious?

I was actually a Sunday School teacher in my youth and when Trevor and I lived in Exeter for a while, we did attend church every week and he was confirmed and we were very, very involved with the church. But since moving back to Dorchester in 2000 we've just not been to church and I've lost really a lot of that religious belief that I had.

Thank you. Going back to your teens, you left school and then where did you go employment-wise?

I went straight from school. Because of my birthday in August I actually left school when I was 15 and started school straight away working for what was then the Midland Bank and so I started earning when I was just 16 and I really enjoyed it and it was great, you know, to go out and earn some money.

Did your parents encourage you?

Yes. Certainly I was never encouraged to stay on to further education or anything. It was -- in those days most people all my friends left school at 16 and went into jobs.

When you left school, did you keep a friend base from school or did you make new friends?

I've always actually kept school-based friends and I've still got two friends now whom I'm still in regular contact with who I actually went to school with. Even though we've moved around I've always still kept in contact with them.

Do you feel you can talk to them about anything now because you've known them so long?

Certainly because we've grown up together so we know everything about each other and one of them in particular I am very, you know, close to.

[08:29]

Can you disclose when you met Trevor or how you met Trevor?

Actually through work. He was actually working at Midland Bank in Dorchester. In those days they used to with the -- if you wanted a career in banking then you would move round to different branches to work. But when I actually met him, he was actually married at the time and so I only knew him, you know, as a work colleague at that time.

Was it love at first sight?

No, it wasn't actually! (laughter) because he was actually supervising me and we had a bit of an argument because I claimed some overtime which he didn't feel that I'd worked. So I always accused him of being, you know, one to play by the rules and ... so it wasn't really, no.

Oh dear, So how did it lead on to you going out with him then after that story?

The bank moved him on up to North Devon and he went up there with his wife and at Christmas time I sent him a Christmas card and -- well, him and his wife a Christmas card and he wrote me a letter to say that him and his wife had actually split up and he was on his own and so we just started phoning each other up and writing to each other and then after a few months he just said did I fancy going up and seeing him for a weekend, which I did, and that's how it all started.

Was Trevor healthy? Was he quite a healthy person?

He was a healthy person but I always say that I knew that I loved him when he contracted salmonella. The bank had a Christmas do and we went to the Christmas do and he ate some chicken and ended up with salmonella and was in hospital and when he came out of hospital he was quite poorly and so when he was sick and I had to clear his sick up, then I thought this must be love.

And things developed obviously and did you eventually move up to..?

Yes, I did. I mean, at the time I was living on my own, I had my own flat you know which I was buying and I had a job in the bank and he asked me to move in with him and I sold my flat and I gave up my job and moved up there. My family were very much against it, as were a lot of my friends, very worried about what I was doing because he actually wasn't even divorced at that time. So it was a big thing but I just knew that I was doing the right thing and very, very lucky it all worked out very well.

So how long was it after you started seeing each other that you eventually married?

We started seeing each other in the April of ... I'm not sure what year but then the following May we moved in together in North Devon. But again with the bank I moved in in the May and in the August we heard that Trevor was going to be transferred to London. So he then was working in London and living in a hotel during the week and I was still living in North Devon on my own and then eventually in the December we bought a house in Essex and both moved up there together and he, you know, that's when he was working in London.

[12:45]

You gave up a lot to move to North Devon. You said your friends and family weren't happy.

Yes.

Did that have an effect on you at all?

It did upset me, especially like my Mum wouldn't come and stay with us and things. So it was quite a difficult time. But I feel that I did actually know in my mind that it was the right thing that I was doing.

How did you like North Devon?

I love North Devon. Although I wasn't there that long but I did really love it up there and all the beaches and things and the people I met up there as well were very friendly.

And you've come back to a lovely place as well.

Yes.

Do you have any children?

No. We made a decision not to have any children. We had this lovely, lovely lifestyle and we were very, very happy together and we just thought we don't need anything else. Everything's just perfect so we decided not to have any children.

Since obviously you've moved on a lot now did your mother come round in the end?

Yes, she did come round in the end. Once we got married, we got married when we were living up in Billericay in Essex we got married and she did come round, yes.

Trevor was still quite healthy at that point?

Yes. He did have suspected Crohn's Disease and so on at times, you know, he had bouts of being a bit poorly and being on tablets and things, you know, but nothing really, you know, major.

[14:41]

So with Trevor's hearing, when did you first notice there was a problem with his hearing?

He had his 50th birthday party and in fact he had a lot of celebrations for his 50th birthday. It seemed to go on forever.

Lucky Trevor.

And a week after his birthday we had a big family lunch together and then the following -- well, during that night actually he got out of bed and he started sort of staggering across the room and he hadn't had anything to drink and he said, you know, that he felt really dizzy and the following day he said he wasn't feeling very well, but we went into town and he just had

to sit down on a chair because he, you know, was feeling really dizzy and he said he had these noises in his ears and things, ringing sounds in his ears and so we were quite concerned. So the next day he went to the doctor's and it was just a locum doctor who thought he had an ear infection and put him on some antibiotics.

At this time, you now work in audiology. Were you aware then of problems you could have with ears at all?

No. At that time I was working with 3 and 4-year olds in a nursery and I honestly did think that he had an ear infection and that he would ... by having antibiotics he would be fine.

So can you carry on. So he took the antibiotics. Any improvement at all?

No, nothing happened and he went back again and saw a different locum and they thought he needed stronger antibiotics and have his ears syringed, which they did, and we did actually go off on a camping holiday and there was just a little bit of improvement but he really wasn't right.

How were you feeling at this time? Were you concerned?

I wasn't really overly concerned. I just did feel that, you know, we were under the doctor and that it would be something that would be, you know, all sorted out, yes.

Unfortunately things continued to go wrong.

Yes.

[17:19]

Could you explain what the next step was?

We went back again to the doctor and again saw a different locum and they thought he may have Meniere's but they were a bit concerned so they did actually refer him to the ENT department and Trevor had his ears syringed and it made no difference at all and then we

heard that our doctor was back from leave and he was just getting worse and we felt we ought to go and see the GP which we did. By this time, Trevor's hearing was quite bad and his balance was quite bad and the GP said well -- we said we're desperate, you know. If we pay can we go and see privately an ENT specialist and he said yes, I think that's a very good idea and that was on the Wednesday. Then on the Friday morning he woke up and he was completely deaf in both ears and he couldn't walk without me holding on to him and we went to see the ENT specialist and I was very, very scared at that time, very scared and the ENT specialist took one look at him and said take him straight to the hospital which I did.

Was that Dorchester hospital?

It was Dorchester, yes.

Previously in Trevor's childhood he had no hearing problems at all.

No, he never ever had any problems at all with his ears.

His parents have any problems with hearing.

His mother had loss of hearing in older age but that's all.

So nothing hereditary at all.

No.

So going back to the hospital you took him to the hospital which very rightly so you were worried and understandably so. What happened? Was he kept in?

Yes. They admitted him to hospital. They put him on steroids and anti-inflammatories and antibiotics and, I mean, it was very, very scary because he couldn't communicate with anybody. He had a pad and a pen and that's how he had to communicate.

Did you start to wonder yourself if you could look into finding out what the problem was yourself by libraries or books or did you think it was something that it would heal and it would just come back? Do you understand?

Yes, I do understand. What happened is I asked the nurses if when the consultant came round then he could actually phone me up and let me know what he thought was the problem and it was on a Sunday and he phoned me at home and I said, "you know what do you think's going to happen?" and he said well in his experience people who lost their hearing like this didn't get it back and he said to me you've got to prepare yourself for the fact that it might never come back and I -- it was so hard because I knew that I was going to see Trevor later that day and I had to decide whether I was going to write down on a piece of paper to him, you know, whether he was ever going to hear again or not and it was a big thing, you know, whether to keep it from him or actually try and explain that to him although my only way of communicating it to him would be to write it on a piece of paper.

So you were fighting yourself inside really which I can understand. Can I ask you what you decided to do?

I decided I had to tell him that I knew that information. We'd always shared everything and I just felt that he had to know what I knew.

Trevor's reaction was?

Well, both of us just cried because it was just -- it was all so sudden and also seemed so final at that time.

Did the hospital offer you any help at all, any advice of what to do or where to go?

They were very good because we'd always -- I've always believed in trying to find out as much information as possible and we asked -- it wasn't the consultant but I think one of the more junior doctors and they actually got information printed information off of the Internet and actually gave us the information about sudden hearing loss.

How long was Trevor in hospital for at this stage?

He was in hospital for almost a week -- well, a week yes. It was a week.

Had he seen a hearing therapist in that week he was in hospital.

No, he didn't no.

Audiologist? The week he was in --

The very day he came out he was actually fitted with an analogue hearing aid.

Did he find that difficult?

It was very difficult, yes.

Did you find it difficult.

Yes, it was extremely difficult at the time, yes.

Because it's a life-changing thing, isn't it?

Yes.

[23:03]

The next step was what did they offer as the next step? Follow on treatment.

Yes, he did have an appointment to go and see the hearing therapist and we were very, very lucky because she was excellent and she gave him exercises to do because he'd lost his balance as well and he couldn't actually walk without my holding on to him. So he was given these exercises that he had to do you know several times a day and things to try and improve his balance as well. But she took a mould so that he could actually eventually have a digital hearing aid and talked to us about tinnitus and all the sort of related problems.

I will come to the present day later on. There's some nice questions I want to ask you about that. I can relate to some of this. You got home. Obviously Trevor was still working at this time.

Yes.

How did his work react to it?

His work was very mixed actually because his supervisor, her husband had had a nervous breakdown a few years before and so she was very, very, very sympathetic, you know, towards me and Trevor and Trevor was very, very keen to keep working and as soon as -- well, when he was in hospital, his supervisor came to see him and brought work and asked him questions about work and things, you know, and then he from home he actually wrote procedures and things so that other people could, you know, maybe do his work. But they set him up with a laptop at home so he could work from home. But one thing his actual boss came to see him and I'll never forget, he said, "Trevor, you're fine." He said "I've called a meeting with all the people in the office and I said to them has anybody got a problem working with a deaf person" and nobody has so you're fine.

Can I ask what Trevor's reply was?

I think I was more totally flabbergasted by what he'd said because I hadn't really met him before but I think perhaps because Trevor, you know, knew him that he wasn't quite as shocked as what I was.

Can I ask did you comment on that remark? Is it printable?

I was speechless, to be honest, because I couldn't believe that in this day and age that somebody could actually, you know, do that.

What year was that can I ask what year? I never mentioned that earlier. What year are we talking about did Trevor's deafness --

Right, so it was what are we now? 2009. So it was like four years ago.

That's lovely. Thank you. So we are probably looking at 2004/5.

2005.

You'd think they'd know better wouldn't you. So what were the attitudes of the medical staff from when Trevor had come home? Were you in constant contact with them?

Yes, we had our regular appointments with the hearing therapist which was excellent and she got to the stage where he didn't feel that she could do any more for Trevor so she referred him to London to a Professor Luxon who worked in the national hospital for neurology and neurosurgery. So we went up there.

[27:20]

Obviously you were apprehensive, nervous, travelling up there.

We were very nervous. I was very, very nervous because I was taking Trevor to London and his balance was still very bad and, you know, travelling on the tube and, you know, things like that and with lots of people around it was very scary. I mean, he'd always looked after me and been protective towards me and suddenly I was in this role of having to actually you know look after and protect him and it was really hard.

It's a reversal of roles, isn't it?

Yes.

How was Trevor feeling at this time? Did he know what to expect from hospital or was it the going into the unknown?

We were both very, very keen to go because we wanted some answers really and we wanted to know, you know, if there was anything that could be done.

How did you find the consultants in London?

They were very, very good and he got lots of special tests and things, you know, which he never would have got locally, especially to do with his balance. He had all sorts of different things that could test his balance and again they put a programme of like physio in for him, you know, to improve that.

Did they offer you any other help at all?

In the end they actually referred him to the Professor Haskard at Hammersmith Hospital who specialises in rheumatism because they think that the problem with Trevor is auto immune system and he specialises in that. So that's why Trevor was referred to him.

At this time, had Trevor been given a digital hearing aid?

Yes Trevor did have a digital hearing aid by then.

Did Trevor notice a difference between the analogue hearing aid and the digital

Yes it was better. Much better.

Does he have regular checks on hearing aids now.

Yes, he only had one on Wednesday actually.

Have they -- hearing aid, is it.

He just has one.

Did they upgraded it at all.

They did this week, yes.

[29:28]

So the outcome of Trevor's treatment in London has that finished now?

No, it's still ongoing. They are still seeing him regularly.

Are they pleased with how he's going.

One thing they were absolutely amazed at is how he has overcome his balance problem because he still has no balance -- the balance in his inner ear has gone but he's actually retrained his brain and he can now actually play -- he plays 5 a side football, kick around and, you know, we go walking, he can ride his bike and they've said that they are amazed that he can do those things again.

That's lovely. And you do them together -- not the 5 a side football .

It has taken three years and it has been really really hard work and determination that's got him there.

You yourself not to deal with Trevor but have you been frustrated over the whole issue? Have you felt frustrated because of what's happened to Trevor?

We always really had this perfect, perfect life, were really really happy. We did lots and lots of things and we always had a philosophy that you did as much as you could today because you didn't know what was going to happen, you know, tomorrow. When I was 17 my Dad died and so you felt, you know, in his early fifties so you knew life was very precious and so, you know, that's how we lived our lives and so when this happened to Trevor, although you never thought anything would happen to you, I mean, we were always very close before and we always, you know, we always have been close. So it was just --it was something we had to work through really.

Do you feel you've come out of it stronger together?

Much stronger yes although, as I said, we always were very strong but it has brought us closer together and --yeah it has.

That's nice.

Does Trevor have any hobbies apart from the walking and 5, aside football.

I think the saddest thing is that he loved music. Music has been very, very important to him and he was learning to play the guitar as well and one of the things we'd love to do is go and see live bands, live music and theatre as well he loved and, you know, he can't do that any more and so that has -- I think that's been the saddest thing really that's come out of it and it's affected us both because, you know, I wouldn't want to go and see live music, you know, without Trevor so, you know, it's something that we don't do now and with the theatre unless it's sort of a captioned thing or something, then, you know, we don't go.

[33:20]

So many people we've interviewed have said the same thing actually. Have they suggested to Trevor cochlear implants?

Trevor has asked about a cochlear implant and at the moment they are monitoring his hearing because his hearing has fluctuated and but more recently it does seem to have sort of stabilised at a lower level and so they are going to monitor his levels and if his levels are really bad, then maybe he will be assessed for a cochlear implant.

How have you found communicating or communication with Trevor and other members of the family? How have they coped with Trevor's deafness?

I think the most difficult thing that I've found is that Trevor's hearing has fluctuated and so therefore you never actually get a strategy because one day it's one thing and another day it's another thing and to be quite honest over the last several weeks when it has stabilised, although it's stabilised at a lower level, I find it much easier because I know exactly where I am and I know how to communicate with him and, you know, I know where I am with it.

What about work colleagues? Is Trevor still at work?

Yes. He got a lot of help through Access to Work and they set him up with a special phone and he's got a converser and things at work. Most of his work is computer-based so he hasn't got a lot of communicating to do, although sometimes he does have meetings with the public or he has to have telephone conversations.

Are work understanding with the time off Trevor has to have with appointments.

They have been excellent because he has had a lot of time off work for appointments and they do actually give him every Tuesday morning a couple of hours off so that he can go to a lipreading class and they are still doing that now. So they do very good, yes.

So they are supportive.

Yes.

[35:40]

That was my next question lipreading and you've come on to that. Do you attend lipreading with Trevor?

When he first started going to lipreading, it was our wedding anniversary and we went to lipreading class. I laugh now but that was very upsetting that day actually to think that's what we'd come to really and he couldn't have gone on his own because he couldn't have walked there on his own. I had to walk in with him holding his arm and -- I don't know. It was very upsetting because, you know, it was a lot of elderly people there and you think why are we here? Although subsequently, I mean, they have been so, so, so supportive and we've found out lots of information and accessed loads of help through going to the lipreading class and then I decided finally that Trev was well enough to actually go on his own and that, you know, he could be independent. It was quite hard because, you know, I had to hold on his arm and help him walk and things like that and be his ears for him and it's hard to actually let go of that and let him have his independence back because you become a bit overprotective really towards him.

I understand that completely. I understand. How's he coping with the lipreading? Is he finding it hard to learn?

Yes. He says that he finds it really, really hard to lipread but it's amazing. I think you do it subconsciously, you know, and he does do well at lipreading.

Are you still practising with him?

We still practice when he hasn't got his hearing aid in we still practice finger spelling.

Yes. Support network: have you had any support network from the hospital, ie people come to talk to you about deafness at home or --

Well, not necessarily through the hospital but what we did have is once Trevor went to lipreading class he met Liz, who is an outreach worker from LINK and her and her husband came to see Trevor and I at home soon after Trevor had become deafened and that was invaluable because you found somebody else who had been through what we'd been through, had the same feelings that we had and you know that they were very, very supportive and gave us a lot of help.

Had you heard of LINK before then?

No. It was her that introduced us to it.

So the hearing therapist at the hospitals never suggested rehabilitation courses at all.

No, nothing was mentioned at all, no.

Have you made the hearing centres audiologists aware of – you've been on the LINK course now.

Yes. I mean, as soon as we heard about LINK we mentioned it to the audiologist who obviously knew all about LINK and unfortunately it's down to money and we had to really, really fight to get on to the LINK course and unfortunately that took 18 months. So it was 18

months down the line before we actually went away on the course and we really do feel that it would have been so much more beneficial to us had we gone, you know, quite soon after Trevor lost his hearing rather than 18 months down the line, although I mean, it was brilliant we got a huge amount from it but I think we could have got even more from it.

If you did it sooner.

Had we got it sooner, yes.

[40:01]

So travelling down to Eastbourne can you tell me you had obviously received the paperwork what to expect. Was it what you expected?

I was really scared about it because 18 months down the line you felt like you were coping with it, you put it to the back of your mind and didn't want to relive what had happened to you and I just felt I really don't want to be concentrating on Trevor's loss of hearing for a whole week, I just don't want to do that, you know. But I think by going to it you realise that actually you haven't dealt emotionally with what had happened and it did make you face up to what had happened and, yes, I mean, it did deliver everything and more of what it said, you know, that it would do definitely.

When you're going through the time when you were trying to work out what had happened to Trevor and yourself as well, because it affects you as well, did you have any downtime?

To be honest, I think when Trevor went deaf I took it upon myself to find out loads of information and everything to get as much help as we possibly could get and I say that he had this rehabilitation programme. So, you know, the first day we walked round the block and then the second day we walked a bit further and the third day and then eventually we got to walking into town and, you know, and then we went into a shop. So I took it upon myself, you know to do all these things for him. And then suddenly he was rushed into hospital and had an emergency operation for bowel cancer and, I mean, they do think that the two are linked that the actual bowel cancer came first and that his immune system kicked in and actually that's what affected his hearing and at that stage I just went to pieces then because

you know losing your hearing's not life threatening but suddenly you've got cancer and the two things together just I find really, really hard to, you know, to cope with.

Yes. Were you offered any support?

Sadly no and that was missing. I mean, I think that with LINK it's recognised that it does really affect, you know, the partner but I think with the bowel cancer it wasn't recognised. I was crying out for help and I really didn't know where to go. There wasn't really anywhere, you know, to go for help.

[43:13]

Difficult question: were the family supportive to you?

My family have always been very supportive but very sadly, you know, members of Trevor's family weren't quite as supportive and that was quite sad really.

How about now?

I think it's just the way that people cope with things and some people cope with illness and others don't and I think, you know, I suppose they've never really been subjected to ill-health and so they don't really know how to cope with it.

I think its the same analogy if it hasn't happened to them.

And they live away and don't see it on a day-to-day basis and don't realise how it's affecting your every day life.

Do you think Trevor's coped well? Has it affected his life do you think?

I think that he's coped remarkably well. He has kept really, really strong through it all and he does get his down times, but, you know, he comes through and I think the determination that he's shown to actually get back to where he is has been amazing, yes.

If you look back is there anything you feel you could have done differently or got treatment sooner, apart from the LINK course which was 18 months? I'm talking about the hospital. You said you saw locums three times.

I know. You go back and you think to yourself well perhaps if Trevor's doctor was there then would he have done things differently, if there was any consistency there then maybe they would have acted quicker. But, you know, that's with hindsight and you don't really know. I mean, looking back as well, we've got a picture in our dining room of Trevor's 50th birthday party and looking at it now, he looks ill and yet at the time I never -- you know, I didn't notice it. But looking back now, you know, you do think well perhaps this was creeping up and we hadn't recognised the signs of it.

I think, because you've lived with someone I think it's different if you are an outsider you can see that, can't you?

Mmm.

So how do you feel today? You've reached this far. You have been to LINK. So how do you feel today with Trevor and yourself?

I still get times. It's like travelling up here. You can't have a conversation in the car and I'm always dying to say something and, you know, you almost ... a lot is going on as well at the moment on a personal level with illness in the family and, you know, you can't talk to Trevor. You have to almost make an appointment. It's like making time when he can actually sit face-to-face with you and you can actually – you know he can hear you and you know things don't always happen like that. Things are coming at me all the time and I want to share those with him and you can't. You go to bed at night and the light gets turned out and the hearing aid gets taken out and that it. You can't communicate with him and again something comes into your head you wake up in the middle of the night, think of something and you can't talk to him about it.

Would you write it down and talk to him about it later so you don't forget or would you just let it go?

I do try -- I don't write these things down but I do try to keep these things in my head and think I must talk to Trevor about things, yes.

I have to ask this: has it affected your personal relationship with Trevor, sex-wise? You don't have to answer if you don't ...

No. Definitely his medical problems have because he has had a lot of illness and so, you know, when he's been ill then it has affected it, yes.

[47:39]

You said earlier it's made you stronger as a couple. How do you see the future?

Well, I don't -- you know I mean, our lives are particularly difficult, as I said, at the moment because of family illness and things like and you just feel that -- I don't know. We've been through a really very, very difficult coming up for four years now and, you know, you just hope that things will, you know, will get better.

We're nearly there. After the LINK course, did you leave it full of optimism?

Yes, a lot of optimism. Very much. So I think they gave you -- you know just meeting other people that were in the same situation. I think what actually struck me as well about the people that we were on LINK with is all of them hadn't just lost their hearing, all of them had other issues in their lives. So like Trevor had had the hearing loss and the bowel cancer and other people had hearing loss and, you know, things in their lives and, you know, you think well yes other people are going through really, really bad times. You're not the only one. There are lots of other people out there that are actually going through it and so, you know, they are coping. So you can cope with it and it did give you a lot of faith and a lot of hope, yes.

Have you kept in contact with anyone from LINK on the course?

We actually kept in contact with Colin and Bev who we met on the course just through e-mail and, you know, Christmas cards, things like that and we met them again at the LINK

convention last year which was the first time we went to it and again it was just an excellent day which really lifted your spirits and it was really a brilliant day.

It's nice to know there's someone there at the end of a phone now.

Do you belong to any deaf clubs? I know you say -- sorry, Trevor goes to lipreading classes. Socially do you have any deaf awareness club you go to or deaf clubs at all?

No, it's just purely the lipreading class.

Would Trevor go to that sort of thing if it was available?

I think he would be open to go to something like that.

He would have the confidence now.

Yes, he would.

That's lovely. So has the confidence grown in Trevor now. You say you now let him together, lipreading on his own. What about going shopping on his own --

Yes now it's something that, again, has just gradually built up and he's had to relearn to go into a shop and you know relearn to do so many things and it has been a very gradual process and also now he's not so anxious about being deaf. The anxiety to start off with it used to really upset me because he used to actually talk to himself. Because his levels of hearing fluctuated, then he would actually talk to himself to see what level, you know, his hearing was and that was really upsetting. But he's definitely not so anxious now about being deaf.

I'd just like to say thank you Sue. You have been so open and honest we were both put on the spot but and also thank you Georgina for doing a marvellous job and thank you very much. That's now the end so you can relax. Thank you and I hope I've not been too painful for you.

[End of recording]