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START AUDIO

Interviewer: And you have a professional radio voice, anyway.

Respondent: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Especially with a Brummie accent, you know. (Laughter) I have to be very careful.

Interviewer: Have you ever listened to yourself on the radio afterwards?

Respondent: I’ve got recording nerves. Not really. No, I haven’t.

When I speak to people, they will say, “You’re not from here,” and I said, “No. I’m adopted, you see?” and leave it at that.

 When I first came up here, they said, “Are you Australian?” I said, “Yes. It’s because I watch Neighbours,” because I was a southerner, you see, and I’ve got a dreadful accent. It’s not so bad now, but I realise my vowels still aren’t the same as the other ones, but we get by.

Interviewer: Yes. Are you happy in [place]?

Respondent: Yes, it’s a lovely place. Have you been up the coast, at all?

Interviewer: Yes. I’ve been up to [place].

Respondent: Oh, yes. I was thinking, going from [place], and around there. It’s absolutely beautiful. [place] Island, you want to go there, as well.

Interviewer: Yes. I went to the lighthouse. Yes.

Respondent: Did you climb up?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Yes, it’s beautiful.

Interviewer: It was lovely.

Respondent: When I first went there, there was a man sitting with his earphones on, like they used to do. Of course, they’ve got the televisions now to show you what’s outside, but they didn’t used to have the… they used to have a little man.

I mean, he was a mate of mine, a staff manager, we said, but it was absolutely enthralling to me, because I had never seen anything in my life like that. Yes.

 Yes, that was good. I can’t go anywhere, just at the moment.

Interviewer: Yes, but you still go every week to the radio show?

Respondent: Every month.

Interviewer: Every month. Sorry. Yes.

Respondent: Yes, because they fetch me. [person]’s got a way of fetching me, and there’s a wheelchair in there, and they said, “We’ll have to do something about that.” \_\_\_[0:01:57].

So, I don’t know what’s going to happen next time because, as I said, just at the moment, I’m a bit incapacitated, but they’re very tolerant, and they send a taxi that will take a wheelchair.

Interviewer: So, the last time you read the notices-

Respondent: Pardon?

Interviewer: The notices that you read on the radio.

Respondent: Yes, I do. Every month. Yes.

Interviewer: Every month. Do you come up with them?

Respondent: No, they’re prepared.

Interviewer: They prepare them. Do you get them beforehand, so you can prep those?

Respondent: No. Not until I get there, because I’ve been doing them that long.

 I have to read through them, because I try and make sure that I don’t get the ww/ (Laughter), and because my name’s Respondent, I’m the B – there’s A and B – and it depends who reads the A, and I always read through them with them, so that if they’ve got any queries, or I can’t pronounce colloquially. So, I always read through them, and make sure that I know what I’m reading.

 It’s very good, and it’s quite instructive, because I don’t know who makes them. I don’t know who does them. I don’t know whether it’s Ann, or not; of course, she’s finished. They’re very, very comprehensive, and there’s lots of information in those notices, especially if you want to go out and about. Well, I think so.

Interviewer: Yes. Do you always think it’s enough time to prepare, reading the notices, because you’re on quite late, aren’t you?

Respondent: Yes, I am. Yes, there is plenty of time, yes, because I know what I’m doing about this. (Laughter) Are we recording now?

Interviewer: Yes, we are.

Respondent: Oh, crikey. I had better watch what I say. (Laughter)

Interviewer: How long have you been doing it for?

Respondent: Oh, ages now. I joined when I came up here. How many years ago? About 27 years ago. I think that’s how old my granddaughter is. I couldn’t understand a word anybody said to me.

I worked at Smith’s on the station, the newsagent. We had some hilarious times with the \_\_\_[0:04:10]. Of course, I didn’t even know what a tab was. (Laughter)

Interviewer: And the radio, how long have you been doing that?

Respondent: I don’t know when I joined them. I don’t really know, quite frankly, because I’ve always been interested in the [organisation].

First I did that. It was all housing then, you know, for the elderly, and because I was elderly, I felt I knew what I was talking about. So, that’s how I joined it.

 If you listened to an earlier recording of what went on, we never used to do a lot of… not exhibitions, but visiting people, and telling them exactly what we wanted, and there’s one of me somewhere, way back when, where we did a recording, and somebody was so impressed, I think it went to the continent. So, that’s in the archives somewhere.

 They were really impressed with what the situation was, and how it was done, and everything. It’s a bit far back in the distance, so I can’t really remember the exact details, but I know it was very… because some event – it was in [place] – and they played it back for me, and we listened to it, and it sounded very good.

Interviewer: So, that was an audio recording?

Respondent: Pardon?

Interviewer: That was an audio recorded interview?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Was this something that they-?

Respondent: That they recorded. Yes.

Interviewer: Yes. Ah. So, you started off with the housing?

Respondent: Housing, I know, [person] – you know, [person]?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: She started, because, as I said, I joined them just basically to integrate, because I didn’t know – apart from my daughter – I didn’t know a sole up here, and it was a totally foreign language, to me. It really was.

 People were very good, because when they realised I was foreign, shall we say, they spoke more slowly, but if they spoke colloquially, I hadn’t a clue. I still can’t understand my granddaughters when they gabble.

Interviewer: Are they from [place]?

Respondent: Yes. Especially if they don’t want me to know what they’re talking about. (Laughter) That’s happened.

Interviewer: So, you did this first, and then when did you get into the radio team?

Respondent: I’m trying to think. I don’t know how. I think it just, you know?

Interviewer: Was this right at the start of-?

Respondent: No, I don’t think so, because I didn’t know anybody. No. I can’t really remember. I’m sorry. You will have to ask. [person] will know. He knows about these things.

Interviewer: Did you start doing the notices from your first day, or did you do other things?

Respondent: No, I don’t think I did, because I had to get integrated, and I think there’s a much bigger group now. No.

The group, in those days, because I didn’t know the ways of the world up here, you know, and I would just sit, and listen, because I’m one of those that can’t take information from there; I have to be told, and I have to understand what I’m being told. So, I can’t take information from… I’ve never been able to do that.

Even at school, I had to sit and listen, because it was no good putting a piece of paper in front of me, and saying, “Read this, and remember,” because I couldn’t.

 As I said, that came about, but how it started with the radio… I think I was just intrigued, quite frankly, and the fact that they came and fetched me, and took me back, was a great asset.

So, it was somebody else’s responsibility to get me into something, rather than sort of turn up, and hope. But, no, as I said, they get the taxi with the slopes and things to put the wheelchair up, and things like that.

We could do with somebody at the school, when we get there, to help push with the wheelchair, or have facilities. They’re pretty sparse for accessible, we call them, and they’re pretty sparse at the school, but they cope.

Interviewer: Yes, but you still get there, right?

Respondent: Oh, I get there. I do most things, but it takes time. The chemist has just been. He’s been, and brought all the tablets, and things. They chase people round.

Interviewer: So usually, you come in, you read the notices, and then you go-?

Respondent: No. You’ve seen a schedule, have you?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: You’ve seen the schedule. The notices are quite far down. We have notices one, and then notices two.

Interviewer: Ah, yes, yes. I remember.

Respondent: You know when to go, because it’s got my name, Respondent, and so-and-so.

You see the pieces of music before you, which means you can go in, and out, of the studio without interrupting the programme, and that’s when we do all the moves about, with the wheelchair, and I used to take that when I could walk. It was difficult, so you made sure you were on time, and it works well.

Interviewer: What do you do in-between?

Respondent: Well, we sit and chatter. You’re supposed to listen to the programme, but… Well, you’ve got to find out the gossip, haven’t you?

Interviewer: (Laughter) So, do you feel like this is an opportunity every month to meet...?

Respondent: When we were at the other place, we used to have a kettle, and me, and another lady, used to make the teas, and everything, but of course, there aren’t those facilities up here, where we’ve gone now, to the new place. You know, the new room, which hasn’t got a kettle where you can make coffee, or anything.

Interviewer: From the [organisation]? Yes.

Respondent: Well, no. We used to go a fill the jug of water, or urn of water, and bring it back, and boil it up, and all sorts.

Interviewer: In the studio?

Respondent: No, in the green room, as they called it, the waiting room, but there’s nothing like that, at the moment.

Interviewer: So, was the radio always where it is now?

Respondent: Yes, it was, but in a different section.

Interviewer: Okay. So, they moved the studio within the-?

Respondent: They haven’t moved the studio, they just moved the facilities.

The only facility they have moved, as far as I’m concerned, because I had wheels and things, we had a bit of a problem, but now they’ve got a slope where they can push me up, you see? I find I’m much more dependent on who’s about, and whether I can manage, but they make sure that somebody will push me; which, strictly speaking, they didn’t go to the radio programme to push me in a wheelchair.

 So, there’s nobody at the school. We’re in the first aid room, yes, but there are no first aid facilities there for people. I suppose that’s between the [organisation], and the school, really to decide; but we manage.

Interviewer: Do you do any other work in the-?

Respondent: Pardon?

Interviewer: Do you do any other work for the [organisation]?

Respondent: Not any longer, because, as I said, I’m very stiff now. Yes, yes.

I enjoyed it very much, and we were quite a good group. I thought, very friendly, and everything.

 My main, as I said, when I first came up here, was housing, because they had made this video about what they had thought about it all. So, I thought, “Oh, that sounds interesting.” So, that was my priority.

 I used to go to the meetings, and all sorts, but when you can’t get about, you can’t do really what you want. Anyway, I think I’m getting… not past it, but I feel I am. (Laughter)

Interviewer: So, for the radio, if you think about the process, do you have things that you think work really well?

Respondent: What process?

Interviewer: Of getting you in, you reading the notices. Is there anything that you think, “Oh, this works really well,” or could things be improved?

Respondent: There’s no room for improvement, because there’s no room, basically.

They could do with better microphones, but I think they’ve improved on those. There are perhaps three of us sharing a microphone, and you have to remember that because you can’t reach it, you mustn’t grab it by its trunk. You have to do the arm, and you perhaps do the arm for you, and then somebody else comes to do it, and you see the little man, the [warden 0:13:07], you know, say, “And one thing you mustn’t do, you mustn’t rustle all of the papers when you turn them over.” People would say, “Very naughty, that is,” because it come over apparently.

 But [person] is there. She’s very good. She knows it all, and [person]. They’re the two main ones.

 There were many more people when I went there that had much more knowledge, and I learnt quite a lot from them.

As people do, they get to leave, because they’ve got other commitments, or they find this isn’t for them anymore. You know, you just go with the flow.

Interviewer: Do you know any people who listen to the radio?

Respondent: Yes, I’ve got a friend up here. I say, “Oh well, I forget.” We get it on that thing there. Goodness knows how old it is, but I’ve got it tuned in on that one, and I can hear that, but of course, I will sleep, you see, in my chair. So, that’s how it is, but anybody else, I don’t know.

Interviewer: So, you tell your friend that you are going to be on, and then-?

Respondent: Yes. Oh, they don’t believe me, they think I’m in the fairyland, you know. (Laughter)

Interviewer: But they never tune in to…? Have they ever heard you?

Respondent: Yes, as I said, my friend up there does, when she remembers. I do tell people that it’s on, but it depends. You know, “Radio 2. What’s that?” So, Radio FM is difficult to find, as well, on the waveband apparently, because there’s a very fine tuning. Well, people don’t use radios any longer, do they? It’s all television, videos, and computers, you see?

Interviewer: Do you have a computer?

Respondent: No, I’m not in that world. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Have you ever listened to the radio show, I mean, when you’re not broadcasting?

Respondent: Yes, but as I said, I sleep, you see?

Interviewer: You feel asleep?

Respondent: I go to sleep. I’ve heard some of them, one or two.

When I came back from hospital, I made notes, and told [person] what they were about, and they used to make comments in the newsletter about it. I thought I was helping, and that was it.

Then they said, “Can you come back?” I said, “Well, it’s a bit difficult,” and then it’s gradually got more accessible, shall we say, and the fact that they got the slope now, and that you can go up to the studio. Whereas, we couldn’t before. We used to jump the wheels down, but you can’t with the wheelchair, you see.

Interviewer: Because you’re not at the planning meetings.

Respondent: I can’t get there on a Friday. No.

Interviewer: Do you talk to [person] about topics that you would like to-?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: So, you have no influence in the…?

Respondent: No, no. Put it this way, if I had the same facilities that I have for the radio show, I would go the planning meetings, but it isn’t possible. Everybody’s on a budget, and that’s how it is. I do really appreciate the fact that they asked me to go back after I had been so ill, and that’s how it is.

 While he thinks I’m still with it, I’ll go. Once I’m beyond comprehension, I would rather they tell me, and say, “I think you’ve served your term,” sort of idea. (Laughter) I think, perhaps, the age has come.

 I think it’s very interesting, but the numbers have gone down. That’s the trouble.

The people who come are very eloquent. As I said, we’re so busy nattering in the green room, we don’t really hear the conversation, but they will do a disc for you. If you ask them, they’ll do a disc for you. I’ve got one at the back there somewhere, which goes on one of those. I don’t know which one it is.

Interviewer: Yes, I should ask actually. So, what do you mean with numbers go down?

Respondent: Where it’s no longer viable to have the radio programme, but I think it’s an essential link.

We used to have a chappie who was very good with the gardening. He always won prizes at the show, but he’s got quite poorly, so of course, he can’t do anymore for his gardening, but he was very, very good. He was also good with furniture, and things like that. That’s how it goes. That’s life, isn’t it?

Interviewer: So, that’s another radio show, on that same station?

Respondent: No. He was part of the-

Interviewer: Oh, part of the [organisation]?

Respondent: Yes. If [person]’s got any old papers. I mean, having tidied up, you see. I used to keep everything, and just when you want things, they’re no longer there.

 They do a schedule, and everybody works to the time schedule on that, and we all help each other, and say, “Come on. It’s time you went in,” and that’s it. Yes. It’s very good.

 They work very hard. I think they’re trying to train somebody up now to twiddle the knobs, as I call it, because Wendy’s not always there. It is a gift, I think, to link programmes up together. I really do.

Interviewer: Yes. That’s interesting. When you said that you don’t make the decisions of the topics.

Respondent: Oh, no.

Interviewer: Do you think you would like to?

Respondent: Would they like me to? That’s the point, because I’m rather forceful when I get going. So, I don’t know.

 I miss the discussion on the following Friday, but it’s just not possible to get there. I don’t know what time it starts. I can’t remember now. I’m not really ready to go anywhere much before 10:30 am, because I have carers in, and you’ve got to wait for them to finish messing about, and doing…

 Also, I have to have prior notice of what I’m doing, because we have schedules, and if you’re not going to be here, you have to let the carers know, and you’ve got to let them know in advance that you don’t want them. It’s not just saying, “Oh, I’m not coming tomorrow.” You’ve got to give them two days’ notice, obviously, for their carers to know what they’re doing.

 They’re having trouble at the moment, because Age UK has been taken over by Home Care, and nobody knows what they’re doing. So, it’s just a case of, everybody tries to fit in.

Interviewer: Do you have any ideas for topics that-?

Respondent: Well, it depends what they talk about. It depends what the topic is. I could put my penneth in, yes, but I can’t initiate a topic, because it isn’t quite that simple. They have to get the people to talk to, and arrange the interviews, and for people to come. I can’t do that, and I wouldn’t want that responsibility. I wouldn’t. No.

 I don’t mind following instructions, but I don’t want to be… because of the fact that I can’t get around like I used to, I don’t want to have the responsibility of deciding what’s on, because if you see the notices. [person]’s got it all listed. How many words, because he has to have it timed, you see? Everything is timed. Of course, they have to twiddle the little knobs, and things, and everybody has to know what they’re doing. That’s why they have the schedules. It’s very, very good. It’s very well done.

 How they’re getting on without [person], I don’t know. [person] was in the [organisation], but she’s apparently gone somewhere else; in the same building, not in the same complex, but she was the link there, and everybody relied on [person] to get things through, but I don’t know who does it now.

Interviewer: Was she part of the radio show, as well?

Respondent: She got it all organised, and all brought together. Down the back of the General Hospital, that’s where she is now. What is it? Care of the Elderly, I think it’s called, that part of it. She’s down there somewhere.

Interviewer: And she was also running the desk?

Respondent: No, no. That was [person].

Interviewer: Okay. So, that was always [person]?

Respondent: Ann only did the typing, and getting everything in order.

 No, no. [person] ran the desk, and I think it’s [person] now. I don’t know who else does it. And, [person]. She’s the mechanic. She’s excellent. If anything went wrong, it was [person], and she would fix it, because things do go wrong, don’t they?

Interviewer: And [person] is part of the community radio?

Respondent: I think she belongs to a different… Whether she belongs to the radio, as such, rather than for us. I don’t know quite where she fits in, but she’s really efficient, as is [person], because she has to link up with the people coming in, and she can chat as though it’s all been prepared, but I think it’s off the cuff really, that she does.

 So, of course, when they’re not there, somebody has to be trained up to be able to cope. It isn’t a case of just triggering an arm, you’ve got to get everything joined in, sort of thing.

Interviewer: Yes. That’s really interesting. Do you think that you could be involved in a different way? Is there a way of you-?

Respondent: Well, I usually have an issue, because I am…

Interviewer: For example, if you – this is just an example – if someone-?

Respondent: You’ll have to speak up. I’m sorry.

Interviewer: If someone came here to record-

Respondent: Oh, yes. They would do recordings like that here. [person] has got several. If they wanted me to do anything like that, I would have to have some practise first, because, as you can see, I tend to talk. (Laughter)

Interviewer: So, you could imagine that this could happen?

Respondent: If they wanted me to interview anybody, and fetched me, and brought me back, yes. I would prefer to do it that way. I can’t get there on my own, because I’m a liability really, when I’m there.

 So, you’ve got to have accessibility, you really have. They’re supposed to have… At the college, there’s a lift as you go in, you know, where things join, and they’re dreadful to take a wheelchair over. It is. Yes.

Interviewer: So, transport is the big issue.

Respondent: Transport basically. Yes, it is. Yes. I’ve got that there, but I’m not really happy with it, because it’s a bit jumpy. As you can see, it’s got a gadget on the top with all the pretty lights. It tells you when you go backwards, forwards, and everything. I don’t think that it would go in a taxi, quite frankly.

Interviewer: Yes. Cool. Yes.

Respondent: I’m taking it around the house, trying to judge the distances, but there aren’t any flat places from the paths down to the road. There’s a lift like that, and at the moment, I don’t like doing it, because I feel I’m not secure.

 I’ve only just got it, so it’s new to me. So, I have to have an escort to go out. The chap here, who did the files, he went with me once. I ran over his feet, and he was \_\_\_[0:25:21], but apart from that… (Laughter)

Interviewer: You’re still practising. (Laughter)

Respondent: It’s stationary. “Will you sit down.” They know where I am then. It’s good, and they’re good company. They really are.

Interviewer: That’s good. Yes.

Respondent: They’re very kind. They really are. Yes. It’s fab that you can have a giggle about something, you know, it makes it all go round, doesn’t it? Yes.

Interviewer: Yes. You need that sometimes. Yes. Is there anything else, concerning the radio, you want to…?

Respondent: I think it’s a marvellous thing, I really do, because it’s something you would never do on your own, is it?

I can’t remember quite honestly how I got into it. I don’t know. I can’t remember.

 I’m sure when they chopped me in half, they chopped half my brain out, because I can’t remember lots of things now, but the people are very kind, and have kept in touch.

 So, when I came out of hospital, I was quite surprised, “Would you like to come?” I thought, “Crikey. They still want me, at my age.”

I tell the youngsters that come as the carers, “Knowledge is never wasted. Take as much knowledge as you can. You will always find it will come in useful one day. You’ll think, ah.” It really is. Knowledge is a marvellous thing. Yes.

Oh, I know what I did on that disc. They wanted to do some icon places. Well, this complex used to be in the city, and I did it, and that’s what’s on that disc.

They recorded it for me, and the lady here, the manager here. She was very good. She gave me a lot of the information. Yes, it was quite something that was. That was quite something.

Interviewer: That sounds interesting. Yes.

Respondent: People are very good, you know. It depends how you approach them, I think. If you go in all bullish, and things like that… and I thought I had knowledge, otherwise they wouldn’t have asked me, you know what I mean?

 So, that’s how I look at it. Whether I’m right, or wrong, I don’t know. While they want me, I’ll go, as long as they fetch me, and bring me back.

Interviewer: It’s also just community, isn’t it, in a way? That you were part of their community.

Respondent: Well, yes, I hope so. Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: Yes, and they want you there. Yes.

Respondent: Well, I…

END AUDIO

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