

## Care Leavers' Stories project

Alan Dearman

Interviewed by Tamisan Joe

C1597/14

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# Social Care Institute for Excellence

## Interview Summary Sheet

## Title Page

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**Title:** Mr

**Interviewee's  
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**Sex:** Male

**Occupation:** Retired

**Date of birth:** 1942

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## Track 1

*Camera rolling.*

*Could you tell me your name?*

My name is Alan, Alan Dearman.

*And what do you do for a living?*

Fortunately I'm retired now [laughs]. But I – I do a lot of voluntary work now so I keep myself busy and occupied.

*Voluntary work – sorry, you do voluntary work?*

Voluntary work, yeah.

*Yeah, for what companies?*

Well I do a lot of voluntary work for Barnardo's, the children's charity obviously, and I do a lot of voluntary work back home in Melton for a local charity called Melton Voluntary Action and I do voluntary driving. So I'm taking people to the hospitals and dental practices and all sorts of things like that, doctor's appointments.

*Okay, how do you find your adult life now?*

Quite busy, quite exciting. And I'm enjoying life, really am, yeah.

*And how long have you been doing voluntary work for?*

Oh, on and off for Barnardo's probably for about fifteen, twenty years, but this voluntary driving only since I retired, so I've been doing it about two and a half year. I retired 2009, two and a half years past my normal retirement date but I decided to

retire 'cause I was getting remarried [laughs]. I'd found a nice young lady so I then remarried at the age of sixty whatever, so yeah life's fine.

*So how old are you now?*

I'm fast approaching seventy-one.

*Okay, and you mentioned you was getting married.*

I got married, be four years next Christmas, yeah.

*So how has that changed your – your life?*

Hugely, because it took me away from my home city where I lived, and different sort of way of life from when you've lived the city life most of your life and then you move into the sort of small market towns, it's a little bit strange and quiet at first, but –

[02:27]

*So were was you born?*

I was born in Nottingham, 1942, the City Hospital, do you want more details?

*Yeah.*

Yeah, okay. Yeah, born in 1942, Nottingham City Hospital, my mother and father had been married for almost fifteen years when I was born and then sadly as a result of my birth my mother died three weeks after I was born from an embolism. And then eighteen months later I contracted polio so the – the early years of my life wasn't – wasn't very good ...

*Could you tell me what polio is?*

Polio, I don't quite know how you would describe it, it's – it was quite a nasty disease which was prevalent during the '40s and '50s, quite know how you would describe it, it's – it was quite a nasty disease which was prevalent during the '40s and the '50s, and it can affect different parts of the body in different ways. For me it affected my right leg and what it does, it causes withering of the muscles and the leg just sort of shrinks down to virtually nothing. Couldn't use the muscles in – got no use of the knee or the ankle, it's basically just a limp piece of – no circulation, no simulation, so it would constantly be cold because of the lack of – polio. But it could affect – it could affect you in different ways, people got polio in the arm, in the hand. I actually had a cousin that had it in the jaw and it affected part of her bottom lip and it looked as if she'd actually had a stroke and this was polio.

*So you mentioned you were born in Notting – Notting –*

Nottingham, yeah.

*Nottingham, when did you move to London?*

1949, 1950. I didn't have my ... when my mother died my dad remarried and he married what was known in those days as the wicked old stepmother, and I can assure you she was wicked, she was a nasty – nasty piece of work to put it bluntly. And that was the reason why I was finally taken into care because of the abuse, both physical and mental, that I used to get from her. And I used to get physically abused from my dad who used to get the belt because my stepmother would tell lies, and my life basically was just spiralling downwards. And I'd play truant from school and my life was just going nowhere until ... [coughs] excuse me, a very very cold November morning in 1949, I'd been locked in the house, my dad had obviously gone to work, don't know where my stepmother was, but I was locked in the house for about seven hours, no heating, no water, no food. And I – at some point as a seven year old, I don't know where I got the idea from but I had the notion to tie the bed sheets together and I climbed out of the window and I got rescued with an aunt across the road. She contacted the local authority, the police, what would have been social

services today, the welfare department, and I was immediately then just taken into care of the local authority, the children's home just up the road from Nottingham. And I stayed there for about two months, wonderful experience there before being taken into the care of Barnardo's in 1950. So my first sort of seven eight years was [laughs] not good.

[06:36]

*So how old were you when you got taken into care?*

I would have been seven, seven and a half then 'cause I was born in '42 so this was '49, so I would have been about seven, seven and a half.

*And how long was your father married to your stepmother before you went into care?*

[Sighs] That would have been virtually the year before, I think they married in 1948. But I spent the first four years with an aunt living in Nottingham, but basically I wasn't wanted, I was basically unloved, unwanted, so I was passed from pillar to post. And it wasn't until 1948 when my dad remarried that I moved to live back with my dad and my stepmother and that's when obviously the abuse and the neglect took part. She did make it abundantly clear when she married my father that she was not going to have anything to do with me, she wasn't going to look after me, so I was basically a guttersnipe doing my own thing. I was getting no treatment for my polio, and it was the school that picked up on this when – when I was about seven and that's when somebody sat up and started taking a bit of notice. 'Cause I was going to school in a filthy disgusting state, holes in my shoes, my leg irons weren't repaired, so life was – was spiralling downwards. And I think taken into care and particularly the Barnardo's care in the later years, I'm under no illusions that had that not happened I would have certainly finished up in one of two places, I would have been six feet under or in prison and I've no illusions about that whatsoever.

*So do you remember the first night you went into care?*

Yes, it was nice because I went to this home in Beeston with a lot of other boys, who apparently were a little bit older than me but I do remember for the first time I was getting some attention, I was getting looked after, I'd got a nice warm bed, I'd got regular clean clothes, three meals a day, other children to play with. And I remember it was just before Bonfire Night 'cause I can remember they had this huge bonfire and the firework display, etc, but the one thing that I do remember about this particular home at Beeston, they had got this beautiful big garden so there was a play area, and at the bottom of this garden was a wooden workshop with woodwork tools in, and I found myself spending time in this woodwork shop making things out of wood. Now nobody had ever taught me, I was seven years of age [laughs] and I always say that thank goodness it was 1949 and not 2013 'cause health and safety I would never have got through the door [both laugh] so yeah and that was – and I'd got other kids to play with and it – it was – it was a complete life changing cycle in two months, you know, I was getting some attention, I was getting looked after, I was away from the abuse and the violence and everything else.

*So how – how long were you in care for?*

I was in care of the local authority just for that couple of months until January 1950, then I went into the care of Dr Barnardo's and I stayed in care [clears throat] excuse me, until 1959. So I was in care for almost ten years, nine of which was with Barnardo's.

[10:50]

*So what was the difference between the previous care home and Barnardo's?*

A lot of difference. The first one that I went to at Woodford Bridge, six months I think I was there, and I'll be perfectly honest I absolutely hated the place, I'd lost my freedom, the regime was quite strict, obviously I'd probably didn't like doing as I was told 'cause I hadn't had to do that, and but story that I always tell and I don't know why it sticks out in my mind, the very first night that I was there the house parents confiscated my teddy bear, I'd got a teddy bear that was obviously a comfort toy. Not

sure where it came from, whether I've had it that particular Christmas before going into care with – from an aunt or whether I'd had it some time, but I know it did – it absolutely devastated me because I stamped and I squealed and I can remember even now I actually made a story up that I'd got an uncle that was in the army and he was going to come along and shoot them [clears throat]. But it didn't work, did not work and from that moment on I – I sort of knuckled down and realised that I'd got to start doing as I was told. But the first four or five months I was at Woodford Bridge I didn't particularly like it, I did settle down eventually before being transferred to one of their other homes at Barkingside which was another story and a completely different way of life. [Coughs] Can I just have a ... I've got a frog in me throat. [Pauses for a drink]. Fine.

[12:55]

*You mention that at your Woodruff House?*

At?

*Woodfield, how did you say?*

Woodford, Woodford Bridge.

*Woodford Bridge you mentioned that you had lost your freedom, what did you mean by that?*

Because of the way I was living with my dad and stepmother who cared very little about what I did, so consequently there were many days when I wasn't at school, when I was playing truant, basically doing my own thing, you know, I'd just hop on a bus, scrounge a penny and get the bus fare down to Trent Bridge, Trent Bridge was one of my favourite places, I spent a lot of time just messing with that, down by the river and things like that. Then I'd come back home when I knew it was teatime. Basically my – my dad was at work obviously and I think my stepmother just really didn't care where I was, or what I was doing, whether I was there or not, so that was

the sort of freedom I'd had. Then of course obviously when I went into care, particularly at Woodford Bridge I'd got to do as I was told, I'd got to go to school and I don't know, maybe it was just a point that because for the first time somebody was actually showing me some attention and actually looking after me, that I sort of went along with it if you like and settled down and started doing, you know, as I was told. It – it wasn't too bad, but there was certain things that I didn't like about it, for that very reason, but then when I changed to the other Barnardo home, the way of life there was completely different.

*So how did it make you feel knowing that your stepmother didn't care about you and your father wasn't there?*

At the time ... at the time it – I don't think it worried me because I didn't know any different, I didn't know any other way of life and to sort of be away from her was in many ways the best thing. And I – I did used to be frightened when I came home at teatime, when I did go to school and I came back from school, just what she was going to say to my dad 'cause I knew that whatever she was said was untruths, and I knew what the outcome later that evening was going to be; it was – it was a good hiding and – and the leather belt across my backside.

*Could you give an example of something that she said?*

Erm, no she'd just make stories up that I'd done this and done that. I know on one occasion she did say to my dad that the shop across the road had accused me of stealing something, which turned out totally untrue, and [coughs] excuse me, I got a good hiding for that. So this was why I used to resent her and even – well it's another story many years later when I went to live back at home things changed and after I'd come out of care and was working, and there was still a sourness and we just didn't get on. But that can wait till obviously as you ...

[16:54]

*So could you tell me about the difference between the Barnardo's home and Woodford Home?*

Well Woodford was a Barnardo home as well but when I went to Barkingside it was – it was a completely different way of life. The village at Barkingside was beautiful, and we – we lived in cottages with twelve boys, or twelve girls, there was I think something like sixty cottages in the village which was something about sixty acres of land. And we were sort of allocated house parents to each cottage. I got two excellent house parents, a couple called Ray and Marjorie Cook who sadly have passed on many years ago but they – they really really were committed, dedicated to looking after the children, and they were very quick on picking up on anything that we showed an interest in. So if we were interested in say art or model making, in my case it was woodwork, or anything like that, they would very quickly pick up on it, encourage you to pursue that interest. And that stood me in good stead a lot later in life because come Christmas and birthdays and the likes, I would get all the things like the model planes, the woodwork sets, the Meccano sets and I was able to pursue – I'd got a natural ability to use my hands. And apparently when I first went into care at the age of seven I'd got the education of a five year old, but the ability to – to be practical ... does that make sense [laughs]?

[18:58]

*Yeah. So you mentioned that there were cottages, at the Barnardo's village, yeah, and you had two parents allocated to a cottage, yeah, so were those two people with ... the rest of the twelve other children in the house, in the cottage?*

Yeah, it was normally a married couple, occasionally it wasn't a married couple, it might be two males, two females, and we had an assistant as well, we called them all uncles and aunts so they would be responsible for generally looking after us, keeping the cottage clean, I wouldn't say educating us 'cause we went to the local schools, obviously there was a school in the village which I went to for a short time. But because there was more children than the school could allocate a lot of the children went to local schools outside the village. So we just had a sort of a basic ...

secondary education, I think – I'm trying to think what the school was called, I think it was Gearies Secondary Modern in Ilford which was where I went. But it wasn't just the education, I was for the first time getting some treatment for my polio. The village at Barkingside had a massage department and I used to go there a couple of times a week to receive treatment for my polio so for the first time in my life I was actually receiving treatment for my disability, and they also used to send me a couple of times a week to Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital for further treatment. And that was great because I actually learnt to swim in their hydro pool and that stood me in good stead many years later in life, it still does, I still swim.

*[Clears throat] sorry [laughs].*

It's okay [laughs], I had the same problem.

[21:22]

*So ... you mentioned about ... getting treatment for your polo?*

Polio.

*Polio, could you tell me how that made you feel?*

Great, because I think it did improve, it improved my physical condition a lot more, it was – I'd got to the point where it was – well I don't think you could ever cure polio, you could only help it and we used to get, it was like electric shock treatment, we used to have to sit with our legs or if it was an arm or a hand in a tank of water where electric – electrodes were sort of connected to it and it would give a sort of tingling effect and the idea was was for it to stimulate the muscles and if you could get the muscles stimulated it created an improvement in the circulation. So and it just generally made you, you know, feel better. And I – at least I was able to have callipers that fit properly and a surgical boot that fit properly and it – it actually didn't really affect me, because I'd been basically – well I wouldn't say born with it but I've had it since I was eighteen months old I just grew up with it [coughs] excuse me, and I

just grew up with it and like any disability or illness eventually you come to live with it don't you? And I just generally in my own mind, in my own body I just felt better, was quite active, I – I used to play football and cricket and swimming, I used to join in with the other – the other kids doing everything that we could. And we were actually encouraged to do that, that was one of the things that Barnardo's or being in care did, it to get you involved with other children and you – you stop feeling different, stop feeling isolated because I think in the early days of – of my childhood I felt different to other kids obviously because of the disability. And it – it is – it has been said in some of my Barnardo reports actually that there was times when I would probably tend to take advantage of that situation [laughs], you know, because sometimes there'd be a little bit of sort of petty directing [ph] in my direction, so – and I think I used to take advantage of that [laughs].

[24:11]

*So could you tell me about a daily routine in – in the Barnardo's home?*

In the Barnardo home? At Barkingside we'd just basically get up in the morning, and like any other family home we'd have to wash, clean our teeth, have a bath, there were no showers I remember, it was a bath. Then we'd have breakfast, well get dressed first obviously, have breakfast and then it was just like any other day, off to school, until we came home in the evening. And then you get your tea, a little bit of leisure time, we could basically do what we wanted to do in – if the weather was nice we'd play outside, if it wasn't so nice then we'd play inside, basically same as any other child would do in a family home, the only difference was there was twelve of us with house parents rather than maybe a couple with a mum and dad. No television so of course we had to make our own entertainment and do whatever we wanted to do. So from the point of view it – it was basically like any other childhood but you hadn't got that one to one relationship, you hadn't got the same ... the same sort of loving relationship, you know, you very rarely got sort of an arm around you with a hug and a kiss or anything like that, that was the one side that we didn't get. But then when you'd never had it which I hadn't at home it was something you probably don't miss.

*So could you describe the house, the cottage?*

The cottage? Yeah, very – how can I describe it, pointed roof [laughs], like a lot of houses, we'd got a playroom, we'd got three dormitories with three four beds in a dormitory or bedroom if you like, a little bit of basic furniture, side of the bed and a wardrobe to – to put your few clothes in. I do remember we didn't have lots of clothes, probably a couple of changes of clothes a week would have probably been it, unless you were fortunate to have relatives that, you know, would buy those little extra things. Barnardo's provided the basics, you know, you got trousers, you got shoes, you got socks, you got an overcoat for the winter months, quite basic clothing.

*Did you share a room at all?*

Yes, 'cause we had three or four beds in a room so we never had our own room. I never in the whole of my time in care did I ever have a room of my own. And I was in three Barnardo homes so –

*Very –*

Well two Barnardo's and the local authority one for the first two months when I first went into care. But even there you see we slept in dormitories with about six or seven boys.

*So your first placement was for two months?*

Was for two months, that was the local authority care.

*Local authority, and your second placement was for?*

About five months, five, six months, yeah.

*Yeah, and your third one was the cottage?*

Was the cottage at Barkingside where I stayed for five years.

*And that was for nine years – oh five years.*

Yeah, from '50 to '55.

[28:07]

And then I moved onto a technical school which was also a Barnardo home in Hertford, and there we had 200 boys [laughs] and that was a training school which I'm quite happy to come to when you want to get that far.

*And what did they help you with in that?*

Oh that was – it was a place called Goldings and it was probably one of the finest Barnardo homes in the country. The other one I would say was probably Parkstone in Dorset which was a naval training school, but Goldings was a technical school and always a big demand to go there because every – most child – most children that were in Barnardo care wherever they were and I think Barnardo's had something like eighty children's homes all over the country, and most children in Barnardo homes knew – boys anyway 'cause it was only a boys home, knew about Goldings, it was sort of the ... what would you say, the Cambridge University of Barnardo homes if you like. And it was a technical school and the idea was that you went to Goldings to learn the trade of your choice. And you only had two ways of going to Goldings, one you would be selected by the parents or the house parents of the home that you was in, depending on what sort of interests and aptitude you'd got, the other was by request because everybody knew about Goldings, and I asked to go to Goldings because I wanted to learn a trade. And 200 boys in this huge big house in the Hertfordshire countryside, I forget how many staff but there must have been thirty or forty staff, sort of house parents and teachers and training staff, and the trades that you had the choice of learning, if I can remember them all now, was carpentry, boot and shoe making, repairing, sheet metalwork, painting and decorating and if you'd got a bit of grey matter the printing industry which of course that was a seven year

apprenticeship so you had a full proper apprenticeship there. And you went to Goldings normally as a thirteen year old, spending the first two years in the junior – what they called the juniors and you would go to school four days a week for your basic education and one day a week learning the trade of your choice. Then at the age of fifteen the roles reversed, you moved from the juniors to the seniors, and you had four days a week in the workshop learning the trade of your choice and one day basic education. And you normally stayed at Goldings till you was about seventeen, seventeen and a half, so most people would be at Goldings virtually four years. If you were doing the printing of course you would then go on to do a full printing apprenticeship which would keep you there for a further three years, so I learnt a trade, two trades [laughs].

*What trade did you learn?*

I did – I did carpentry to start with, and I kept that going for about a year, and you were allowed to change trades once, and I got a bit fed up with the carpentry and decided that I wanted to do boot and shoe making, but I carried on doing carpentry at night school in the winter ‘cause we had night classes if you wanted them, you know. And I then switched to boot and shoe making which is what I continued doing for almost the remaining three years, before I left Barnardo’s in 1959. So I came out basically with a skill of a carpenter and a shoemaker/shoe repairer. And both those jobs combined kept me in work for almost twenty-five years in one industry.

*What industry was that?*

I was a prosthetic technician, worked at the local hospital in Nottingham and my job was making and repairing artificial limbs which I did for almost twenty-six years and that was all thanks to the training that I got at Barnardo’s in care.

[33:20]

*So could you tell me a bit more about your life before care?*

There wasn't a lot there [laughs]. As I say I was just wandering the streets, doing my own – own thing, living in a bad home with as I say a lot of abuse, physically, mental abuse, I really hadn't got a life. Although I mean my dad and stepmother had had three more children so I've actually got three half sisters [coughs]. Only one of those was born while I was still giving with them, the other two were born obviously during the years that I was in care so I had very little – little dealings with – I wasn't brought up with them obviously.

*Did you have a relationship with them while you were in care?*

Not – not really because partly because we were 130, 140 miles apart. My dad very rarely – well I say very rarely, my dad did come to see me while I was in care, Barnardo's did allow visits from family, but he like all of us we came from a very very poor background, no money obviously in those days, although my dad was working, I don't – I don't quite know what he did but he didn't have a particularly good job. So for him to come and visit me would take a lot of saving to – to find the money. And occasionally he would bring one of the girls, normally the middle one, Audrey, my half sister, who we are now very very close. Because we – we've got a lot in common, she was also abused by her own mother, physical abuse and mental abuse, not sexual abuse fortunately, but mental and physical, and she was very close to my dad, which was also her father. And she was told that when she reached sixteen years of age she was out on the street, and she came home from school one day and her mother had packed all her stuff in black bags and it was on the doorstep and it was at that point that she came to live with me and my dad. And we've been very close ever since. I mean we talk about it now, you know, we reminisce about her mother, my wicked stepmother, she didn't have a particularly good relationship with her mum because of what happened. I mean she knew that I'd been taken into care because of her and of course she learnt the lesson herself when her own mother threw her out, she came to live with me and my dad. So yeah we – we're still very very close and we're like brother and sister basically. The oldest one died several years ago from TB, the youngest, Christine, we don't even know where she is now, she's around in Nottingham somewhere. Apparently many many years ago she became a lady of the night and then the last we heard several years ago she'd become a born again

Christian, but neither of us have seen her. So my sister's married, happily married now, she's fine, we keep in touch, we see each other, in fact I'm going to see her next week and yeah from that point of view that's our family, just me and my half sister.

[37:28]

*So do you have any memories of ... feeling vulnerable when you were young?*

Erm, I don't think I did at the time, but sort of looking back and thinking now I must have been very vulnerable, life in those days of course in, you know, in the '40s and early '50s for kids to be out on the street was a safe environment, I don't think the – the sort of child abuse, and sex abuse that's present today was around or certainly not as prevalent as it was in those days. I'm pretty sure it probably existed but of course we didn't have the media to publicise it all so we – if it was going on we were just innocent and didn't realise it. But I don't – I don't recall any experiences in, you know, in that area, other than the physical and mental abuse I got from my dad and my stepmother.

*Is there anyone you could talk to at that time?*

Not really, no. I'd got an aunt that lived across the road, like a lot of families I don't know the background to it but there was a family feud, my auntie's husband didn't like my dad so I wasn't allowed in their house, and the only time that I would go over across to my auntie's house was when her husband was at work. And that was the only sort of relationship that I had with that particular aunt who was very close, I'd got other aunts but no that there was nowhere where I could really turn to. I think I did have a teacher, in those first three or four years, and I know the head – the head teacher of the school was very concerned about me and I think – I don't know, I think in those days there wasn't the option to go and talk about things like this, you just got on with it, it was a part of life. But as I say looking back now I must have been very vulnerable, I must put myself at risk time after time, you know, begging and hopping on the buses down at Trent Bridge [laughs] to spend the day rather than be at school, so yeah I'm – I'm sure I was certainly at risk but not realising it then. I think today –

you know, when I went into – even when I went into Barnardo's at the age of, I was sort of thirteen, fourteen, we were allowed out of the home to go and do what we wanted to do, and I'd – one of my main interests was football and I was a Forest supporter, and whenever Forest came down to London to play I would go and watch them, we were allowed out of the home. You know, twelve, thirteen year old boys travelling across London on the underground in those days was a safe environment. I don't think we'd do it today would we [laughs]? Thinking about it. But I – I'd come into London, you know, travelling – that's why I know the London area so well because as a child I've travelled around the tube system and know where the football grounds are down here. Putting it like this, if I was the parent of any child today, I certainly wouldn't allow twelve year old, thirteen year old to travel unaccompanied around London, going to football matches and things like that. I think I'd be a little bit protective [laughs].

[41:59]

*What were your coping strategies, 'cause you mentioned that you couldn't – you couldn't talk to anybody about it so how did you cope with the situation?*

I don't – I don't really know, I think I just ... just bottled it and got on with it, and I think we did in those days, I'm sure we did. A little bit different of course once I was in care because there was people I could talk to, but then I didn't have those sort of problems because I'd been taken away from the abuse and, you know. I mean my – my experience in care were good, mainly positive, had its bad moments like everything else, you know, if you misbehave you got punished. Although we didn't think at the time we should do, you know, because we were in children's homes so why should we be punished further, I think that was basically the attitude. But [coughs] no, I mean if I had a problem and I know I could turn to the house parents and occasionally we did if it happened. But it – it was two totally different ways of life, you know, I was experienced being looked after, having some attention, getting treatment for me polio, being involved, other kids to play with and generally, you know, life was pretty good. And I know 'cause I've got my Barnardo records, and apparently it – when I was first taken into care with the local authority I did

apparently turn around to the welfare worker who was handling the case and I said something to the effect that at least I won't have to see my dad again. You know, which is a ... some indictment to make isn't it? I was never really close with him and even when I went back to Nottingham. I think because of this abuse that I'd had, I think to a certain degree I think I was probably frightened of him, and yet I was six foot one, my dad was five foot five and about seven stone wet through, and I was frightened of him. I say frightened, maybe more out of respect than anything else, you know, because I – I know in my own mind that if my dad had done anything in that way when I was seventeen I would have probably battered him 'cause I was physically capable of doing it.

[45:01]

*So do you remember how you were taken into care, 'cause you mentioned that you read your report, do you remember how it actually happened or?*

Hmm, yeah.

*Could you tell me about that?*

I remember exactly what happened on the day. As I say I'd climbed out of the bedroom window, my aunt had contacted the police and the welfare department, she'd taken me across to her house and the only reason she was able to take me across there of course 'cause her husband was at work [laughs], I would never have been – it would never have happened, I don't really know what would have happened and I can remember going across there, I was given a bath, I was given a hot meal, this was early afternoon. I was given some clean clothes but I don't know where these came from, now whether she'd fetched them from our house I don't know, because there was nobody there of course, we don't know where my stepmother was, my dad was at work, they eventually traced my dad and I remember him coming back before I was put in the car and taken to this children's home down the road, and I remember being given this nice overcoat which I'd never had before, this sort of winter coat and we were talking about second third of November, snow on the ground, it was freezing

cold. And I remember just being put in the car with somebody from the local authority which was probably have been a social worker I guess, who escorted us to the children's home. And I can just remember when – when we arrived I was shown to the dormitory, I was given some sweets [laughs], it seems strange, but life just seemed to completely change, I think I sort of looked around the environment and thought I like this. I think probably because somebody was actually paying attention and actually feeling something for me, which obviously I hadn't had for certainly the last three or four years.

*Was the first home where they took your treasured teddy bear?*

No, that was Barnardo's that did that.

*Ah.*

But I – I know the reason why they did it, I mean obviously I'm involved with Barnardo's a lot more now so I know some of the thinking's behind it, and apparently the reason they did it was because when you went into Barnardo's care, the idea was to physically if possible break every tie and connection from your past, that was apparently the thinking behind it. To, you know, make that complete cut from your old life, this is now your new life and this is the way you're going to live it so it was to break the tie. And I know it was several months before I had any visits from relatives.

*At your first placement, yeah.*

Yeah. No not the first one, Barnardo care, the – the Barnardo policy was different to the local authority policy which of course I was only there for two months anyway.

*Okay, so is this the second or first Barnardo's home?*

I remember having a visit from an aunt not very long after I'd gone in, and then I never saw any more of my relatives until I moved to Barkingside and it must have

been – I mean I can't say for certain but – or certainly seen – it was probably nearly two years before my dad came to see me. And I think to that – to that point Barnardo's was obviously protecting me because they wanted to make sure that I was fully settled, and I'd got that past life out of my system. And they had to – they had to write into Barnardo's and get permission, they couldn't just turn up and visit, and that would have to have been done three or four weeks in advance. But I – I was very fortunate that I'd got two aunts that actually lived in London, one lived in Shepherds Bush and the other one lived in Poplar. The one in Shepherds Bush was my mother's sister who of course I never knew because she died when I was three weeks old, and my aunt in Poplar was my dad's sister, and they did used to come and visit me quite frequently, and I used to go and spend weekends and later years spend holidays with them. But the initial – the initial couple of years there was very little – very little connection with my past, I think Barnardo's were more concerned about getting me settled, sorted, and – but and I know my dad couldn't afford to keep travelling down to London, that was one of the things. I think that was partly part of it but I also, I think there was also a part of it that he didn't particularly want to, but whether there was a sort of a guilt complex at some time I don't know. But as I said when I went back home, I never really felt close, even when we were living together after six or seven months of going to live back in Nottingham, they split up, my stepmother and my dad split up permanently and I lived with my dad for about four years. But there was never – we got on okay but there was never what you would call really close, we never sort of sat down and had a – a father son heart to heart, you know.

[51:33]

*So when he came to see you how was it, what did you talk about or?*

It was quite traumatic. Erm, my dad wasn't – by all account – I mean I can't say for sure ... I have my Barnardo records, everything that sort of happened in those early days, but those records can only contain what they've been told. Now some of the information that they're told some would be true, some would certainly be untruths, and they described my dad as lazy, a heavy drinker, a heavy gambler, of gypsy stock, and when I actually had access to my records some years ago, my sister came with

me. Barnardo's were very good at sort of slowly introducing the documentation because it wouldn't suit everybody. And when they went through the first page and gave us this little bit of information [laughs] I remember my sister looked at me and said, 'That's not our dad that they're talking about,' and we slowly over a period of time and certainly the years that followed, some of the stuff that was in my Barnardo's records was obviously stories that my stepmother had given them and a lot were just totally unfounded. So you know, my dad wasn't this drunken idle gambling man, although I – I know for a fact that when my mother died he went off the rails for a while and I suppose when you've been married to somebody for fifteen years and something like that happens it's quite understandable. And there is a mention that at some point he served a prison sentence and he also had the birch [laughs], now again I can't confirm whether that actually happened but it's in the Barnardo records, so whether it's true, whether it came from my stepmother, there's an element of doubt there, but my sister said, 'This isn't our dad that they're talking about,' and she was far closer to him than, she lived with the family while I was in care, so – I mean I've learnt a lot more from my sister than – about my early days than, you know, that's why I know so much, although I've still got a pretty good memory of a lot.

[54:30]

*You mentioned a birsh?*

The birch?

*Yeah, what –*

Yeah, my dad got the birch, yeah.

*Yeah, could you elaborate on that?*

I don't really know, fortunately I've never had it myself. It was ... I mean I've only heard it described, I know it – I know it was a punishment they used to use in the Isle of Man, and apparently it's some sort of twigs and branches woven together and used

as a – a sort of a ... an instrument for beating. So it must have been quite – quite unpleasant. Something to Google [laughs].

[55:17]

*Yeah, you were saying you've learnt so much from your sister.*

Hmm.

*Would you say – what would you say she means to you?*

Everything, she's ... what I didn't have as a child, you know. I only knew her for a very brief time when I went back to Nottingham, to live with my dad and my stepmother, because that was the only – I don't know, six, seven month, probably no longer than that that I lived there as a family, you know, I'd got three sisters living under the same roof for the same time in my life. I can remember Anne being born, the oldest one, and I can remember that – that went about – she would have been born about 1948. She was, she was born – she was born in February 1948 because my dad married my stepmother in the September of the same year. And I always said [laughs] that I think that was the reason they got married because children out of wedlock in those days was frowned upon. But I can remember my aunt coming over to the house one morning and I can – it's as vivid as if it happened today, she picked me up in her arms and she said, 'I've got something to tell you,' I said, 'What's that?' she says, 'You've got a sister,' and of course I would only be, what six, five or six then, she says, 'You've got a sister,' and I remember she picked me up in her arms and she took me through to the front room and my stepmother was in bed with Anne at the side of her, so that was my first – and it wasn't very long after that I – I think Anne could have only been virtually a few months old, less than a year old, she was born in '48 and I went into care in '49, so that was the only short time that I sort of lived as a family. And the other two of course, Anne and – Audrey and Christine were both born while – during the period that I was in care, the two following years. So I never knew them other than when my dad came to visit me and would sometimes bring Audrey, the middle one, and then the only other time I really knew them was I

went back to spend a summer holiday with them, back in – probably halfway through my period at Golds, which would have probably been '56, something like that. I went back for a summer holiday and that was the only sort of two weeks that I had what you would call the entire family around me, my three sisters or half sisters and my stepmother and my dad. And it – it was okay that two weeks holiday, we managed, and I think that was probably the reason why when I finally left Barnardo's two years later that I went to live back in Nottingham, with them, you know, cramped in this little two up, two down terraced house [laughs], four kids and two adults so it was [laughs], you know.

*How did it – do you remember how you felt when you were told you had a sister?*

No, I ... I don't think I really knew what a sister was, you know, because as I say I would have been born in '42, this was '48 so yeah I'd be five and a half, six, never having had a brother or sister around me, it was just me. But I don't ... no, it – it's a difficult – difficult question to answer but as I say I can remember my auntie taking me through, there was my stepmother in the front room in bed with the baby in her arms. It was a – a strange – strange circumstance.

*FS: Sorry to interrupt, can I let you know that you've had an hour so –*

Have we, that's gone quick hasn't it, yeah.

*FS: So it's up to you if you want to have a break now?*

Yeah, we can have five minutes if you like if –

*Yeah, that'd be handy.*

*FS: Okay, so stop the camera rolling.*

[Break in recording]

[01:00:14]

*MS: Camera rolling.*

*Could you tell me about support systems that you had while you were in care?*

I don't really remember having any, what do you mean by actual support systems?

*Support systems in terms of academic support ... relationship support?*

[Sighs].

*Emotional support?*

No, I don't think – I mean the later years of – as I say when I was at Goldings learning a trade, we got the support from the tutors obviously anything that we wanted to know, we'd get the help but it was basically the learning of your trade. Emotional support, I wouldn't say there was a lot, I mean one thing about being brought up in Barnardo's, I don't know about other care homes, etc, you were not so much left to your own devices and I wouldn't say that Barnardo's condoned what we would call bullying today, but we were basically told to stand on our own two feet. You know, get on with it, live in the real world, and I know we used to joke about it, we had a member of staff at Goldings, he's not alive anymore sadly, his wife is, and he was a physical training instructor, he was a physical training instructor in the army, quite a hard man and but fair. And I remember well what – we used to joke about it, but if a lad say went to his – went to him and said, 'Well, you know, Fred Bloggs has hit me,' he'd say, 'Look lad,' he'd say, 'go down to the carpenter's shop, get a three foot length of two by one and go back and hit him with it,' [laughs] and we used to joke about that. But that was really the only support, so in other words you were told go and stand on your own two feet, you know, if he's hit you hit him back. But it wasn't condoning bullying or violence, I think it was to teach you just to stand on your own two feet, you know, and I learnt from that because I have to be perfectly honest, from the day that I left Barnardo's I wouldn't like to think anyway that I've ever let

anybody walk rough shod over me, I'll always stand up for myself and defend myself and ... you know [laughs]. Rightly or wrongly, if I think, you know, if I think that wall's pink then it's pink, that's the end of it [laughs].

*So who would you say would ask you –*

Who would?

*Who would ask you how you were doing ... or how you were coping?*

I think probably the headmaster of the home, a guy called Mr Wheatley, a superb excellent head of the school. Got no hair, his nickname was Pinhead, everybody called him Pinhead, he knew he was called Pinhead. He had a son who lived at Goldings at the same time as us, about my generation [clears throat], later went onto Cambridge University, played cricket for Cambridge University and is still around and still comes to our old boys' reunions, and still calls himself a Goldings boy. And he will often comment, he always say a few words at the reunion, he'll put something on the website occasionally and he actually says that if his father was alive today he would be proud of the way the Goldings boys have progressed and done things in their life. And he was ... he changed Goldings, he – apparently he came to Goldings in 1945 before I was ever there and Goldings apparently was a bit of a – not a rough place, but it was a very very strict regime and today you would probably call some of it perhaps a little bit cruel, you know, the punishments and the treatments and he came apparently in 1945 and felt that there was a time for a change, this is not the way that kids in care should be treated. And he basically changed the whole regime within a couple of years and if you go onto the Goldings website and read anything about him you'll find that there is nothing but praise for what he did for the boys that were under his care anyway. And I mean I've – I've got fond memories of him, he was a good headmaster, I got a bit of attention from him and I remember at the time I was at Goldings I was interested in painting, watercolour painting and I used to do a lot of it, sadly I've never done any since I left Barnardo's in 1959, whether I could even paint anything now I don't know. And he was an artist himself, very good oil painter and I remember doing a couple of paintings and I'd done one particular painting in the

church, we'd got our own church at home and I'd done this watercolour painting and he saw it and he said, you know, he said, 'That's very nice,' he says, 'now what I want you to do,' he says, 'I want you to go back, do it again and get the perspective right this time.' And he said, 'If you get it right,' he says, 'I'll give you a little treat.' So I went back into the church one Sunday afternoon and I redid this painting, made an improvement on it apparently, and took it to show him on the Monday and he said, 'Right,' he said, 'after school tonight,' he says, 'come up to my study,' which I did, so I went to his study and for the first time – I'd been at Goldings about two years, two and a half years, and for the very first time in my life, and it was a rarity for any boy to get taken up to his own private quarters, and he'd mounted a canvas on a frame, and a pot of oil paints, he said, 'Now that's your reward,' he says, 'now go and do it again but this time in oil paintings,' and that was the – the sort of attention and dedication. So if you did something it got recognised and you was encouraged to pursue that interest. And I have never ever forgotten that and I've never ever forgotten that was the very first time I went up to his own private quarters.

*What does that memory mean to you?*

Everything, everything. And I see his son now, David, and I mean we were at Goldings at the same time obviously but he'd lived a slightly different life but he knew the mischief that we used to get up to, and sometimes if he'd catch us where we shouldn't be like in the orchard scrumping or out of bounds on – 'cause Goldings stood in 200 acres of land of which about 180 of it was out of bounds to us boys [laughs]. And if he caught us he'd say, 'I've seen you, now this time I won't tell my father,' [laughs] but if ever he saw us again he would tell his father and we'd be on report. And I remember talking to him a couple of years back at one of the Barnardo's staff whose funeral we was attending, and we'd gone to this club afterwards for the, you know, the what do you call it, the wake or whatever. And I remember saying to him, we were just talking generally and I said, 'Do you know David,' I said, 'never forgive your dad,' he'd say, 'he once give me six of the best,' and I did, I got six of the best [laughs], that was when caning was being used. And he turned around to me and said, 'If my father gave you six of the best, Alan dear, it means you deserved it,' [both laugh] and that was his philosophy, 'cause he, you

know. And that is another memory that has just stayed there. So my time there was good. And a lot of people that I was there with are still around and we've all got the same – same sort of feeling, but yeah Mr Wheatley was an excellent – looked after hundreds of boys, and we all came out of Goldings level headed, you know, I like to think law abiding citizens and I think most of us have made something out of our lives. The odd one or two has gone astray, obviously you're always going to get the odd bad apple aren't you in any – any walk of life.

[1:10:44]

*Being shown all this attention, positive attention, do you think that has had an impact on your experience in care?*

Oh yeah, definitely.

*In what – in what kind of way?*

Changed my ... probably changed my outlook in life, I think it – it's influenced my – my early days. I ... basically when I first came out of Barnardo's I was catching up with all my friends who I knew before I went into Barnardo's, you know, living on the street where I lived, because I went back home to the same address. And like all lads we'd only got one interest and we used to go to the pictures and we used to go and play football and for many years I wasn't interested in girls, we – we were too busy doing our own thing, you know. And then I think eventually one found a girlfriend, then another found a girlfriend and I eventually found a girlfriend, got married, had one child in the '60s, my daughter was born in '66, and the marriage didn't last, it – it split up when my daughter was about eighteen months old and she walked out with another fella. But she didn't just walk out on me, she walked out on me and her daughter, Kerry was eighteen months old, nearly twenty months old when that happened. And I thought, what am I going to do? I'd got my aunt across the road who was there for me when I climbed out of the bedroom window that day, I'd got my wife's brother living three doors away from me, and they totally disagreed with what she'd done, cut her off from the family dead, they – they worshipped Kerry, you

know, our daughter. And I said, 'Right,' I says, 'I'm going to find a solicitor,' I says, 'we'll get a divorce,' I said, 'and I'm going to make sure I get custody of my daughter,' and I did, I went to court and got custody of Kerry when she was eighteen months old and I brought her up on my own for eleven years and I can't nail it as to say why but I'm convinced that somewhere there it was to do with my Barnardo upbringing. It wasn't that probably – well it might have been subconsciously I didn't want her to end up in care, but then I was fortunate, I'd got my auntie, I'd got my wife's brother and his wife three doors away and I'd got a damn good employer so I was able to carry on working full time and raise my own daughter till she was eleven, twelve years of age. She had a few aunties in between like, you know, but [laughs] – and then I found somebody else and I got married again. So I – I've had one divorce, two wives who have died, and [laughs] I'm still – still getting married now which I did four years ago. But I like family life, probably because I didn't have it as a child, you know. My daughter's married many years ago, she now lives in the Isle of Wight, she's got a good stable relationship, I've got two granddaughters in their early 20s [coughs] and a great-grandson that's just turned four. So for me [coughs] excuse me, I've got a family again if you like which I didn't have as a child and I'm sure that it – it was by being in care I'm sure that has played a big part.

[1:15:08]

*What was your view of care before you went into it?*

Never knew anything about it, the word care wasn't something I'd ever ever heard of, you know, care is ... it's a word that seems to have been used more, to me anyway in the last twenty years, even when I was in Barnardo's they didn't sort of treat it as well you're in care or you've been in care. Most people that know me or most people that know say, 'You was in Dr Barnardo's,' the word care for some reason is something that's – it's not very often used. It is today, it's a common word isn't it, you know, you say well I was in care 'cause there's so many different types of care, foster care, you know, children's homes, local authority care and of course there's no Barnardo homes now so kids aren't in – in Dr Barnardo's as they used to say anymore. So I feel slightly, you know, mixed feeling on the word care [laughs].

[01:16:24]

*So how would you say you dealt with moving placement after placement after placement, how did you cope with that?*

I coped with it very well because every – everywhere where I moved to I thought things were going to be better and as things turned out they were, you know. Moving to that first placement in Beeston for two months was brilliant because it got me away from the sort of like I said the abuse and I mean we were already in poverty, we got nothing, families hadn't in them days, you know, and the area that I lived in it was full of poverty, everybody was in two up two down terraced houses, nobody had got two halfpennies for a penny [coughs]. And then as I say going into the first Barnardo home, I obviously had no feelings about going – didn't like it as I say, but I – I settled down and then the last two obviously were just improvements all the way. And I – I got a certain amount of freedom because we were allowed to do things that we wanted to do, you know, we were allowed out of the home, although there was a strict, very strict restriction, I mean kids in care today – they can't legally lock them up anymore can they, that's why so many of them sort of wander off onto the streets from, you know, local authority care, etc. And Barnardo's was different because theoretically you weren't allowed to just walk out of the home, you know, when you wanted to, you were being looked after, people were responsible for you and like I say we had the freedom at certain times when we could go out, we had to go back. I did run away on one occasion, about 19 [sighs] ... '50s, '57 I think, as I say I – whenever Forest came to play in London I always used to go and watch the football matches, used to save my pocket money and get on the train from Hertford to Kings Cross and then on the tube to, whether I was going to Tottenham or Chelsea or Highbury or whatever, and I remember this particular time, I don't know why, I'd gone to watch Forest play at Luton. And while I was at the match on the terraces I got talking to some people, obviously from Nottingham, the Forest fans, became very friendly and we really had a great afternoon and then we went back to the railway station, it was St Albans and all the Forest fans was on the other side of the platform, including this little group of people that I'd met waiting for the train to go to Nottingham and I'm on this side of

the platform waiting for the train to go back to St Albans. And I don't know why for the first time in my life I wanted to go back to Nottingham and I just simply walked across the bridge over to the other side of the platform [laughs], met up with these lads, got on the train and walked off at Nottingham Midland Station with a platform ticket [laughs]. Got on the trolleybus, went back home, by now of course it's probably about nine o'clock on the Saturday evening, and the back door was always open, always used to leave the – dad used to leave the back door open and I just walked in. And I can remember him just jumping up in total amazement and my stepmother and saying, 'What the hell are you doing here?' and I told him [laughs]. And I was in deep trouble because it involved the police obviously because I'd gone missing from – from the children's home, from Barnardo's, and I had to stay in Nottingham all week 'cause he couldn't afford the train fare to send me back, although I was told I'd got to go back and I had to wait until he'd been paid on the Friday and then he could afford the train fare to send me back on the Saturday [laughs]. Put me on the train at Nottingham and I was left to make my own way back to Goldings. And I can remember coming out of the railway station and walking through the town and there was one member of staff and he was probably the only member of staff that I didn't like, that I didn't get on with, and he was a – he was a former sergeant major [clears throat] in the army, about five foot seven but very ... 'I'll sort you out when you get back dear man,' he said. And I got back up to Goldings [clears throat], I didn't see him for that weekend but obviously I was in front of headmaster and that was the time that I got the six of the best [laughs]. And it was several months before I was allowed out of the home on my own to go to football matches again [laughs]. But again it – it's – it's a memory that's there, I shouldn't have done it, you know, but I did and it was very very rare that a boy from Goldings would – would abscond. So I think it was an indictment on what a nice place it was to live there, that nobody really wanted to abscond, you know, but I don't know why that was the one time that I just wanted to go back to Nottingham.

[1:22:34]

*Did any – did you have a social worker who – who would ask you why you had done such a thing?*

No, we – we didn't have social workers while we were actually in Barnardo's 'cause everything was dealt with with the staff, we have a social worker, aftercare worker, whatever you wanted to call them, when you left Barnardo's and these were placed in various parts of the country, and at that time you were still under Barnardo's care, although you'd – you'd come out of the home and you was living your own life, you were still technically under Barnardo's care until you reached twenty-one [coughs]. And the social worker would just sort of come once in a while, my particular one lived in Northampton, a guy called Mr Ayres, I can always remember, and the very first time he came I'd only left Barnardo's about four weeks, and he came to the house, my stepmother and my dad was there and he was basically – I mean they kept a record, they knew what you did, knew where you were working, and they could get information from your employer which in those days was permitted, I'm not sure whether it would be today, whether it'd be data protected or I don't know. So Barnardo's knew where you were working so they would contact your employer periodically and if there was anything that your employer was concerned about they would contact Barnardo's, maybe not contact you, you know. I may not know anything about it, if I'd done something that they thought wasn't right [coughs]. But after four weeks he came to see how I was doing, I was working, I'd settled down, and the very first question that they ask and this may seem strange, 'Did Alan come home with a green blazer?' which was our school blazers, 'cause we weren't allowed to bring school uniform home unless you'd won your school colours for sport or anything else. And that was the very first question he asked, 'Has Alan brought a green blazer home?' 'No, I haven't,' [laughs]. But then you would see him for probably every six months, and you didn't always know they were coming, they'd just turn up at the house in the evening or on a Saturday. And it was – it was a bit strange really, you know, obviously in them days you didn't have telephones, you hadn't got your mobiles so everything was just a letter wasn't it so they couldn't sort of contact you at short notice. And that's what used to happen, but they used to get a lot of feedback obviously from your employer, and if you left your job then the employer would contact Barnardo's and say, 'Alan's left this job, don't know where he is now,' and then of course Barnardo's would be back in touch with you, 'How are you doing, what's happening?' so that was the sort of support and back up that we had. But then

at twenty-one of course – today I suppose it would be eighteen ‘cause you’re coming of age at eighteen today, coming of age was twenty-one wasn’t it in those days and then that would be it, after twenty-one it was up to you whether you – the options were there, you know, if you’d got a problem, even now, I’m seventy-one, if I’ve got a problem I can still turn back to Barnardo’s and I’ll get the help and support if they can offer it and if I need it. So you know there is that nice – nice thing about it, it used to be called the welfare, or the aftercare department, now they call it making connections, which is exactly what it means, making connections.

[1:26:46]

*So do you feel that you had any privacy ‘cause you mentioned that –*

Erm, privacy?

*Yeah, in terms of –*

No, no, there was no ... there was no sort of privacy, you didn’t – nobody had a room of their own so there was really nowhere to sort of go on your own if you wanted to, where you’d just wander around the grounds or go somewhere, if you wanted peace and quiet and you wanted to be on your own you just found your own space. But having said that if you had got a problem you could always go to your house parent, because we all had house parents, you know, they all lived on – on the same landing or area – that they had their own staff room obviously, but obviously if they were off duty you’ve got to wait until they’re on duty again. But yeah I mean we – we’d each – we lived in what we called houses, you know, a house would have a name like mine was Pelham and there might be thirty or forty boys living in that, what we called a house, two or three dormitories with one house parent. So in a way that house parent was our father or mother if you like. And if you had got a problem yeah you could go and – you’d get some help and support. The same as if you wanted to go and visit a relative, you know, if I wanted to go and see my aunts in London my first stage was to see my house parent who would then approach the school headmaster, permission given, as long as they knew what the arrangements were, where I was going and I got

a half a crown in my pocket then I could go and do it. Half a crown, two and six, [both laugh], what's that – what it equates today, about twelve and a half p so [laughs].

*So at some point did you ever feel like you didn't want your house parents to know what you were actually doing or what you would have liked to do?*

No, not really, unless it was doing something that I knew I shouldn't be doing [laughs] then obviously you don't approach them, you know.

[1:29:26]

*And how was your birthday celebrated in Barnardo's?*

With the bumps [laughs], used to get the bumps if – if your mates knew that it was your birthday, do you know what the bumps is? They get a blanket, and you've got no cha – you've got no chance because you've got about twenty or thirty of your friends or whatever and they get you down on the floor on the blanket, then they'd all grab a corner and a side of the blanket and you'd be thrown up in the air and bump [laughs], you don't [claps hands] – that's what they called the bumps, I think some schools still do it but it's just grab an arm and a leg now and, you know [both laugh], but ours was we was tossed up in a – in a blanket and just lightly allowed to hit the floor when you come down, that's why they called it the bumps.

*Would you get birthday cards or birthday cake?*

Yeah, I seem to remember getting birthday – I mean obviously you get birthday cards, if you were lucky enough to be in care and you'd got relatives, I mean I had, I'd got a couple of aunts that lived in Nottingham, I'd got my dad and I'd got my two aunts that lived in London, used to look forward to birthdays 'cause you used to get the about half a crown postal order and things like that, you know, basically the only treats. But yeah we used to get – we'd get a birthday card from the house parent, would give us a birthday card, I don't ever remember having a birthday present from the home, but it –

it would get mentioned at school assembly in the morning that it was so and so's birthday today. And then you used to – to wait till dinnertime, 'cause what used to happen, we used to go out on the play – or we called it a parade ground but the playground if you like, and one of the members of staff would have all the letters that's come for anybody so we'd sort of stand on the wall with this pile of stuff and say, 'Smith, Johnson,' whatever, you know, and you'd be standing there thinking is there one for me, is there one for me and if there was your – the first thing you used to think of was I wonder if there's a postal order in it [laughs]. But I – I ... I do remember at Barkingside having a – a birthday card from – I don't know, one of my aunties, and it was the day that I was being – I think I'd told you, Barnardo's used to take me to Great Ormond Street once or twice a week for treatment [clears throat] and I got this birthday card and there was a postal order in it, I think it was about half a crown, two and six this postal order and the ambulance driver that used to take us was the same one every week, so we knew him, you know, you were sort of treated quite nicely. And I remember saying to this guy when we was coming back, 'Can we stop at the post office so I can cash my postal order?' and he did, he actually stopped at the post office, I cashed my postal order, I said, 'And can you stop at the sports shop 'cause I want to buy a cricket bat?' And I remember buying a cricket bat with this money on my birthday and getting back to the home and the house parent in there, Ray and Marjorie going ballistic 'cause I'd got this postal order cashed and spent the money without them knowing anything about it [laughs]. Why – I mean at the end of the day it was my money, it was my birthday but it was just one isolated incident. But yeah in answer to your question, yeah, we got birthday presents, we got Christmas presents, we did very well at Christmas because Barnardo's was extremely well supported from the general public, you know, big London companies used to send toys in and things like that. So really we never went – went – never went without at Christmas. Never.

[1:33:52]

*What about pocket money, you mentioned that earlier?*

Yeah, we got pocket money – I don't remember what I used to get at Barkingside but we used to get pocket money 'cause we used to go across the road to the little tuck shop and buy sweets.

*Would you get pocket money daily, weekly?*

No, just weekly. At Goldings we got pocket money and it – it was scaled up from when you went first went to Goldings, obviously as a junior you got less and as each birthday your pocket money went up a little bit and I remember I think the most mine went up to was two shillings and five pence [laughs], which ten, eleven, twelve p equated to today, something like that. But I did used to get an extra shilling a week 'cause I sang in the school choir, and it wasn't for my singing voice, it was because we got the shilling [laughs]. Yeah, I mean that was an occasion of its own because pocket money was always paid on the Saturday morning, again we'd go on the parade ground and they'd put a table out on – if it was bad weather it was done indoors in the school room but in the summer it was done outside on the playground, and you'd just line up and, 'Dearman two and five, Smith three and six [laughs] and you went away along the line and you got your pocket money. And then you went and had your lunch at lunchtime . And Saturday afternoon was the time when we were allowed out of the home, we could go into town, into Hertford and we could go to the pictures or just go round the shops or do whatever we wanted to do. And we were allowed out from, I think it was from about one o'clock on the Saturday until about eight o'clock in the evening but we had to have our school uniforms on so that we were recognised in town [laughs].

[1:36:00]

*And what would you say that – what would you say father's day and mother's day meant to you?*

Nothing, I don't think we even had them in them days to be quite honest, yeah, I don't remember anything like a father's day or mothering Sunday or, I don't think they even existed possibly then, I don't know. Something else to Google. I hadn't thought of

that actually but no it didn't – didn't mean anything whatsoever in those days. Because most of us, I mean I'd got a step – I'd got a dad and a stepmother, a lot of the guys in there had got no parents at all, you know, they'd either been killed during the war or they'd abandoned them, you know. So there wasn't many that actually said they'd got a mum or a dad or even both. It was very – it was very are actually to be in care if you had got two parents, certainly in Barnardo's anyway, but normally it was because they'd either split, didn't want to know the kids or, you know ... a little bit, yeah probably a little bit different to today kids going into care 'cause most kids that go into care today have probably got parents and maybe they've split up or for some reason they've got into care for other reasons. I don't know. I think the care system today is totally different to what it was – well certainly was different to what it was forty, fifty, sixty years ago.

*In your words could you describe the differences, in your own words?*

No, not really. You know, I – I hear about obviously with – with being involved with Barnardo's, I hear about, you know, young people today being in care, for so many different reasons, as I say at my time it was you wasn't sort of referred to as being in care, you was referred to as being in a children's home or being in Dr Barnardo's. So I don't think I could compare the two to be – to be honest [laughs]. It's a different – different world of care. But both vital obviously.

[1:38:50]

*Do you feel you was ever discriminated for being in care, or being looked after?*

I wasn't, no. I mean this is one of the – this is one of the great things, I mean I suppose in a way I'm fortunate that my time in care was in Barnardo's, apart from that first couple of months in local authority and I think from what I can understand I shouldn't really have been there because I was too young, the boys there were older than me but it was a desperate measure to get me out of my abusive situation that I was in until arrangements could be made for me to go into Barnardo's. And what was the question again, lost my track then [laughs].

*Did you feel you was discriminated for being looked after?*

Ah, no, no, because one of the things that – that Barnardo's did then and they still do and if you look at any of their literature you'll see the same information, Barnardo's don't discriminate against any child, regardless of sex, colour, religion, disability, whatever they may have done, Barnardo's claim that they will always support and look after that child, so the discrimination element doesn't really come into it there. I've probably been discriminated more since I came out of Barnardo's, you know, living in the real world than – than I – if I was abused then I certainly didn't realise what abuse was. Discrimination I should say not abuse.

*You mentioned Barnardo – you've been discriminated since leaving Barnardo's, that – did you feel that you were in another world when you were in Barnardo's, was it different to the world that other people perceived as normal?*

We didn't really know any different, I – I can only compare the two living in the real world now compared to living in Barnardo's, you know, it was like [sighs], how can you – like living in a cocoon, you know, you were sort of sheltered and protected by Barnardo's and you knew very little if any about the outside world, the only thing we knew about the outside world of course if we went to the local school or things like that and of course if we went out on trips with Barnardo's 'cause we were quite well looked after from that point of view, we'd go out to parties and a lot of the big companies in London used to hold annual events for Barnardo's. You know, I'm – I'm very lucky in some ways because I've got some excellent memories. One particular company that was based in London, I'm sure they still exist because they make matches, Brighton May, people that make matches, they had a huge factory, I don't know where, somewhere here in London and every Christmas we used to come to this big Christmas party, you know, and for us jelly and trifle and ice cream and all that [laughs] was special. And Father Christmas used to come and we always used to come home with a present. And we used to do some of the old Scotland Yard, the police used to put something on for Barnardo's, used to be a naval training ship on the Thames not far from where the Eye is now and I remember going to a party on that on

one occasion. Lots of other little companies used to put parties on. And then we would go to places like Earls Court, Olympia, Haringey Arena, and we'd see things like the circuses, Billy Smart's, Tom Arnold, Bertram Mills Circus, we'd go and see ice shows. Two people that I say at the Haringey Arena that stick out in my mind and I always talk about this when I do my talks, was one was the Evangelist, Billy Graham, I don't know whether you've heard of Billy Graham, he was an American well known evangelist. And the other guy that I saw and not many kids can say that they've seen Roy Rogers and Trigger [laughs]. That they were just the good memories, you know, I had the – I had the pleasure, honour, whichever way you look at it, I made a record with Petula Clark. Petula Clark used to do a lot of work for Barnardo's, like a lot of the stars still do, still very connected and we made this record called Where Did My Snowman Go, I don't know whether you've ever heard. I'm such a sad person it's the ringtone on my phone actually [laughs]. And it – we had to rehearse it, oh, for about three weeks and then we went back to Woodford Bridge to actually do the recording and it actually reached number two in the hit parade in 1952 this record, but she did a lot with – so we – we had all sorts of little treats like that as well so it – like I say we sort of lived in our own world if you like.

[1:45:04]

*So what would you say the impact of being in Barnardo's has had on your health and wellbeing?*

Changed my life completely. I – as I say I came out of Barnardo's with a trade in my hand, far better educated than I went in, although I've learnt a hell of a lot more since I've come out [laughs], you know. School was never my favourite – never my favourite place, didn't like English, didn't like maths, I loved science for some reason 'cause we had a brilliant science teacher and all they ever used to do was experiments [laughs] so that – that was okay. And there was the – as I say there was the sporting aspect 'cause I was very interested in sport, got very involved in sports, encouraged as I say to participate in sports. And those that had got a disability were still encouraged to do sports, so I played football and cricket and swimming and everything else, and I went on in later years to get heavily involved in disabled sport. And got very

involved with – with a lot of Paralympians that – I mean Paralympics today has just gone beyond, you know, it's a huge sort of event, isn't it, the Paralympics today which of course you had down here last year. But I was very much involved in – in disabled sport, taking part all over the country at different events and I'm [laughs] very proud that in the '80s I won three national titles, I was the British Polio Sportsman of the Year three times during the '80s, won a lot of medals at the amputee swimming champions, so Barnardo's taught me to swim [coughs]. And I'm ... very – I'm even more proud of this because I went to work as I say at the artificial limb centre making artificial legs which was part of the – the Barnardo training that I would work in the leatherwork [ph] and I worked for the limb centre in Nottingham as I said for twenty odd years. And many years ago I came across a five year old lad who was born without any legs, and I first met him at a swimming gala that I was competing in and he was competing in, later got to know him because he started coming to the limb centre for his legs and I made his very first artificial legs when he was six years ago. And the guy I'm talking about you may have heard of, called Richard Whitehead, our blade runner, won the 200 metres at the Paralympics Games last year and you would have seen him running around the London Marathon just a few weeks back. So I've known Richard for many years and we say that part of that gold medal he won last year, Barnardo's – only just a tiny bit of it but you see without me being in Barnardo's I would never have learnt that trade, I would never have got the job at the limb centre, and would never have met him obviously. But I've – I've worked all my life, rarely been out of work and the only time [laughs], it's ironic isn't it, the only time I was actually out of work was in the late '80s and I got the sack from the limb centre, unfairly dismissed in actual fact, took them to a tribunal and won which is another issue. And I was out of work for about eighteen months and then I got a job and who did I go and work for [laughs], the very people that helped me when I was seven years age, Notts County Council Social Services, I got a job in one of their old folks homes and I was the gardener and handyman, so all those, again the skills that I'd learnt at Barnardo's kept me in work even then [coughs]. So you know, I'm eternally grateful not to Barnardo's but for the care system in general because I know what it's like to have been brought up in care and I know what benefits I've had from it. And I know for a fact that I wouldn't have lived the life that I've lived had I sort of remained at home with my stepmother and my dad. Intriguing isn't it [laughs].

*Yeah. So you mentioned ... you mentioned by gaining a lot of skills through Barnardo's it has had a positive effect on your future.*

Huge effect, yeah.

*What would you be doing right – what would you have been doing if you never had that support from Barnardo's?*

I don't think I'd have been here. I'm – I'm under no illusions I would have finished up definitely in one of two places, I would have been in prison or six feet under.

*So did you have any contact with the police?*

Sorry?

*Did you have any contact with the criminal justice system?*

Only once [laughs]. I was with some friends one year, one Christmas Eve, full of high spirits, had a few to drink, thought I was the world's best goalkeeper 'cause I used to play in goal when I did play football and I remember running down the street and you know how the shops have the – the illuminated signs, the neon signs outside, and this particular street called Market Street right in the centre of Nottingham and at the bottom was a tailor's shop, I don't know whether they still exist actually called Austin Reed, and I remember just running down and jumping up, pretending I was a goalkeeper and this neon sign that was sticking out I hit it too hard and it smashed it [laughs]. And right on the corner – it was the days when you used to have the old blue police boxes, and there was a copper standing there 'cause it was New Years Eve wasn't it, there was a copper standing there and he saw it happen [laughs]. And of course we respected the law in them days, we respected the police and I sort of walked up to him with the tail between – he said, 'Do you realise young man you've just broke that sign?' and I said, 'Yes,' I said, 'I'm ever so,' first time I've been in trouble with the police, or contact with the police, I said, 'Yes, I'm very sorry, I didn't

really mean to do it,' which I didn't, you know, so he took my name and my address, he said, 'Right,' he says, 'on Monday morning when that shop opens,' he says, 'you go into the shop, you apologise to the manager and then when you've done that,' he says, 'you come up to the police headquarters,' which was just up the road basically and he said, 'and you come and see me.' And I got a police caution for that [laughs], so yes I got a police record if you like, just for wilful damage in high spirits and that was my only contact with the police. So yeah [laughs] ...

[1:53:28]

*You mentioned after leaving the Barnardo's home you went onto a special Barnardo's home where they train you.*

Oh Goldings, that's where I learnt my woodwork in the leatherwork skills, yeah, in Hertford.

*Yeah, after that, what happened in terms of after you'd completed four years?*

I left Barnardo's, came out of Barnardo's care then, returned back home to live with my dad and stepmother, got a job at a local shoe shop, shoe repairing. Didn't stay there very long [laughs], it involved working on a Saturday afternoon [laughs] and I had other ideas on a Saturday afternoon, I was too interested in my sport, and I wanted to be at the football in the winter and cricket during the summer. So working Saturdays was never an option for me [laughs], but that was it.

[1:54:35]

*So did you – when did you leave your parent – your father and your step mum's, did you get your own flat after that?*

No, well I – I didn't live there 'cause I – I'd gone to Barnardo's. I went back home, they only stayed together for a few months after I'd come back 'cause I think that's what had caused friction again, stepmother walked out, I stayed there living with my

dad until [sighs], I think it was about four years – about 1966 when I got my own rented accommodation because by then of course I'd met my girlfriend, my daughter had been born, my daughter was born before we got married, that was why we got married. But we did have our own rented accommodation then. But my dad was still alive just living around the corner [coughs].

*So when you got your own accommodation.*

That was lovely [laughs].

*Were you supported by Barnardo's or were you completely independent?*

No, by then I was completely independent 'cause I'd reached twenty-five, twenty-six so my sort of ties with Barnardo's had finished when I was twenty-one.

*Were you still in contact with anybody from Barnardo's?*

Oh yeah, yeah, I mean I used to – used to go back for the school reunions, the old boys' reunions and things like that, but I never had any sort of real, what you would call real hard contact with Barnardo's. They were there if I needed them, I used to write to them occasionally and just tell them what I was doing, but it was many years – probably by the time I'd reached about forty, you know, when the family was off the hands I started to get back involved with Barnardo's again. No I think I'm [laughs] – I'm more involved with Barnardo's every day today than I was when I was in care [laughs], which is great 'cause it's just my way of putting something back.

[1:56:56]

*So when you were living alone, who – when you was living with your girlfriend and your daughter, who was your support?*

None really, we – we were just like an ordinary family.

*Did you have support from any of your other family members or?*

Oh yeah, yeah, we'd got other family members, you know, my aunt was still around, my sister was still around obviously which she still is, my wife's side of the family of course, we were no different to any other couple, you know, we were just a normal family and the care system was something of the past that, you know, that had long gone. But I knew, you know, Barnardo's was always there if I needed them. As I say I used to keep in touch with them occasionally if – obviously I told them when I was getting married and they have a Guild Messenger which is a sort of a for old boys and girls which is published a couple of times a year, so anything of interest they would put in there so that other kids that you knew in care, you know, all those years ago would still – but I kept in touch with a few Barnardo friends. I've got one now, lives in Newark just down the road, not too far from where I live, we were in both the Barnardo homes together and we've remained friends ever since, you know, we've been friends for fifty odd years now. And we – that's where we're spending a couple of days with them next week in York, with – have a little mini reunion, three of us that was at the same home together, a couple of days in York with our wives. You know, exchange a few fond memories again, a few beers, a few meals [both laugh], like you do [laughs].

[1:59:03]

*You mentioned earlier that you accessed your records.*

Yeah.

*Was that an easy process?*

Yeah, erm ... I – I didn't have any reservations about doing it because I knew basically – or could remember, a lot of my past. And as I say [clears throat] my sister who I'm still very close to, was very close to my dad, so I learnt a lot from her about my past as well. So I ... I knew a lot of what had happened and I didn't really think that there was anything in my Barnardo records that would possibly upset me or that I

didn't know about. And in fact the only bit that was in it was that very first piece which I explained about Barnardo's describing my dad as a heavy drinker, gambler, no gooder, but that obviously – that information obviously came from my step mum because my sister said, 'No, that wasn't our dad,' so. [Jump in recording – repeats last sentence]. No I didn't – I didn't have – the only thing that I didn't know, which was a little bit emotional because Barnardo's were very good at – and still are when it comes to, you know, covering people's records, and we met in the Barnardo Project, we were a bit disappointed actually 'cause we were hoping to come down to Barkingside to see my records which because of the big demand at the time Barnardo's sort of used social workers in different parts of the country, and Barnardo's had got a project in Nottingham so we met there. And we went and sat in this room and the guy was sitting there with the folder and he just sort of slowly opened it and he got a brown envelope, he said, 'Before I do anything,' he says, 'just have a look in there.' And we opened this [laughs] – we opened this envelope and my sister almost broke into tears 'cause it was a black and white photograph of me and Barnardo's took a photograph of every child the day that they were taken into Barnardo's and this picture was of me, never seen it before, so that was – that was probably the only emotional part 'cause I'd never seen it and she hadn't seen it, I mean she was in – oh she said, 'Look at that,' you know, seven year old boy there [laughs]. And then –

*How did you feel when you saw it?*

Quite emotional, quite emotional, yeah, it's ... part of my presentations actually 'cause I use it in my presentations when I go doing my Barnardo talks to Women's Institutes and U3A groups, etc. But yeah I – and the strange thing is, it is the only – and I was interested in photography and I remember when I was at the last Barnardo home I always had a camera, but I've got no pictures at all from my time in Barnardo's, other than this one that Barnardo's took [laughs]. So that's the only actual official picture I've got in Barnardo's.

*What were the thoughts that you had when you saw the picture?*

Erm ... I don't really know, I was more concerned about what was in the file, what was going to come out, you know, and after we'd sort of got through the photograph bit we sort of put that down and then I remember the social worker saying, 'Do you remember much about your time in Barnardo's and how you went in,' which of course I did [coughs], you know, and that sort of five and six years of my life I could hardly forget it really so I knew exactly. So he sort of turned the first page over and he said, 'You went into Barnardo's on so and so,' 'Yeah,' 'So and so,' 'Yeah,' and then he slowly started bringing out all these photocopies of different things and there was my school report there, there was one or two things there that I didn't realise what was going on because little did I know that they sort of kept a daily record of anything different. You know, so there was sort of information about my polio treatment, about going to Great Ormond Street, there was some reference to when I had weekend breaks with my two aunties that lived in London and eventually we sort of got through it very gently, over about a two hour period, you know, they were very delicate the way they did it just in case there was something that, you know, maybe you didn't want to know or hear about. But no I – I had no – no fears, no inhibitions about doing it, you know, I just wanted to know – I just wanted to see what had happened over the years in case there was something I had missed. And a lot of the information in there I can recall anyway, but there were just as I say one or two little bits that I didn't realise that they'd sort of [coughs] logged if you like.

So –

*FS: Sorry, can I interrupt just 'cause we've had two hours and five minutes altogether now so if you wanted to have a break now you could, it's up to you.*

Yeah, I could do with a visit to the little boy's room.

*Yeah.*

[Break in recording]

[02:05:55]

*MS: Camera rolling.*

*Has accessing your files changed your life in any way?*

To be honest no, not really, 'cause I'd – as I said earlier I don't think I found anything in my files that sort of came as any surprise. It was nice to know that, you know, records had been kept and which were obviously kept for my benefit, you know, in my best interest, such as records of my polio treatment and things like that, but I just felt that I wanted to see them, you know. I mean that – that all stemmed from ... there was a television programme several years ago now, I think it was called Barnardo's Children and it was when – it – BBC showed it, it was on for three consecutive weeks, one hour programmes and it was just at the time when they'd allowed access to your records. One of the things that the Barnardo's old boys' council did which I serve on now was pressing to have access to our records from Barnardo's, you know, and that it was part to do with I think Data Protection Act and things like that. And I just felt after that that having watched this programme and seen how they'd pressed, I thought it'd be nice just to see my records, it was more for curiosity than anything, as I say I didn't really expect anything to come as a shock. And I thought, you know, with me starting to do the bit of voluntary work that I was doing for Barnardo's and starting to give one or two talks which started as two or three talks a year several years ago to about forty a year now [laughs] since I retired. Just done I think the twenty-sixty one this year [laughs], this week, the two days at Norwich. But no I just thought if there's anything there that I can use in my talks and presentations which there is so no it was just purely out of interest rather than surprise. I mean [laughs] like I say I know a lot of Barnardo kids don't know anything about their background and why they was put into care, at least I did know why I was put into care. But some – some obviously don't, they – whether they've got uncles and aunts, mums and dads that they obviously wanted to know why was I put into care, which is understandable. From my point of view as I say I knew the reason why I went into care and I was glad I went into care to be perfectly honest.

[2:08:58]

*Could you tell me about how you managed your finances once you were living independently?*

Quite easily, you know, that was – I wouldn't say it was something Barnardo's taught us but it was something we learnt, you know, with having a little bit of pocket money we learnt how to sort of look after what little bit of pocket money we'd got. The one thing that we were trained at Goldings was that we had a clothing allowance and you – it was all in – all on paper, you never handled the cash physically, you know, and you was allocated so much money a month and you were allowed to go up to the school stores and select your clothing. So basically you bought your own clothing from your given allowance and if you spent it all that month then you've got to wear the same old pair of underpants for a month or same old pair of socks or, you know, I mean they were laundered every week obviously but we were allowed, you know, to buy Extra Grey Flannels, trousers, shirts, socks, in my case footwear didn't come into the equation because I'd a surgical boot and shoe anyway. But it was just a way that Barnardo's taught you to sort of handle finances from that side of it. I must admit when I went out into the big open world, I lived with my dad as I say for that while, and that didn't concern me, but obviously once I got my own rented property and then you've got to start paying for your own gas and your electric and shopping and – but by then you see I was twenty-six, twenty-seven so I'd sort of learnt a lot, been working a few years, been used to getting a pay packet, been used to understanding what your income tax and national insurance was all about. So I didn't really have a big issue with it. Plus the fact that we didn't have a lot of money anyway so finances, we didn't worry about mortgages and things, as long as we paid the gas bill when it came through the letterbox and the electric bill and the rent every week, you know. As I say I – in some ways I was fortunate 'cause I had ... not a good standard of living, I had compared to many other people around me I had a fair standard of living because my job as you can imagine working at the hospital making artificial legs, it was a highly skilled job but it wasn't a highly paid job because it wasn't the sort of, you know, wages were way above what you would have got working in a factory or in a warehouse or something like that. So we had a fairly good, a fair standard of living,

let's put it like that, we could afford a holiday every year and I – I mean I didn't drive a car then but I had a scooter and a sidecar and things like that. So you know ...

[2:12:28]

*Could you describe the most memorable incidence in your life while you were looked after?*

Oh definitely.

*Apart from the ones you've mentioned already.*

Making that record with Petula Clark [laughs].

*Something that you haven't mentioned already as a memorable incidence?*

Memorable incidence. I think I've probably had quite a few ... the time covering professional football was – was memorable, have I mentioned that, I have haven't I, haven't I? My hobby of photography?

*Yeah, but you didn't go into detail about it.*

Oh right, okay, yeah we'd have probably got to that at some stage, yeah. My hobby, photography, as I say I had my own darkroom and I got a company to sponsor my disabled sports at the same time so I suppose winning some of those titles and medals at disabled sport was some of the highlights of my life. But I also spent about three years going around the country covering professional football as a hobby, and I was touring football league grounds all around the country, sitting probably – not realising at the time obviously, probably sitting at the side of some of the country's top press photographers and I was very very fortunate to do 'cause it was a project I was doing at night school for photography and it just went on a little bit longer than perhaps it should have done but while ever I wrote to football clubs and asked for a press pass and they kept giving me them I kept going [laughs]. But I'd got a good relationship

with The Football Association because I actually went to Wembley eight times covering football and to walk out of the old Wembley and to walk out at Wembley and sit on the touchline with, you know, forty, fifty other professional photographers was a highlight. I was both very close to the players obviously, close to managers, knew Brian Clough quite well, he gave me my very first opportunity, had a huge row with him on one occasion [laughs], I defended – I don't know how much history you know but Brian Clough signed Justin Fashanu who was a black player, black footballer and the first footballer to come out gay and because of that Brian Clough ostracised him. And he treated him horrendously, he made him train on his own, and I had a go at Brian Clough about it because Justin Fashanu happened to be a friend of mine because Justin Fashanu had also been raised in Barnardo's so we'd got that, we'd got that bond. And I had a right argument with him about it, he didn't change, but he did later in his autobiography apologise for the way he treated Justin Fashanu. So in some ways that was a highlight of my life, you know, to have had conflict with such a high profile person if you like, not publically but privately between us. So that was a moment in my life, you know, not many people can probably say they walked around and had an argument with Brian Clough over such a – what became quite a well known incident, you know, once he came out gay it was headlines, all over the football world really. So that was – that was a highlight. Another highlight, difficult really whether you would call it a highlight or I don't know, I was un – I had this lovely three years of covering professional football, you know, and all the highs of being close to a game that I passionately love and going to all these different grounds, getting all this sort of ... well what would you say, press status, you know, 'cause there was a sense of pride to walk through a player's entrance as a press photographer, although I was only doing it as an amateur. And going to Wembley as I say eight times was a highlight but one of the – it's a sad occasion but it's still a highlight in my life, I was very unfortunate or fortunate, whichever way you look at it, I had a press pass on that fatal day at Hillsborough ... [gets upset], it's the one thing I do get emotional about, the Hillsborough football disaster ...

*Could you elaborate on that?*

Yeah, it was twenty-three years ago, and ... ninety-six football supporters lost their lives [gets upset] ... crushed to death. [Pause]. In effect we – it doesn't affect me, but when I talk about it, I do get emotional about it, it's again that I love football and ninety-six Liverpool supporters died. And they were – it was an FA Cup semi final between my own team, Forest, and I just had a press pass that particular day and to be down there on the football pitch and seeing these people carried across on hoarding boards, advertising boards. And we knew within a few minutes that the majority of them were dead and there were ninety-six of them died. It's something that's currently coming back into the headlines because they are now going to hold an enquiry that it was the fault of the police. It was – it was something that has been covered up by the Yorkshire Police, covered up by the government, covered up by Maggie Thatcher and it's now been proven that they were to blame. And I don't know what actions are going to be taken, but yeah, it's a part of my life having not been in Barnardo's I would never have been involved in the interest – well I don't think I would, the interest in sport and the passion for sport that I've got, so I'm not blaming Barnardo's in any way [laughs], or being in care for that, it's just one of those chapters of my life that has happened, you know. But I got over it, it didn't – didn't stop me going to football, I went to a football match again the very week afterwards and I still go to football and it's just that ... I just feel so sad that it's taken twenty-three years for somebody to have finally accepted the truth. Okay? [Gets upset]. I don't get emotional very often but that's one subject that, you know, you're being – be somewhere where you love being and seeing ninety-six people die, it's not what you go and expect to see.

*So after about –*

Sorry [laughs].

[2:21:20]

*Throughout your experience in care –*

Are we alright drinking while you're still filming?

?: *Yeah.*

*Throughout your experience of being in care ... have you made any complaints?*

About being in care?

*Yeah.*

No [laughs].

*No?*

No, my memories of care is basically, as I say I had the odd days that things didn't quite go right, you know, like when they took my teddy off me and things like that but complained about that but it didn't do any good [laughs].

*So what would your view be today about people who are in care now, what would your view be on that?*

I ... I find it sad in this modern world that – that children have to go into care. It's an indictment on society I think for whatever reason, bad parenting, circumstances, it covers a multitude of reasons why children go into care don't they? You know, families can't cope, the financial stress, the modern world ... somebody loses somebody in the family, the mum or the dad die and the other one can't cope, I think it's good that we've got a care system, but I think I was probably one of the first to condone how poor the care system is today. I don't think – I don't think kids today get the care, in care [laughs] as we probably did, or that I did fifty years ago. We see and hear so much, you know, you're taken into care and you expect to be safe in care, we've heard and read and seen so many cases haven't we of child abuse still going on while they're in care and this to me is totally wrong, this is where the system is failing these kids. I'm not suggesting for a minute that it didn't happen in Barnardo's, it certainly didn't happen to me and I saw no evidence of it, but I'm sure – you know

when you've got 8,000 children in care like Barnardo's had it probably must have happened somewhere down the line, but I – I certainly had no knowledge of it. But today, I don't know, every time you switch the television on, pick up a newspaper there's another child abuse scandal emerges isn't there? And I think it's just – just sad that kids put into care today are still not being protected, for – for whatever reason. Just something I feel strongly about, you know, I've got good positive vibes from my time in care, and I think kids today – some of them are probably getting a bad deal, through no fault of their own, children don't ask to be born do they, I wasn't asked to be born but [laughs] I didn't ask that my mum would die when I was born but it happens so, yeah.

[2:25:06]

*Going back to what you said earlier, [clears throat] sorry, going back to what you said earlier about your relationships with your first wife and your latest wife and how you transitioned from your first wife to your present wife, could you kind of elaborate on that? Or explain a bit more about it.*

I don't quite understand it [laughs].

*'Cause you did mention before that you had your first wife that you divorced from and then you said that you had two wives that passed away, then you have a present wife.*

Yeah.

*Could you talk a bit about your relationships from the beginning to your present?*

Er, there's not a lot to talk about. I – I just moved on after my first divorce, as I say I spent almost eleven years raising my daughter before I remarried, she'd got two children, so all our three children was about the same age. I think there was actually a year separating them, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, eleven, twelve, thirteen, something like that. But she sadly died just seven years later and by then her two children had sort of grown up and gone off her hands anyway, they were in their late teens, early

twenties, my daughter was then – got her boyfriend and she got married and settled down. It was – it was a bit of a difficult time because I suddenly found myself back on my own again, no children around me [laughs] and my wife had gone, and – but that was just that – just bad timing, was that’s the way it happened. And I – I just carried on, I was fortunate, I’d got a good job, I’d got a social life anyway and I’d got a circle of friends and then eventually I found another wife and life just went on. I had eleven good years with her before she died, we used to drive to Spain for our holidays, she’d got one daughter from a previous marriage that was grown up anyway, and – and then when she died in 2003 I thought, that’s it, just carry on doing what you’re doing, you know. And then I – I got introduced to the computer world [laughs]. I was doing this work for Barnardo’s by volunteering and then the boss that I worked for at the time, I had a super boss, excellent, he said, ‘Why don’t you get yourself a computer?’ I said, ‘Oh no no,’ I didn’t understand all this .com and everything else. He says, ‘You’ll find it very handy,’ he said, ‘it’ll help with some of your Barnardo things that you do.’ And at that time I used to do a lot of letter writing for the local paper, you know, any subject that I felt [laughs] I – I put a letter in the letters page. Anyway, eventually [clears throat] the job that I was doing looking after the warehouse, managing the warehouse for these medical products, I don’t know whether I mentioned that, we’ve spoke about that, which was the last job before I retired, it involved keeping stock records and things like that, then they went computerised, so I think this was my boss making me switch to a computer. And of course I had to use the computer in the warehouse and then he said, ‘You ought to get a computer for doing your other things at home,’ and, ‘No,’ he said, ‘Get one, I’ll guide you through it,’ so I bought myself a laptop, a little bit apprehensive, probably the best thing I ever did, this was 2007, 2006. And I – I got a laptop and I started doing things on there, I was able to start booking holidays on the internet and I thought, oh great, this is marvellous, and then somebody said, ‘Why don’t you try online dating?’ I said, ‘Uh-huh,’ [laughs] but I did and that’s where I met my current wife, we met on the internet. And of course since then the computer’s not took over my life but I can do so much on it ‘cause I do all my presentations and PowerPoint presentations and things like that. I’m not totally computer literate but I can do what I want to and it’s great, I book my holidays and I book my ferries and I drive down to Spain and things like that, so yeah it’s – it’s another chapter of my life. But I met my

wife through it so – and she’s better on the computer than me, if I get a problem nine out of ten she can solve most of the every day problems, you know. So you know, life’s pretty good ...

[2:31:02]

*So who would you say in your life, looking back, has cared for you, like truly –*

My aunt, my Auntie Vi, she was the one that – she was my dad’s sister and she was the one that came to my rescue the day I climbed out of the bedroom window. Yeah, she used to come and visit me when I was in Barnardo’s, did a lot for me when I was – apparently did a lot for me when I was very young, before being born and ... before the abuse and everything started with my stepmother and my dad. But she was always there, she was there when my daughter was born, she was one that helped me which enabled me to hold down a full time job, she’d look after Kerry in the early days, she’d see her off to school and back home again. Yeah, I would say my Auntie Vi although didn’t know her for that many years was probably the most caring person in my life, apart from my wives of course, I mean [laughs] I wouldn’t say my wives haven’t been caring ‘cause they have and my present wife is.

*So looking back on your life, would you say that it’s turned out the way you expected it to?*

I don’t know if – how I expected it to actually [laughs], I mean all I can say is that my life’s got better as I’ve got older, and I think it’s – it’s – I think it’s probably the way I was brought up, you know, Barnardo’s instilled a lot into us. I – I learnt to stand on my own two feet, I realised that having come out of care there was – I was going to have to do a lot for myself because there wasn’t really anybody there to help me. So yeah, I think [laughs] – it’s a difficult one, but yeah, my life has got better as it’s gone on, I’m enjoying life.

[2:33:38]

*So looking back, what would you say the positives and negative experiences were from care, from being in care?*

I think if I'm honest they were all positives. I ... I don't think Barnardo's were ever negative to anybody, you know, they were very positive in working with us and encouraging us, yeah, at the end of the day [coughs] we were cared for, we were watered, we were fed, we were educated [coughs], I was taught a trade as were a lot of other kids that went through the Barnardo's system or the care system, so I can't really complain. I know – I'm pretty sure that without that upbringing I wouldn't have lived the life that I have done, you know, I – I like to think I've had quite an interesting life, I've met a lot of interesting people, done a lot of interesting things and I – I have to be honest and say that most of it is down to Barnardo's. A lot of it is my own initiative of course because at the end of the day you've still got to work these things out for yourself. You can have the support, you can have the training, you can have the background, you can have the knowledge but you've still got to produce the results at the end of the day [coughs]. Getting dry [laughs]. But no I ... I think it's the in care upbringing that has given me the positive attitude. I've never had a negative attitude, you know, if I've made my mind up to do something then I'll do it. Like I said if that wall was pink it's pink and you wouldn't convince me otherwise [laughs]. I've got very ... I've got a very – I'm very strong willed, I've got a very strong mind and I've got some very strong views, and when I sit shouting at the television sometimes my wife says, 'Get off your high horse,' but that's [laughs] – that's just me, you know.

[2:36:25]

*If you could go back in time what advice would you give your younger self?*

My younger self. Not to get married four times [both laugh]. It's expensive [laughs], no seriously I – I don't know, I don't think ... to be perfectly honest I'd change what I've done, I think I'm content and happy with what I've done. Erm, but I still don't

think I would have achieved it without being brought up in care. I can't say what would have happened if my mother hadn't have died, I'd – would have probably lived just a normal family life, you know, with two – two parents. They were obviously good parents 'cause they'd been married fifteen years before I came along so it wasn't a – it was probably an accident, I don't know, I may have been planned, I don't know, but you know, I think it's sad to be married fifteen years and then lose a partner over having a child. But that's – that was the card that I was dealt, and I've just – I've just taken it from there but there's no doubt that Barnardo's has given me this positive – yeah I talk to a lot of Barnardo's colleagues and friends and basically they all say the same thing, you know, you go and look on our Goldings website, you'll see nothing but positive remarks and stories and it's interesting.

*So what advice would you give to younger people in a similar situation?*

My advice to anybody – taken into care or otherwise – if an opportunity is presented to you, take it. Seize that opportunity because that's exactly what happened with me, the opportunity was there, I wouldn't say I had to take it because at the end of the day we've all got our own minds, like going to school, you choose whether you're going to be bothered to learn something or not. But my advice to anybody if an opportunity is presented to you take it. Doesn't always work out does it but [laughs].

[2:39:24]

*Why were you keen to tell your story?*

Why am I keen, because I ... [coughs] ... I think probably because being brought up in the care system ... I want people to know what being brought in care is because I think a lot of people, today I think – I'm sure we hear so much today that being brought up in care is – is negative, and I think it's often used as an excuse, you know, I often hear it said that, 'Oh well, you didn't have a mum and dad,' or, 'he's been in care all his life or her life,' I don't think that's an excuse, you know, if like I – maybe that sounds a little bit harsh but I was fortunate to have these opportunities put in front of me and at the end of the day it was my choice whether to seize those opportunities

or act negatively, and I'm just glad that I chose the positive way. That would be my advice to anybody, whether they're in care or otherwise, if they, you know, if there's a chance of an opportunity presented to you take it because you aren't likely to get a second chance.

[2:40:59]

*What's your thought on this statement?*

On?

*On this statement, what's your thoughts.*

Oh sorry, [laughs], you're going to read a statement, okay fine.

*Yeah. No one can change their past but they can shape their future.*

Spot on I think. Which is what I said, it's – if an opportunity is given seize it, it's up to you to change your future isn't it?

[2:41:24]

*So going forward, what are your hopes for the future?*

[Sighs] What from a personal point of view or –

*Yeah.*

I just hope that I can continue doing what I'm doing and – and keep my health and mental mind for years to come. And just carry on enjoying life, you know, there's so much going on out there in the world today isn't there that's – that's not good ... no just ... I can't see that my life can [laughs], I shouldn't say that could I 'cause I could win the lottery tomorrow couldn't I – I was going to say I can't see that my life could

improve but yes it could, but as long as I – I've got my mind and my health, you know, I'm not in – I'm not in perfect health but I'm fine, I'm [laughs] – I'm coping ...

[2:42:30]

*Is there anything you would like to add to the interview?*

The only one thing I didn't cover was my disability wasn't it? [Clears throat]. I had polio eighteen months after I was born and it was actually while I was working in the limb industry making artificial legs, that it was my choice to have it amputated. I did it for two reasons, one working in the industry I could see the advantage, it's got some disadvantages obviously but I could see the advantage of having an artificial leg as opposed to what I'd got before, and the other reason was because the limb surgeon who I worked with at the limb centre said that would be the best thing I could do. So I said, 'Okay, I'll do it, what do I need to do?' he said, 'You just need to go and see your own doctor, explain the situation.' I'd got a brilliant doctor at the time, he really was, a guy called Dr McCracken, and I'm pretty healthy, I very rarely see the doctor from one year to another and I remember walking into his surgery and I sat down and he says, 'Alan,' he says, 'I haven't seen you since 1975 [laughs],' and this was 1979. And he says, 'What can I do for you?' I says, 'Well,' and I just said [laughs], 'I want my leg off,' just like that, and he said, 'What do you mean you want your leg off?' I says, 'I want my leg amput,' well he knew what industry I was in, he knew what I was doing for a job. I said, 'I'd like my leg amputated to the knee,' and he says, 'Where's this come from?' so I briefly explained to him and he said, 'Right, not a problem,' he says, 'you've obviously thought about it, I'll send a letter to the hospital and we'll get the wheels moving.' Six months later job done [both laugh]. Simple as that. So that was – that was my decision, but again it – it comes back to [laughs] – I know I keep harking back to Barnardo's but without being in their care having their training, I certainly wouldn't have been doing the job that I was doing and obviously I would never have had any notion about having my leg off, so it was all positive positive positive.

*So how have you managed to live with a disability?*

I've basically grown up with it, with, you know, I'm actually better with a prosthetic leg than I was before. Because polio, I don't know if you know polio cases, it went out like a banana, there was nothing there, it was just a withered, just a withered limb, two leg irons with all sorts of straps and buckles to keep it on, a three inch surgical raised boot because of the shortening, and just ghastly. You know, I mean I walk about now, 'I never knew he'd got an artificial leg,' and it's only because of the hip problem that I walk with the limp, otherwise they would probably be none the wiser. But no I'm happy with that, it's positive for me anyway. Kept me in work for twenty-six years, still tamper about with it now [laughs].

*FS: I'd just like to say you've got fifteen more minutes in this [inaud].*

Okay.

*Is there anything else you would like to –*

Credits roll then do they [laughs].

[2:46:25]

*Is there anything else you would like to add or talk about any other experiences that you've had in care that you haven't covered already?*

Erm ... I was a Wimbledon ball boy, very apt for this week isn't it? Yeah, the Barnardo home that I was at, Goldings provided the Wimbledon ball boys for twenty odd years and to say that I played a small part as a Wimbledon ball boy is an honour, there's not a lot of kids around that can say that [coughs]. So I'm proud of that. Something else that gave me another sporting interest, 'cause I love to watch the tennis but – and I'm under no illusions that's obviously what influenced me, whether I would have ever become interested in tennis had I not been that close to it I don't know. But Goldings was a very sporting orientated school, we were – there was a lot of sporting opportunities and even those of us who were disabled was encouraged to

take part in sport so I did, I pursued – the facilities were there, you know, we'd got a swimming pool, we was able to play football and cricket and table tennis and other sports, so this is what I meant when I said that if an opportunity is presented take it 'cause I don't regret it, you know.

[2:48:05]

*So what impact would you like to have on the next generation?*

I'd like to see the end of children having to be taken into care. I can't honestly ever ever seeing that happen, it's just one of those sad things in life [coughs]. Children aren't asked to be born, they're not asked to be born into the circumstances, whatever they may be, but ... all I can say that anybody that in the future is taken into care just try and be positive, look at the positives ... look around what's being provided for you, and make the most of it. And that's – that's my honest opinion, that's how I feel ...

*How do you feel about the family that you've created?*

My family, there's not much, there's only one, there's only my daughter [laughs] but yeah I mean there's four generations there, there's myself, my daughter, my two grandchildren and one great-grandchild. They're doing well, they're fine. I think I obviously did – I obviously did something right bringing my daughter up [laughs], she's never actually complained so [laughs] ...

[2:50:00]

*Is there anything else you'd like to say?*

No, I think we've basically covered it haven't we?

*Yeah.*

Anything you can think of, I can't, I think we've covered a lovely wide scope over three hours.

*Yeah, okay?*

Yeah, happy with that.

*Okay.*

[End of Track 1]