

## Care Leavers' Stories project

Amy

Interviewed by Khatija Hafesji

C1597/12

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# Social Care Institute for Excellence

## Interview Summary Sheet

## Title Page

**Ref no:** C1597/12

**Collection title:** Care Leavers' Stories

**Interviewee's surname:**

**Title:** Mrs

**Interviewee's  
forename:** Amy

**Sex:** Female

**Occupation:** Retired housewife

**Date of birth:** 1917

**Dates of recording:** 26.06.13

**Location of interview:** Interviewee's home

**Name of interviewer:** Khatija Hafesji

**Type of recorder:** Canon XF 305

**Recording format :** .mxf

**Total no. of tracks:** 1

**Mono or stereo:**

Stereo

**Total Duration:**

**Additional material:**

**Copyright/Clearance:** Full clearance except surname to be redacted

**Interviewer's  
comments:**

Amy discusses wishing the interview to be confidential- this was discussed with her and she agreed to just have her first name used.  
Interview refers to Lily, another housing association resident/neighbour who also grew up in same children's home.

**Track 1**

*Hello. Do you want to tell me your name and when you were born?*

You don't need my – you don't need my maiden name, do you?

*No.*

No, no. Will you just, erm – in – just Amy.

*Amy, okay.*

Amy, yes, yeah, Amy, yes.

*And when were you born, Amy? When were you born?*

Where?

*When?*

13 Havelock Road. Do you know Havelock Road?

*No.*

It's down by – do you know Homesdale Road?

*No. Where's that? Is it in Bromley or ...?*

Turning off of the high street, yes, yeah, that's where I was born, in 19 – 1917.

*1917? And that was during the war?*

I was a war baby, mm-hmm, yes, mm-hmm.

*And when did you come into care?*

[0:01:00]

In 1921. My mum died suddenly and she left three little girls under five, so we went to Farnborough, Farnborough Hospital. But the three elder ones, they stopped at home with Dad, yeah.

*Do you remember your dad?*

I do remember Dad but I've got no living memory of living at home when Mum was alive, and yet I was three and a half when Mum died, yes, yes.

*Do you know anything about your mum? Do you know anything about your mum?*

Nothing at all, no. All I know, that she was little and, erm ... I did used to ask Lucy about Mum, but she never sort of told you much about Mum.

*Lucy, your sister?*

She was the oldest one, one that stopped at home when – after the mum – after Mum died, yeah. And – and I think – I think because Mum died so suddenly and we were taken from this home alive to Farnborough Hospital, and I think it was that that blacked the memory of Mum out, through shock. I think so, because at three and a half you do know your mother, don't you? You talk. You can talk. You know all your brothers and sisters. I've got nothing at all in my mind, no, no.

*What about your dad?*

Oh, my dad lived to be quite elderly, yeah, yeah. Yes, he was seventy, erm – he was seventy nine when he died. Now that was old in them days, yeah, mm-hmm.

*What kind of man was he? What did he look like? What did he do?*

Very quiet, very quiet. He must have been a loner, I should think, 'cause he was very quiet. Mm, yeah.

*Did he serve in the war?*

The year the war ended, but he died in that year, 19 ... 1945, was it, the year ended?  
Yes, yeah, he died that year, mm-hmm.

[03:20]

*And what was Farnborough Hospital like?*

Well, I haven't got a lot of memories about Farnborough Hospital, but, erm, there was only a few of us that was there with – and the lady – and the person that used to – was in charge, she was lovely. We used to call her mother. Mm, yeah, mother, yes. And – but it wasn't so regimental – and we used to go that little village – 'cause I remember the day I left – I went to my – erm, for the first day at school, 'cause we went to that little village school in Farnborough. Do you know Farnborough?

*Not at all.*

No, no. Well, we went through a little lane to this little village school. And I think I must have been about eight, seven or eight. And one day – we didn't call them coaches, we called them charabancs, them days. This charabanc drew up and all us children, there was only a few of us, we all got in and they took us to Mitcham children's homes, yeah. But I don't remember a lot about Farnborough but I do know they were kind. They talk about the workhouse, but if that's – we were – they did treat us very kind. We weren't dressed so poshly though, 'cause it wouldn't be, with being, you know – well, I – I wouldn't say it was actually the workhouse, though people used to call it the workhouse, but we were looked after. We – we did get a bit

of love there, I think, by that little lady we used to call mother. She was in charge of us all. But there was only a few of us there.

*Were you there with all your sisters?*

My sisters were with me, Hilda and Lily, mm-hmm, yes. So now we get into the charabanc – [laughs] I call it the charabanc ‘cause we did call them charabancs, and we went to – I remember that day, yeah, mm. I couldn’t have been very old because I was in the infants’ section, so I must have been under eight, eight years old, yes. And then, erm, we went to

[05:56]

... and then we had to settle into the life at the Mitcham children’s homes.

*And what was that like?*

Well ... we were – we had everything we needed, really. We had three meals a day. Oh, I’ll tell you how we’d start the day. A big bell used to ring at seven o’clock. Went all over the – over the park, and that was the time you got up. No one told you. It was all regimental type of a – you did – at one stage at a time, you got up with that big bell, mm-hmm.

*Was it scary? How did you feel, waking up to that bell?*

Never felt at all. We took it in our stride. I must say, all the children took – we all took everything in our stride. And anyway, we got up and we had our breakfast. Oh, we had to do a little job before we had our breakfast, only a little job. And then we had our breakfast and then we went to school. But we went to an out school. We made our own – once we went out of the gates of the home, we was allowed to make our own way to the school, mm, yeah.

*How many of you were there?*

There was – that was quite a lot of us. We were a big place, yes.

*How big? Can you give me a number?*

Well, not really, because in numbers them days, you didn't know, really, did you? We were never counted up. And there was – and we was in sections, like, the people that had left – the girls who had left school, they were different to us. They lived a different life.

*So you were in the infant section?*

When we first went there, I was in the infant section and then – I don't know how we used to go to school in – I don't think they went to school. But we went to – we made our own way to school, came home on our own, yeah. Yeah. So ... and then we came home at teatime. We had teatime. And then we had to do another job. Now you'd never believe this; we was on our knees – knees, scrubbing, scrubbing floors, after our tea. And, do you know, we all liked it. What do you think of that? We all laughed, getting our water. And how it was – 'cause the playschool was very big, 'cause it was – and we all lined up at the back and we was in twos. We shared a bucket between two. And we scrubbed – we didn't scrub all over. There was quite a few of us, all in a line. And when we'd done that bit, we moved back and then we did another bit, moved back, until we'd done our bit. Now if that wasn't child labour, I don't know what is. But we was on our knees, scrubbing floors. And I would say we were – we weren't – not on the infant section, we'd got a bit bigger then. But we were all laughing and – well, never joked but laughed. We was happy, scrubbing bare boards. Now you wouldn't believe that today, would you? But it's the truth, yeah. Yeah, scrubbing floors, yes. Oh, I forgot about the bit after – when we got up, 'cause we all had to wash properly in a big old trough, we washed. It was a strip wash. But when – when we'd – before we had our breakfast, we had to do another job. So a section of us were in the dormitories and the same way – 'cause we didn't scrub the dormitory floors, we polished them with a cloth. And the same thing happened with the dormitories as it did to the living – we all moved back one. We used to sing. No,

we never – we never thought any – it was unkind or we shouldn't be doing this or – we never even thought that way, yeah. Yeah, but that's right, we were on our knees, scrubbing floors. Used to have to – and we had to kneel on an old wooden kneeler. But we never saw no harm in it. No grumbling, never grumbled, no, no.

[10:55]

*What did you wear? Was there a uniform?*

We were dressed to perfection. We had a lovely gymslip on. We had lovely warm woollen stockings. 'Cause manmade fibre wasn't known in them days, black, black woollen stockings, lovely boots or shoes and a nice warm coat to go to school in, and this lovely gymslip and white blouses. We were – we were dressed better than the women that lived at home, yes. And Sundays, we used to go to church twice a day. You were dressed lovely. We used to have panorama hats with ribbon at the back and in the winter the – there were felt type halo hat, lovely warm coat. I used to love to go to church. Used to have to go twice, twice a day, on Sunday. Yeah, we all liked it, mm-hmm. Yeah, I loved going to church. I don't think – when I look back on that home, I don't think people ever grumbled. No, never grumbled. We all – the children – and there was no bullying with the children. We all played together in a big yard, lovely yard. We played in the summer and in the winter we had a lovely room to play in. Two fires if it was very cold and one if it wasn't. Yeah. And we had a bath twice a week, yeah. Wasn't like that in the homes, in the ordinary homes, yeah. Twice a week, mm-hmm.

*Who was in charge?*

Now how far am I getting now ...? Oh, scrubbing the floor, yeah. Only once a week though, not every day, but we all had to do a job and my job was, I used to have to – 'cause the nurses used to live in cubicles, I had the job of doing one of theirs, yeah, cubicles, yeah. And I'll tell you about our treat, shall I? Well, we used to have to go to – we used to go out for a walk on Saturday afternoon and we got out the gates and we – we was asked to wait, and out of the blue a bus come along. And we all – and I

don't know who paid for it, but we were going – we all got in the bus and we was all laughing 'cause we never knew what it was to have a penny worth of bus ride. And next – I think they took us to Tooting, 'cause Tooting is the next town to Bromley – to Mitcham, isn't it, Tooting? Well, I think – and they took us in this great big shop and I think that was Woolworth's. And we all had a few coppers and we bought a penny worth of sweets there. But we did have to work back again. Now you wouldn't think so much joy would come out of that penny worth of bus ride to a sweet shop, would you?

*No.*

You wouldn't think – not today, would you? To think that – well, it was joy, yeah. But we did have to walk back again, I remember. But how we – whether it was arranged, I don't know, but this bus came up and we all got in. But there was one in charge – someone in charge with us, yeah.

[14:35]

And at Christmastime we did – though there was no love and affection at Christmas, we didn't lose out. We had a lovely dinner, I remember. An apple and an orange and a brand new penny, you know, new penny [laughs]. Christmas pudding, yeah. And we had a little treat in the evening. Yeah, someone used to come along and entertain us. Yes, that was Christmas Day. But there is something that lacked in that hospital and not only this one – not hospital, this home, was love and affection. There was no love and affection, because one – for one thing, they weren't allowed to single one person out. We was all treated the same, yeah. And they weren't spiteful. But the reason we were so, erm – we were so well behaved, so there was no need to be – for the nurses to be brutal to you. But in some of 'em they were, but not this one we were in, yeah, yeah. But there was no love and affection. And because we had a home to go to, Dad and Lucy and Charlie – that's my two – they used to come up and visit us, but they had to have permission. They had to get a pass from the – 'cause we still come under Bromley Council. They had to get a pass to – only three times a year though. And all those other children – there was only a few of us that had visitors.

They must have been all orphans, I should say, all my age, coming up into the '30s. Yeah, mm, yeah. There was sadness there, when you think back. But being children, you don't think that way. It's when you get older that those sort of thoughts come into your mind. Yes.

[16:47]

So how far are we up now? Oh, to the day we came home now. Now this is 1930. It pointed us out there was something different between me and Lily and Hilda, because – oh, on the Saturday before that week, we had to go and have our teeth tested, which was unusual, just the three of us. And then the nurse said to me – said to me and Lily, 'You must have a bath and we're going to wash your hair.' Well, we'd already had one the night before, or something. But they never told us that we were going home, no. And anyway, we didn't go to school that day and I was looking over at the gate and I saw an ambulance come in the gates and I said to Hilda, 'There's an ambulance just come in the gates,' but we didn't think much of it. That ambulance was taking us to Bromley Hospital, where we started off from, 'cause we were still under the Bromley authorities. Anyway, we had our dinner in it. Now we're coming back to the old workhouse. And that little lady that we used to call mother, she came to see us. Still working there, still working at Farnborough Hospital. She came to see us. She said, 'My goodness, haven't you all grown?' And anyway, erm ... about teatime – now Dad and Charlie and Lucy, they were working, so they couldn't afford to have the day off to welcome us home. And do you know, when the ambulance man knocked on the door in 13 Havelock Road, there was no one there to welcome us as far as relations. They couldn't afford to have the time off, them days –

*Where were they working?*

But the other lady that lived in the house, she opened – and she said that she didn't know nothing about it. And anyway, the ambulance man said, 'We'll have to take them back again.' So anyway, the lady said, 'Well, I'll take them in.' And then the family turned up, Dad and Lucy and Charlie, yeah, yeah.

*How old were Lucy and Charlie?*

Well, when Mum died – now this is sad, more sadder than what we're putting up with. When Mum died, Lucy was a schoolgirl, only just left school, 'cause that was in the – he was fourteen and Charlie was, you know, able to cope for a bit himself. They didn't go into the home. But Lucy more or less had to run the home and she was only a schoolgirl, yeah, yeah. We had no help, them days, at all.

[19:55]

*And where were they working? Where were they working? What jobs did they have?*

Well, Lucy worked in the cinema in Bromley High Street, yeah, yeah, the Grand and then it was the Gaumont, yeah. And Charlie worked on the building. He was a decorator, yeah. But that was a bit of money coming in that – coming into the home. That's why we came home, I think. Because we were going now through the slump years and, erm – and a lot of those big orphanages were emptied because they couldn't keep up with them. They went broke, yeah, mm.

[20:39]

*What was it like, coming home?*

Well, to think that I lived all those years under ... under other people and then all of a sudden you're home and you're free. And my goodness, I soon changed, yes. I was running – going down to the caseworks to getting coke for threepence. Oh, I changed quickly from that type of a life, where everything's mapped out for you, to a home that you – erm ... The – erm, you lived, yeah, mm-hmm. Now I'm thirteen now. So naturally, because I was thirteen, I had to go to school. So now this was a bit of a strain, because in the home we'd know what – from class to class – yeah, but in this school at Raglan Road – do you know Raglan Road School?

*No.*

No? Well, I had to do a year at school because I was only – I was only thirteen, you see, and that was a bit of a strain, to be in this classroom with all these new – with all these different girls. They didn't know me. Yeah, no, that – I think that did take a bit of a strain on me.

*Did you make friends?*

But soon as I left school – erm, got in, I used to do Dad's shopping. Yeah, I more or less took over family – family life, yeah. But I always felt that the home we had at Mitcham, even though you had everything you wanted and we were dressed lovely and everything, there was no love and affection there, no, no.

*Did you get love and affection when you came home?*

Not a lot, no, no. They hardly knew us, you see, because we were babies when we left home and grown up young ladies when we did come home. No, no. And of course Lucy had had it so hard, running the home with Dad and my brother, yes. There was something else I was going to just say ...

[0:23:15]

Oh holidays. In this – now you would never think this. Every year we used to go down and have a fortnight by the sea, yeah. And this place was called Dovercourt. Do you know Dovercourt at Harwich? Ipswich way. We had a lovely fortnight there, mm. We used to come out the station – 'cause the boys' section used to run a band and we all – the boys were in the front – no, the band was in the front and then we were – erm, the boys were that section, then we were, and we used to have to march to this place with the band, to the place, what they called the Retreat at Dovercourt. And we had a lovely holiday, yeah, yeah.

*Was this in the home? Was this while you were in the home?*

While we was in the home. Nothing like that when we came home. We couldn't afford it. We didn't [laughs] have no money, yeah. So we were lucky, weren't we?

*Absolutely.*

Apart from the love and affection. And that scrubbing of the floors, we didn't mind doing it, never known no different. As a matter of fact, we used to like doing it [laughs]. Yeah, mm. Used to laugh, you know, and talk. But we weren't cowered down, no, we weren't. I can't honestly say we wasn't cowered down like some of the big orphanages were.

*How do you know what happened at the other orphanages?*

Well, my husband worked at Annerley, a big – just before the war, and they was very strict there. My husband didn't like discipline and he didn't like the way those children was disciplined. But they were more crueller there at Annerley. And that closed down. And my husband taught the boys carpentry, yeah. Just before the war, that was.

[25:18]

*So when did you meet your husband?*

That was my husband, yeah.

*When did you meet him?*

Oh, well, that's another strange thing [laughs]. Because – because my three elder ones didn't go into the home, they knew all, erm, Steve's brothers and sisters. Like Lucy knew Steve's sister. But we – because we were in the home, we wasn't involved. And then we came – and naturally came home. But I think Steve knew me by being round Havelock Road, though he didn't know me to talk to like he did Ernie and Charlie and Lucy. He knew who I was. Well, the war had ended now and I left

home and I wanted to live an independent – more of an independent life rather than be a housekeeper to my two brothers, who were still living at home. The war was ended now.

*The Second World War? The Second World War?*

Yeah, Second World War, yes, yes. Well, erm, I'm out now to find a nice bed sitting room to, erm, live an independent life. Well, I was working in this house. And I can see Steve now and he was – he came towards me. He'd got a paintbrush in his hand and – what's-her-name. And he said to me, 'You come from Havelock Road, don't you?' And I said, 'Yes.' Anyway, we got chatting and we parted again. And then by the – a few – couple of few years went past and I'd got the bedsit room I liked and I got a fulltime job in the hospital, a forty-eight hour week. That's what I wanted. And who should be doing the painting there was Steve [laughs]. So I bumped into him again [laughs]. And, erm, then I saw him again, but I can't remember the third time. Then I – and then I never saw Steve again for about fifteen year, or longer than that, because he was only just someone I knew, even though he knew all the family, you know. But anyway, do you know the Chinese garage? Oh now I'm working at Barrows & Welcon's [ph].

*What's that?*

That's the chemical people, but it's not there now, it's all been closed down. Well, I'm coming out the gates and I'm going past the Chinese garage at – do you know the Chinese garage? Do you know the Chinese garage? No? Well, it was coming out of the Barrows & Welcon's gates and I've got to past the garage. Steve's standing there. I never saw him. I got home, back home. Then the second night he was waiting there. I never saw him. Well, now this – talk about fate. Come out the – come out again the third night, come out the back. Steve's waiting there again and I looked – I went right past him. And I happened to turn and I looked, there was Steve standing up against the wall at the Chinese garage, waiting for his daughter, Margaret, 'cause she worked there as well, but she was a bit later than me coming out of there. And I said, 'Oh hello.' I said, 'I haven't seen you for years.' It must have been about

fifteen, sixteen or seventeen years. And I said to him, 'You don't look all that well though, you know.' 'No,' he said, 'A couple of months ago my wife died.' Yeah, talk about fate. Well, I said 'Cheerio.' I said, 'Oh, I'm sorry to hear that,' 'cause I never knew his wife. I didn't know his family, though I knew Margaret was working there. And because she was – Steve's picking up Margaret it's because her husband was in school, learning to be a bank manager. So that's why he was waiting to pick Margaret on the scooter, 'cause Steve had got a scooter, you know, a Lambretta type. So anyway, I said cheerio to him. And blow me, the next night he was there again and I said to him, 'Oh hello.' I said, 'Are you waiting for Margaret?' 'No,' he said, 'I'm waiting for you.' He said, 'I wondered if you'd like, erm, a little run round on the scooter.' So I said, 'No, I don't think so,' 'cause I was more or less an old maid then [laughs], you know, in my – er, forties. 'No,' I said, 'As a matter of fact, I'm going home to do my washing.' Oh dear [laughs]. So he said, 'Alright then.' And anyway, he was there again the next night, which was the fifth night now, and I said, 'Oh hello.' So he said, 'Would you like a little run round on the Lambretta, on the scooter?' And I thought to myself, well, you are being a bit unkind, keep on telling him – he only wants to be friendly, he's just lost his wife. So I said, 'Alright then.' So anyway, I said I'd go home and freshen up. And do you know where we went? I don't suppose you even know this place, Keston Fishponds. Do you know there? No. Well, it's Keston anyway. And we sat and watched the people fishing. Mm, yeah. And that's how – well, the years went past and we – it was just friendship, yeah, and then after two years we got married. Went to live in Parkfield Way over there. And then by then I was forty .... I must have been about forty-seven when I got married.

*That's very late.*

Too old to have children.

*I think Sybil is trying to tell us something.*

*Female: I'm just trying to say that we've had thirty-one minutes, but Sarah said you can have longer.*

Yeah, well –

*Would you like to carry on or would you like to stop? Would you like to carry on or would you like to stop?*

Well now, really, there's not much to carry on for. We were married for forty-two years, me and Steve, and about six years ago Steve died, so that left me on my own. So really there's not much more now – we're up to date now.

[32:24]

*There's lots more I have to ask, actually. There's many questions that I have for you.*

Yes. You're going to ask me a few questions now?

*Well, I was wondering what life was like during the war.*

Oh. Well, before the war, I worked in one of these great big houses, not very far away from me, the last one, at Lower Camden. And the raids were getting – the raids were getting earlier and earlier. And the lady I was working with – for, asked me would I like to go and sleep there instead of going back to Havelock Road, and I said yes. Well, we got – a year after the war, the year during first – the war, we were conscripted to work – we were called up. And of course now I'm only about – I'm about twenty five now, twenty two, twenty five. So naturally I had no responsibility. I was working in a house that was no responsibility. So they nabbed me. But they did give you an option of what you'd like to do. You could either be in the forces, like the air force, the army or the navy, yeah, be there, or work in the landmine – land army. I didn't like that 'cause I wasn't all that strong with the cold weather, so I turned that one down. You could be a postman, work on the railways and then it came to be the factory. So I said – so the girl – it was at the labour exchange. She said to me, 'Would you like to work in the factory?' So I thought to myself, well, I suppose I - you know, I could change that much. Anyway, I had to – I said, 'I'll work in the factories then.' But I had to do a month of training at Deptford and then I was

sent to Birmingham, working in one of the big – big factories in Birmingham, engineering. And I stopped there – ‘cause we wasn’t allowed to leave, ‘cause you worked for the government. And I stopped there until well after the war. Oh, and I loved it. I loved the Birmingham girls. We used to go to the pictures, you know. But it was hard work. We worked from eight o’clock in the morning till half past six at week. Mind you, a lot of it was overtime. And, erm, Saturdays, we worked till four, and if a rush job came in you had to go and work – you had to work Sunday. Oh, it was really hard. And it was piecework as well, so you had to keep up a pay – a pay sort of day. Yeah, it was hard work, yeah, but I loved it there, mm.

*And where did you live?*

Amongst the Birmingham families, yeah, you know. Got to live – live with the families, right.

[35:45]

*And what was it like when the war ended? Did you expect the war to end?*

I never gave it much of a thought, really, no, because we all seemed to get on well together. We were – we didn’t seem to grumble about anything. Yeah, the years went past, mm-hmm.

*And rationing was happening at this time. There was rationing happening at this time.*

Well, that’s where we gained more than we did in the First World War. There wasn’t much rationing right until the very end of the war. So the poor people went hungry, mm. But we were rationed right from the start at the Second World War, mm-hmm, mm. But you did work hard in the factories. There’s no getting away from that. But I liked it [laughs].

[36:44]

*How does it feel now, looking back at your childhood?*

Well ... I think I suffered. I think I suffered through Mum dying, because there was no one to cuddle you. Yeah, I look back on that. There's no big hugs. And you – and you're different. Because I never noticed I really did it, because – because we were never used to having a nice big kiss and a cuddle, you didn't know what it was. And someone said to me one day, she said, 'Amy,' she said, 'Whenever someone's going to approach you, you back back.' Yeah, yeah, and I thought to myself, well, I didn't even know I did it. So the next time I noticed that I did, when people come to approach me, I would back back, yeah. Because – I suppose it's because you were never used to having a cuddle or a kiss, mm, yeah. Because even when we come home, there wasn't much love and affection at home, really; I can't remember Dad every kissing me. Lucy used to though. Oh, and they used to come and see me, see us, only three times a year though, but they did used to give us a little kiss, but we never knew what it was [laughs]. Fancy – today, now, when you think of the – when you think of the children today, they run to their mums and they have big cuddles and kisses, yes, yeah. But even over the road, she says to me, 'Come on Amy, I'm going to give you a big hug and a big kiss,' yeah, yeah. But we never knew that as a child, no. And there must have been thousands of children at that time of life, what I'm talking about, that never knew their parents. A lot of them must have died through the First World War. A lot of them, their fathers never come back, mm.

[39:07]

*And you said before that when you got married, you were forty-seven.*

I was forty-seven when I got married, yes.

*Too old to have children, you said.*

Too old, yes.

*Did you want children?*

Not really, no. That's something else I've never really grieved over. Because I always think that what you've never had, you don't miss. I don't know if it's the right way to look at it, but you don't miss – I never really missed Mum 'cause I never knew Mum, no, no. Sad really, to think that you've never known your mother, isn't it, mm-hmm? Yet she must have kissed and cuddled us as babies, yeah, mm-hmm ... yeah. And I've lived to be ninety-five.

*That's an achievement.*

Mm. And all that's the matter with me is my eyes [laughs], yeah.

[40:13]

Well, up till last year – my eyes went again the – erm, at the beginning – at the end of last year and I found that I couldn't see so well, so I've had – I used to walk down the road to the shops this time last year, yeah. But I don't – I don't go out on my own anymore though, 'cause common sense tells me not to, mm-hmm, yeah. That's something I've still got is common sense and I work on that [laughs]. I don't go blundering, walking down the road and you can't see anyone, making yourself a nuisance to other - you know, for other people.

*And do you miss Steve?*

Hm?

*Do you miss Steve?*

Very much, yeah, mm-hmm. Well, I've said it one – 'cause Steve was ninety and – but he wasn't in such – excuse me, I wasn't in such good health as – excuse me – Steve wasn't in such good health as I was, so I had to look after him towards the end of his life. And anyway, I did my bits and pieces in the morning and at eleven o'clock

we sat down and had a drink or banana or something like that. And I said to Steve, 'Would you like a banana, Steve?' 'No,' he said, 'I'll have mine later.' So anyway, I'd got to go down to the shops and to get a loaf and a – what's-her-name thing, and I went out in the garden and picked out – took a few things off the line. I would say I was – by the time I walked out of that house into the garden and then came back and put my coat – I must have put my coat on and there's Steve died in the chair, within those few seconds, yeah. He must have died as I got up from the chair to go out and get those clothes, 'cause when I came back to – to put my coat on to go and get my – to do my shopping – anyway, I ran down to the office and there was no one here. It wasn't Sarah then. And I ran back again and I pulled the cord and the ambulance – I said, 'There's no response from my husband.' And the ambulance were there within a few minutes and they took over from that. They arranged everything after that, to have Steve taken away, and called the doctor to certify. And that was – that was the end of Steve, mm.

[43:12]

*And are you good friends with Lily? Are you good friends with Lily now?*

I beg your pardon?

*Are you good friends with Lily?*

No, I never see her, no. No, I never see Lily unless I come down here on a Wednesday, mm-hmm, yeah. But that's ... did I tell you that Steve worked – he worked in one of these orphanages just when he – when he was a – just before the war, at Annerley. And they made him a lovely cabinet. I've still got it. Yeah, he taught the boys, erm ...

*Carpentry?*

Carpentry, yeah, yeah. But the discipline in there was terrible and they was a bit cruel to them – 'cause Steve wasn't cruel and he used to tell the officers off, yeah, 'There's

no need for you to hit those children like that.’ But we didn’t go through that, no. They were – they never hit you, no. But really there was no need to because we were so well behaved with this discipline, came natural to us, mm. Isn’t it strange how though – how I walked past Steve three – more or less three times? Talk about fate. Now that was fate, wasn’t it?

*Yeah.*

Yeah. And I walked past him even the third time and I looked like that. I’m walking – ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘Hello stranger.’ I said, ‘I haven’t seen you for years,’ yeah. And he said that his wife died a few months, er ... yes. So strange, life, isn’t it, how – very strange, when your – in my brain box, I can remember every minute of. But sometimes, even now, I forget little things that I’m – I think, oh, then I didn’t do this and then I didn’t do that, but I can remember all – everything in my life. I can remember every job, every place I went to, the holidays, yeah, mm, yeah. Wasn’t it nice to think that we had a fortnight’s holiday at the seaside every year? Place called Dovercourt, Harwich way, yeah.

[45:47]

*Thank you very much, Amy. Thank you very much.*

Yeah, yeah. Well, we’re right up to date now, in here I am, ninety-five, tell you all about it [laughs].

*Thank you.*

[Laughs] Well, I hope Lily – are they – do you go to other homes? No? Oh, oh ... Why was we picked then? How did Sarah come to ask me – ask me how and then – if I would like to have an interview.

*I guess she must have heard about it. Someone must have told her. But I don’t know who.*

Yes, 'cause she said to me – she said, 'You was in a home, weren't you, Amy?' And I said, 'Yes.' And she said to me, 'Would you like to ...?' What is this, a documentary or ..?

*A documentary but mainly it's going to go to the British Library and it will stay there forever, really, for people to look at.*

Yeah. And it's for the children to see what it was like.

*Yeah, and children who –*

Are you going to the schools?

*No, but they can go to the British Library and they can have a look at it.*

You can take sections of the schools to the library?

*We can, we can. And schools do go to visit the library. So yeah. Is that why you wanted to do it?*

Well, I – I never really give thought to – I did ask Sarah if it was confidential, mm, yeah. And she said yes. Is there any more questions you would like to ask me?

*No.*

I think I've said everything.

[47:40]

I'll tell you something that happened to me during the war. I was working at the big house at Lower Camden. It's not far away from where the caves are. And before I went in – got called up to go in the factory, well, the – as the summer was beginning

to end and the nights were getting a bit darker, each night the raid used to – ‘cause the sirens went every night – evening, until they went into the – in the night as well. Anyway, I said to Dad – ‘cause I used to go home in the afternoon to see my – my dad, like, ‘cause he was still alive, and I said to Dad, ‘I think I’d better get back before the sirens go.’ So anyway, I started back and the blessed sirens went early that night. I thought to myself – and I’m coming up this road here, Pageave Lane [ph], to go passed this church here. And I crossed over – oh, I heard the sticker bombs coming. I heard the plane coming and it dropped its first bomb and – that was the first bomb. I heard that bomb. But I was going passed the church, this church not far away from here – do you know the church? It’s quite open. I’m going passed this church and it dropped its second bomb. I’m going passed the – that side of the church and the bomb dropped that side of the church. Did a lot of damage. Anyway, I hurried on. I wasn’t afraid but I was hurrying. And – but the second one dropped in the field not far away. Then the third – fourth one dropped in – on – in one of the roads, Turpin, up there – but there were people killed on there. I didn’t hear the fifth one. But they were what you called sticker bombs, one after another, but they weren’t big heavy bombs, yeah. Mm. And well, and so say – I wasn’t meant to get killed by that war, and yet I was close to it, yeah. And one night me and – ‘cause I had to – when they were telling me about the engineering, I had to leave home – leave this big job and go back home to live. Anyway, one night we was in – under the table with me and Lily and Dad, and I was – I wasn’t asleep. And I felt a vibration] in the air, just like that, a vibration and all of a sudden there was a colossal explosion and it – it was a – a bomb coming down on a – on a parachute. And it was coming down slowly and that was causing the vibration [ph], yeah. ‘Cause I said to Lily, ‘Can you feel this vibration in the air?’ She just grunted. But that was a parachute and we heard it explode. A lot of people got killed. That was somewhere near Homesdale Road, which we – where we lived, mm. Yeah, yeah. So I’ve had some – I had some – we all had narrow escapes when the war was on, yeah, mm.

*I bet you were glad when it ended.*

I was. But I still stopped up in Birmingham for another year, yeah, but I felt in the end I'll have to come back home where my roots are, so I come back home [laughs]. Yeah, yeah. Surprising how we got through it and no one didn't seem to grumble.

*No.*

No. We didn't seem to – took it all in our stride, yeah. Are you going to see Lil now?

[51:50]

*We are, yeah.*

Yeah, yeah. She'll be different to me, Lily will. She'll be different.

*Thank you Amy.*

She might say that you know how well we were looked after and we wasn't hit or anything, but mind you, we were dressed lovely for school girls, yeah, really lovely, warm, mm. We were lucky there as far as clothes were concerned, mm, yeah. We looked better than the people that lived in their own homes, yeah. Lovely gymslips and lovely white blouses, yeah, mm-hmm.

*Okay.*

Well, I'm sorry, I've got to go. I'll still carry on in a while. Have a little bit of water.

*That's alright.*

*Female: So we'll turn the camera off now.*

[End of Transcript]