

Social Care Institute for Excellence

Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

Ref no: C1597/08

Collection title: Care Leavers' Stories

Interviewee's surname: Gardiner

Title: Mr

Interviewee's forename: Larry

Sex: Male

Occupation: Dementia Advocate and
Charity Trustee

Date of birth: 1952

Dates of recording: 13.05.13

Location of interview: Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London, SW1Y 5BH

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: 3:01:43

Additional material:

Copyright/Clearance: Full clearance EXCEPT from 2:01:17-3:01:43 which is closed until 24 October 2023

Interviewer's comments: Since the interview took place Larry's condition/diagnosis (discussed) has been revised: doctors have now definitively exclude Alzheimer's and Vascular type dementia as the reason for disordered memory and cognition and investigations continue.

C1597/08 Larry Gardiner

Track one [00:00:00] [Session: 13th May 2013] [00:00:00] Larry Gardiner [LG], sixty years old, chair of the Oxfordshire Dementia Empowerment Group. Previously trustee of Oxfordshire Advocacy. Discusses impact of dementia on individual liberty. The Mental Health Act, stigma. LG has had dementia since 2010. LG describes an incident involving general anaesthetic in hospital. LG describes himself as a campaigner, and discusses common perceptions of dementia. Describes models of liberation – feminist, black. [00:07:00] LG details his declining capacity. Difficulty driving, reaction and vision tests at Wrightington hospital. Stresses importance of brain stimulation, work of Susan Greenfield, patron of Young Dementia UK. LG was a student at Ruskin College studying writing for performance. LG considers impact of dementia on his relationship with his past. Past as little red threads connecting to the present. [00:15:18] JG discusses his mother [M]. M born in Vienna, died at the age of fifty-four. M lost her entire family during World War Two, then migrated to UK. M suffered from mental health problems. LG discusses M's character and hobbies. [00:20:50] LG is the eldest of five siblings. Describes his father, was an evacuee during WW1 and a conscientious objection in WW2. Discusses father's family. [00:24:54] LG describes his own character as mad, sad, and bad in early years. LG describes going to care as a very young child. Went to a children's home called St. Margarets. Elaborates on experiences in St. Margarets. Bedwetting, lack of affection, and being in and out of care and schools until the age of twelve. LG stayed in care from twelve to sixteen. [00:30:06]

Track 1 [cont. from 00:30:06] LG describes his siblings in depth. LG's sister Diane is missing. [00:34:55] LG reflects on the anger of his early childhood, refers to himself as the black sheep. LG beaten as a child, and cites an incident which led to him being taken into care permanently at the age of twelve. LG describes a variety of placements: foster placements, children's home, children's home attached to a school, and a secure care home. LG mentions abuse in care. [00:41:31] M's death, funeral. LG has school photographs. LG describes running away to an air raid shelter near an allotment. [00:44:47] LG describes going to school and hobbies. Describes domestic life, housing, River Lea, Hoddeston, Letchworth, River Amwell, copper wash boilers. [00:50:30] LG's Dad attempts suicide by gas. [00:52:26] Describes returning into contact with Dad after M's death. Dad had become an almoner, hospital social worker, child protection social worker for Staffordshire County Council. [00:57:00] LG describes Dad leaving home, Dad sectioned, Christmas presents from Dad. M ended all contact. LG recalls paternal grandmother, anecdote about running away to visit grandmother. [01:00:08]

Track 1 [cont. from 01:00:08] LG describes an accident involving a bus, hospital. [ten minute comfort break] LG recalls working in co-op, joining the Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers. Credits the union for his interest in history. LG

worked for Dutch union FNV, Bondgenoten. [01:06:00] Memories of school, getting into fights, St. Pauls Infant church school. Church supported LG and M at home. [01:10:54] LG discusses relationship with food, rebellion, nutrition, cooking lessons at the children's home, grocery shopping. Critiques chain stores and lack of choice in food. [01:17:59] LG driven by the desire to make future different from the past. Considers upward trend of history. Campaign for nuclear disarmament, atmospheric testing, atom bombs, Berlin Wall, Iron Curtain, apartheid. LG worked on a constitutional development and education project in South Africa at time of apartheid, sponsored by Overseas Development Agency. [01:23:04] LG discusses his own education, then work in factories, as a bus driver. Second chance to learn in Liverpool city College. [01:26:20] LG went to prison after leaving care. Describes leaving care, YMCA hostel, little preparation, was homeless, left Ipswich and went to London, took drugs. Anecdote about stripping a derelict house for scrap copper, then was detained in a youth detention facility. [01:30:36]

Track 1 [cont. from 01:30:36] LG in Ashford hospital age seventeen for drug treatment. LG discusses prison life, vicar who was prison visitor, library trolley, read a book called Oblamov. Probation after prison. LG lived in Dalston, probation office in Old Street. [01:34:00] Absconded from probation and took a trip to Holland, flower power time, drug liberalisation, slept in Amsterdam's Vondelpark. Lived in a commune during time of Vietnam war, commune was called Christania. Felt revolutionary and subversive. [01:37:37] LG describes children's homes as Barnardos-style, strict, sometimes religious, and LG did not play much as a child. Describes chores, other residents. Relates an anecdote about an older resident, Anton. [01:40:44] LG's discusses younger brother who has throat cancer. Anecdote about M smoking a joint given to her by Anton. LG describes taking drugs and their impact. [01:44:44] LG describes life in communes, Hallehuis, the culture and geography of the Netherlands, and their approach to children. Mentions philosophy of The Free School, and his feelings as a child. LG became skilled with computers. Began working with Digital as a contractor, then at Compaq, worked with Hewlett-Packard. [01:52:59] LG recalls feeling worthless and discarded as a child. Makes friends easily. Considers shared experiences, moving around, and being a chameleon. [01:54:48] LG considers whether he felt safe as a child. Recalls an incident of serious abuse as a child. LG did not tell anyone about the abuse. [02:00:22]

Track 1 [cont. from 02:00:22] LG discusses the end of his marriage and his daughter, Emma. LG went through care proceedings for custody of Emma, which was unusual at the time. [02:03:00] [LG declines a comfort break, interview continues] LG became a single father and joined the Gingerbread one parent family organisation in London. [02:09:29] LG's marriage collapsed. LG and Emma lived with Emma's maternal grandparents. Describes parenting Emma. Anecdote about sledging. [02:13:14] LG describes his five children from three relationships. Next daughter is Sarah who is angry with LG for being absent. LG experienced issues over contact. [02:15:00] LG's

youngest son, Tom, from a different relationship is fifteen now. Was born prematurely, now has a statement of special needs. LG discusses the schooling for special needs children. LG mentions another daughter who is experiencing difficulties. Self-harm, eating difficulties, anger. Eldest son, Charlie, is wise. Studies physics and mathematics. Charlie close to Tom from a young age, Charlie interprets Tom's needs. Charlie enjoys building things. Anecdote about building a smartie-carrying machine out of lego-technic. LG describes a trip to Vienna with Charlie. [2:25:30] LG felt close to M in Vienna, and discusses historical background to post-WW2 Vienna. Anecdote about M in post-1945 Vienna. M lost her papers and swam the Kleine Danube to escape the ghetto of Russian occupation. LG recalls hearing about M's death and arranged the funeral [2:29:30].

Track 1 [cont. from 2:29:30] LG cried, howled, when M died LG distributed M's effects. LG kept M's piano stool and music sheets. Recalls singing together with M and Dad, Schubert. LG discusses his attitude toward women as a consequence of his experiences with M. LG discusses relationship between carers and residents in children's homes. [2:34:59] Lack of intimacy due to shift work, burnout and staff changes, very little kindness from staff. LG considers himself to have been a rebel because he felt the care system was oppressive. LG continued to run away after leaving care. Evidences ended relationships, working away from home, living in different places. LG relates an anecdote of a teacher at school who attempted to talk to him. Also an incident where LG fought with another child in the playground. LG's advocacy came out of being a parent and having a child with special needs. Then advocated for disabled children, and around school exclusions. LG advocated at SENDIS tribunals, and for those with dementia. LG narrates anecdote about resolving his son's difficulties at school through advocacy. [02:54:26]

Track 1 [cont. from 02:54:26] LG discusses his openness about being in care. LG worked as a development worker for the Liverpool In Care group, a self-led place of refuge for other care leavers. The Merseyside Trade Union Resource Centre was used as the base. The group wrote a play together. Local council then cut the funding. [02:57:47] LG discusses his motivations for being interviewed. Opportunity to be listened to, has had a therapeutic effect. LG wants his story recorded to demonstrate that outcomes could have been better. Care system with very little care. LG's dementia gives the need to record his memories more urgency. [End of interview]