

TRANSCRIPTS

ASSEMBLY RESOURCES



SLIDE 6 PEOPLE VOLUNTEER TO DO THEIR DUTY

At the beginning it was quite difficult to establish the criteria for it. Because it was publicly funded, mm, obviously there had to be criteria and we hadn't to carry anyone who could be carried by any other form of transport. In other words if they had a car available at home and could drive it, which wasn't always the case with some people, mm, they would have to use it. And similarly they couldn't use it to go to hospital for treatment because there was already a hospital car service paid for by The Health Service. So, you know, there were, there were criteria were being set up for it. But of course, there were anomalies right from the start and I well remember being asked to Dyfed County Council had taken over, this nice young fellow who was still in charge of it rang up and said 'What's going on', he said 'I see a dog has used our, the Country Car Service'. And I, I'd noticed this because it, I was still very much in touch and had looked through all the claims and I said 'Well, yes, it was an essential, he's an essential user'. You had to be an essential user, which could, it could even, essential use could be perhaps going, if you were completely housebound being taken to see a friend or being taken even to the hairdresser if you've no other means of getting there, but it had to be a use. The fact was that this was a fat old dog that could no longer walk properly and his dear old mistress couldn't get him to the bus stop or, or indeed on to the bus but it was essential that he was taken to the vet. It was her need really, I mean she had an essential need of a car and they, they agreed it, but we always used to laugh about the dog that used it because it established part of what it was about, it was the person's need for transport.

SLIDE 7 PEOPLE VOLUNTEER TO HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE MORE IN NEED THAN THEMSELVES

I have enjoyed helping people, it's never been a chore to me. I'm thinking about one old lady, we had a call at WRVS one afternoon, a Friday, I know it was a Friday afternoon, I'd got a beautiful pink Grazia suit on because I must have been in town, and the police rang in and our secretary said to me can you go to this house. So I went to this house, I'd never been up this little back street before, and it was in a really poor part of town. This lady answered the door to me, she was dressed alright but the house was an absolute tip. The best thing that I always remember about her was she wore glasses and her glasses were always clean and shiny, Miss McCabe she was called. And I said the police had said, asked me to call and see if she was alright because she'd had a window broken. So she asked me in, there was no electric light. There was gas light. She slept on the settee, on a set of rags as it appeared to me, and she had umpteen cats, and these cats jumped all over me in my nice pink suit, it was on my shoulder, it was everywhere these cats. And she said no there wasn't really anything we could do for her, she was alright, she was a very independent old lady. She must have been eighty plus at least.

And shortly after that we had the years of the power cuts, and I can remember going before I went to work in the morning pushing a candle through her door. I don't know why, oh ah, because candles were in short supply when everybody had no electricity they'd bought up all the candles and I'd got some spare ones, so I can remember pushing these candles through her door before I went to work in the morning. Mm, the cats, I said to her 'Are you sure you want all these cats'? She said 'No', they were a nuisance. So in the end the RSPCA went and took several of them away. And then she would have Meals-on-Wheels. And then, I used to visit her and she belonged to the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church opened four sort of flatlets near to the church, and they gave her one of those.

And so for years I visited her down there, eventually she became bedridden she just lived in bed. And I used to go and see her, I used to bring her sheets home and wash them for her. I ended up doing her finances, collecting her pension and paying her rent, and finally she was found collapsed when they went with some dinners, and they took her to hospital and they said she was suffering from hypothermia. She just lived in a cold house, she'd always lived in a cold house all her life, it was not that I'm quite certain. And I went to see her in hospital, and instead of being a perky old lady sitting up in bed she was slumped in a chair and she didn't live long after that.

SLIDE 8 PEOPLE VOLUNTEER TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS AND MEET UP WITH PEOPLE

[EM]: I mean in fact, yes in fact the very last session we did, which was shortly before they closed down permanently the hospital chaplain came in and...

[PC]: And he's the hos...

[EM]: The hospital chaplain came in regularly on a Sunday and he apparently didn't know that it was closing and what he said to us was he said 'Who is going to hold the hands of the customers'?

[PC]: If they're in a commercial enterprise. I don't know, he didn't even know it was going to, that they'd lost the franchise. I think at that point we didn't now we'd lost the franchise, we just knew the coffee shop was closing for a while.

[EM]: And that was it.

[PC]: And that was it. We thought, you know, closing for refurbishment because they were moving the whole commercial bit outside and making a new entrance and we didn't realise at the time that it was going to be put out to tender and we were very surprised when it was a:- put out to tender and b:- that we didn't get it. I mean after all the years, I mean we did twenty-five but it had been going a lot longer than that hadn't it?

[EM]: Well when you look back we must have started pretty much near the beginning.

[PC]: Yes. I don't quite know when they started. But it was also, it was also very useful for the staff because, mm, there was...

[EM]: Well there was nothing open.

[PC]: Nothing open for the staff and they used have to just come in and buy sandwiches or something to take upstairs for later on in the day because their own bistros that they had, and they had two, closed at two o'clock on a Sunday

so, you know, it was a good hub to meet the staff as well as the, as the patients. We found it quite, you know, quite an enlightening experience.

[EM]: Yes.

[PC]: We enjoyed it.

[EM]: We enjoyed it and we're still working towards thirty years aren't we?

[PC]: Yes, I've got a few more to go yet. What is it, twenty-seven now is it?

SLIDE 9 PEOPLE VOLUNTEER TO CARRY ON THE TRADITION IN THEIR FAMILY

In the '70s I had an aunt, my mother's younger sister, and she volunteered for the what was then WRVS and she worked at the National Headquarters, which were still in Park Lane. And she did that until they moved to Brixton, when I got involved, she used to tell me about her life in Headquarters and my, one of my claims to fame in the organisation is that my aunt knew Lady Reading, and she was there, she rem..., she told me very clearly about the day Lady Reading died, that year, they were at, she went to St. Paul's Cathedral for one of these celebrations like we had last year, she was sitting in St. Paul's with other people from Headquarters, or other people as well I expect from the regions, and they kept saying 'Where's Lady Reading', you know, 'she's still not come, where is she'? And she, of course she didn't come and they found out after this service that she had died very suddenly the previous night. So that, you know, that was one of her recollections. And my aunt was in charge then at Headquarters of the people who were seconded, the volunteers, they weren't volunteers these were paid people that we had with, with the Army, on the Army bases, Services Welfare. She did it, I think, for about five or six years. And so, it sort of is in the family

SLIDE 10 PEOPLE VOLUNTEER TO CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY

The Duke of Edinburgh Award. There was a school in, in Swansea, a girl's school, and one of the Masters at the girl's school had always been interested in Duke of Edinburgh Award, and he persuaded the Head Mistress there to let him use some of his pupils for Duke of Edinburgh. Now he was using girls who were challenged. They seldom went to school, they had got very little home support, they really were not bright. And he had said to them would they like to do this, you see, because in Duke of Edinburgh you have to do a certain amount of service. And so the service was our service, helping out at WRVS Luncheon Clubs for the elderly, which the girls thought was wonderful. So he sort of said to us 'Will you do the rest of it'? Because they obviously had to know all about WRVS and they had to do a certain amount of, of work with it, so we had said 'Yes', and the girls were good. But the girl, he said to the girls 'You only go to the Luncheon Club if you go to school'.

Now truancy was the thing. So in fact, for the year that we were doing it there, or for the two years, they went to school every day because they wanted to go to the Luncheon Club. And we used to go and we would do lessons with them, but we knew that they couldn't really take things down because possibly they couldn't write, they couldn't read and it was just very unfortunate for them. But we, even when it came to the test or, or sort of making sure they'd got it all, we had an oral rather than a written. Now for other schools we would do written things whereas with them it was... And we didn't do the testing at the end, but other people did, and that was quite amazing because they all got through.

And I can see it now, we had the Head Mistress was there the last, they, they had to have the certificates given to them and the badges. And they had got, he had organised a very special coffee morning. All the girls had been in the day before to help make cakes and things. And their parents had been invited. And it, she had sort of introduced the girls, and how superb they had been, and the WRVS had been doing this and that, and then I had to say something about

them because I was Emergency Services, I had to say something about what we'd done with them. And then, you know, sort of say, we had given them their things and praise and everything else.

And afterwards I was going round talking to the parents who were there. And I can remember going up to this dad and his daughter was there as proud as punch, and I said to him 'Well, what did you think'? He said 'Oh', he said 'how I didn't cry', he said, 'I had to take time off work because I never ever thought she would get anything'. And I thought that was lovely. He'd, he was so chuffed that she'd got something, you know. you know. Out of all of this, so different, so different. So it did do very well, and actually he [the Duke of Edinburgh] came to Swansea on one occasion and we were there, there were two of us, somebody, Julie, another girl, and the two of us were there with some of our, with some of us, the school girls. And, and he had talked to them, which was, he thought, they thought was wonderful. But, no, that was good.

SLIDE 11 PEOPLE VOLUNTEER TO USE A SKILL THEY ALREADY HAVE OR LEARN A NEW SKILL.

I also did, while I was in the WRVS I decided because I was a, had trained to be a keep fit teacher I actually used to teach keep fit and, mm, I thought these old people sitting all day in chairs not talking to anybody, long before local authority had started, which they do now, movement classes. ... I went to our local care home and, mm, asked the matron there if she'd like me to go in and, and do some musical movement. And so, and I used all the old songs that they knew. Some of them I had to learn, I didn't know there was a song called *He Played His Ukulele As The Ship Went Down*, and I got the songs from these old, I say 'old people', I mean heavens some of them are younger than I am now. But, but they were and they sat all day and they did nothing, and so I felt that this was a really good idea. And so I, I went and we used these songs that they knew and we did actions to the songs. Now it's done, local authorities are doing this all over, but at that time it was quite revolutionary and nobody had done that. ... That was actually breaking new ground because it hadn't been done until then. And then after that I then went to, I had a woman who played the piano for me and I went to Age UK and I went to all kinds of old people's clubs and she played the piano and I did the movements, mm, and it was, that was then sponsored by the local authority. ... It was so satisfying because I felt that the, they just loved having somebody to be with them and do these and think about how it used to be when they were young, the songs that they could sing. And we used some wartime songs as well. And before, as I say, I never knew there was a song entitled *Three Pots a Shilling* which is about a gypsy selling honey from door to door. And I learnt these, I actually looked them up. I went to, I went to Charing Cross Road to the, the archive shop there and looked up all these songs and bought the music so that my pianist could play them for me. And, mm, it was great. And then sadly Greta, who was much older, was not able to do the playing anymore and so another, another lady took over and she didn't need music at all, and it was lovely because she used to play for my keep fit classes.

SLIDE 15 WHO RUNS SOCIAL CLUBS FOR THE ELDERLY?

I'm the leader of the Over 60s Club in Baxenden, Which I have been since 1970. We meet every Wednesday in the local Conservative Club and originally when I took over there were over forty members. And I suddenly had a Christmas party to arrange and which was held in the Conservative Club. In the afternoon the committee prepared the tea, we had turkey and ham salad, tea, bread and butter, cakes, I think there might have been trifles as well, which we prepared in the afternoon and then all the members came in at five o'clock. Some of them had to be picked up by volunteers and then we had a jolly good tea. And then after tea everything was cleared away and we had a concert. In those days you could bring in groups who entertained, there were three ladies, they were ladies and men and I think it was because they retired early and then had time to entertain other people. Nowadays you don't hear of people making concert parties. They might be in a choir but they don't like being the solo artist, and that was the Christmas party. Everything was so much easier, so much done to help other people. So that was how I started with the Christmas party.

SLIDE 15 WHO MAKES A HOSPITAL STAY MORE BEARABLE?

Moira Trotter with a Trolley Shop at Dr Grey's Hospital Elgin

We started a paper round in the hospital, we used to go round with the newspapers. We started a trolley and very soon realised that it was silly doing them separate, we put them together as a trolley with the papers and, mm, so we went round the wards ... there was just a very basic trolley. Always two of course, went round the wards. And, mm, as they still are now they're very pleased to get their newspapers and that, you know, and it's a nice feeling when you walk out of a ward and they're sitting up reading a paper or a magazine because I always think 'Well, it's a bit therapeutic isn't it'? Kind of stops them maybe thinking for a wee while about problems they may have.

How did funds from the trolley shop help the hospital?

We bought gifts for the hospital. Mm, it was luxury things at that time like televisions, travelling rugs, hair dryers, mm, luxury things. And then as the years rolled on we were then allowed to buy medical equipment and we would buy, mm, maybe there was baths that you could raise up, you know, or special beds or, mm, and that seemed more sensible if that was something that they really needed. And then again as time went on, you know, we ended up giving them money because basically that's what they all need nowadays isn't it? Which was supposed to be kind of for The Endowment Fund which was for the good of the patients, we, we hoped that was what it was for.

SLIDE 15 WHO DELIVERS MEALS AND SUPPORTS THE HOUSEBOUND?

For a long time I'd planned to become a, a Meals-on-Wheels lady. My mother's cousin, who lived to well into her eighties, she had Meals-on-Wheels in Loughborough, which is where I originate, and it, they were so helpful to her that I always planned that I would do Meals-on-Wheels at some stage in my life. And when the time came I, I saw a piece in the local paper asking for volunteers so I, I went along to join up.

My first day they sent me out with a lady that had done it for years. She's quite high profile in Scarborough so I won't say any more than that. But she was a delight, and she, she knew everybody, everything and she gave me a run down on all of them. She told me the ladies on Meals-on-Wheels that had been Meals-on-Wheels lady that, before, you know, that had done it themselves. In those days we didn't have packed meals, they were delivered in little containers, metal containers with lids on, one for the main course and one for the pudding. And so they were told to have a hot plate ready, so when we went in we dished it up on the hot plate and then we took away the containers, we washed and dried them and put them in the van.

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