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*Ok so this is Claire Days interviewing Alec Everitt on the 19Th December 2011 and can I ask you to say your full name and date of birth please*

Yes is Alec Albert Edmond Everitt, and it’s the14 of April 1948

*(14 April) 1948 that is fantastic and can I ask where you were born?*

Islington on Highbury fields well that of curse not exactly true, err it is a very grounded xxx building opposite err on Highbury fields my Mum and Dad had one room, and a biscuit teen, I remember at the time um, and that err xxx then I moved when I was about two years old, three years old I went to Clarkson road Barking, which is now part of the Gascoigne estate, and I had a very –very happy few years xxx two up two down scout age, in the xxx back on to the xxx factory, and err and look back at my years at the infant school, some of the happiest days of my life I most err then we moved to East ham err I was educated at the primary school Kensington Avenue primary school, and East Ham grammar school, very please to get out of East ham grammar school, because I wasn’t good at that, intellectually wish to be at grammar school

*How did you end up in grammar school?*

Err, xxx my err we done the eleven plus in those days my younger brother who xx got the same school as me, who is born in September didn’t get the age allowance, and xx went to Thomas xxx modern and had wonderful five years there because he was at the top of his school, I on the other hand got I think six or seven extra point for age allowance and ended up in the F stream at, it was A down to F and I was in the F, and I hang on to the bottom of the F by my finger nails for five years, thoroughly miserable, struggling um and err wishing I wasn’t really there, and to be honest with you my parent and two or three generation before they were milliners and I had always known that when I left school I was going to go in to the family business, so I want very interested in education because I had made up my mind totally what I was going to do, err I lefty err East ham grammar school, with English oral, err history, and art, so I could I knew where I was going I can tell you about it and I can drew a picture of it, but apart from there (laughing) but err then I went in to the family xx just had xxx you know what I mean, I was born in to a family xxx and um if you know something, you can sell it and I really knew it, because I can bake xxx velvet hat, feather hat, floral hat, fur hat, any hat I mean I spend my work doing what we used to called home work, I use to making hat you know, that is how I got my pocket money, so when I finally got out to start selling and the first order I got was, at um Peter xxx in xxx square, at the age of seventeen, and err from then on it was just xxx it was just because when a buyer err this are all women of a certain age, would say well I like that, but I don't like that, or I want that, I can actually say A because, I was the son of the owner , or xxx my Father, but also from xxx I say well, if you don't have that it will be that much less or err if you want that, it will be so much more, because I can actually give them the because you know, and once they knew I actually know what I was talking about you know, just and I was seventeen xxx little waste and, I was having a xxx absolutely

*It sound wonderful*

It was wonderful absolutely wonderful, and I came back with err and enormous order from xxx I haven’t gone to xxx, I didn’t know they exited; they where xxx farm at the time, and I was selling at xxx in Oxford street, and she said you are not selling this to xxx are you? I said no, which was absolutely true, because I had no idea what she was talking about, and I left the xxx and I went outside to a public telephone box, who had telephone directive in the time, I look up xxx and phone them up, and they happen to be central xxx in err Tottenham court road, xxx hills, explains who I was could I come along and show them my sample yes I went along, and um I have no idea they are central xxx, they were buying for few but I had no idea how many, and they pick out a dozen hat, and they said well what colour do you do them, that okay fair enough, thirty or forty colour, like a paint range xx, okay we will have that hat, we will have one of each colour, and we will put them in to our stores, and they were like twelve hats, and then the err that was about sixty seven something like that, sixty six, hold on how old was it, um that most be sixteen err seventeen, yes sixty seven something like that and the order come to, over two thousand pound, when I joined the fire brigade, in 1969 my annual pay was six hundred, so it give you some idea, I had already open up with xxx which neither my grandfather my Father xxx do so they were quite opposite, and I was doing London xxx (co-op) at the royal arsenal xxx (co-op) and various other groups basically I was very xxx sell, it just brilliant

*Did you think your Father was very-very proud of you?*

Yes, my Grandfather was not, not so he was pretty upset that because he was trying to tell how to sell, and err I was opening up with all the stores he was able to an, and selling hat; like he couldn’t believed so um I forget the phrase, I shouldn’t forget um but it was I will think of it at some stage, but he was a flash guy xx you know, but um that was the err that was generation of the war, xxx and all rest of, I came in xxx you know in his view showed him how it was done really, he wasn’t happy dad was proud, but the problem was that err I came back from that big order, and my Father said ok, Son you are in the office from now on, and I said no, you know I don't do office, I sell, and he said no- no, because my younger brother was in the office as well,. I said no, get on with brother fine, but no, we are not going to get on twenty four house a day, and I don't do office work, and err he said what happen? Xxx we get far too many orders, we can’t possibly produce them, so you have to stop selling, I said ho no- no, you err you got to expand, and err we agree to disagree um and although we are best mates now at the time I was xx because apart from anything else I was on commission, and err no-no I am not going to come in to the office err so we had a heart to heart, and I was still living at home at the time, and I applied to join the fire brigade, and they accepted me

*Wow*

Yeah it was difficult to get in those days

*Could you describe the process of applying to be in the fire brigade if that is ok?*

I turned up at my interview, there was forty two of us, when short listed, and I was on the forty two because I went in with, I had always had a problem, I have always had a knee cap (laughing)

*Nothing wrong with that*

As you can probably tell, and I went in and I went in with a Bess knee, a why would they not employ me because I was xxx I was earning quite a lot of money going down to petty cash really, it just awful money in the pocket, fifty six hours a week you know, why wouldn’t they err basically, why won’t they employ me you know, and I turned up to my interview, in a, I thought I was in business, I had a light gray Edwardian long coat velvet shut on, well when I say velvet shut it was, it was xxx shut but a silk shut it had um velvet colour and cough, I had a xxx shirt with a cut away bow tie cut away err west Coat on, and err buckle black shoe, I mean I sat back in there I think well you know, first thing xxx like pocket you know xx well yeah you know, xxx any questions well here I am, that is right, I mean knowing what I know now, xxx but they, I think what they, xxx been the youngest queens scout, they most have though well, I know what their eyes are seeing, but there must be something, xxx and the worst the very list we can give him to a bunch of bloke to play with for a few month, before he resigns (coughing) and um there were four of us, who are accepted out of that forty two, one of which was err had his employment um withdrawn after they check the references, because they check the references xxx after they gone through all that, err you had to go through an interview you had to go through the strength test then you had to go for medical, and you past all that, and been offer a job, they then check the references xxx very strange

*That is quite sad isn’t it?*

Yeah –yeah, the chap I remember, I remember his name but I won’t err say it but, he um because we get on quite a house on fire, xxx me pardon but he was previously employed by the post office and obviously there was a problem, then the post office had given him a bad report, it is probably why he left the post office I don't know, anyway so there was just err three of us left um, off I went to Finchley training school, because that was supposed to be the training school for officers of the future, you see it all down to gift xx, because I had you know intellectually I was never, it was never going to happen

*You must have had a natural xxx (ability) for this sort of thing*

Yeah I must have convince them that I was you know, I don't know, but they send me I didn’t know at the time, till I got there, and err we was informed that we were the you know not there leaders but we were expected, the once that were expected to go on through the rank you know, and all the rest were been trained at Southwark, ours was a shorter course for some reasons , but you can imagine, I had absolutely no , I mean I have been I was in err I was working in the business, for women, err selling to women produce by women, all our staff are women the only two men three men in my life was Grandfather, my father, and my brother, everybody else, everything everybody was a woman, so suddenly you know I thought it was good idea to join the fire brigade ooh god, xxx probably deservedly as well i must been such an idiot

*Was it quite sort of almost like a culture shock really?*

Totally

*Yeah*

Totally but it was only err when I get to my station it was worst, of course, um I went to Plaistow for the first year, and I was absolutely useless to then because um they were, A I wasn’t the Alec you see now, you can imagine you know, um I had the only car at the station at the time, xxx I have to encourage xxx bunch of blokes and I turned up and I was always wearing this outrageous, now I look back it was perfectly normal but I was wearing outrageous cloth, had life experiences that must be sounded like I was showing off, but err it was just my life experiences you know, and err after the first year I um I was very lucky, I was able to leave all my mistake behind me, and xx in charge of the xxx at the time xxx and um he knew what the scour was and he obviously seen that I regret something, I have done and said, I was happy to learn, err I got xxx here at East ham would you like to come here, I said this was very kind of it, but I thanks him years later, err I bump into him, and err it was that was it, that was fine that was run by, I spend the year learning how not behave or how to behave which other way, and I spend the rest of my carrier in the fire brigade just having a bowl, just having a xxx all I remember doing is I was up err the tower the xx in Plaistow um, and a length of rope when I first joined um you know what I can’t believed that I xxx no-no it will come back to me,

*Probably about three o’clock in the morning or something*

Yeah, I was at Moorgate, I was one of the first crew, I was in the first crew that went in to the largest pieces tower fire in London at the time which was xxx I was with the guy who was the stage officer who was absolutely magnificent, as a fire fighter, you know I was lucky I had two of them, and you follow them till the end of the xxx um useless manager, but you forgive many things because he was just such a great fire fighter and in dose days you were really busy and err we was in xxx and err there was four of us in there, err xxx who was later the senior officer who had overall responsibility for Kings cross, and if it went wrong with him, in charge it was a really unusual xxx um and the chap called xxx who went up through the ranks and um xxx Frank xxx who end up the chief fire officer driver and myself and we in there, and this chap xxx station officer we drop the horse and he turned around and as he started running he said to us “run” and if xxx run you know you are in deep –deep, and we ran, and memory recalled xx the flames and you could hear it bubbling behind us, looking at what it was, surly it must xxx penny must have drop with him and it was the xxx and xx between the thick walls of the xx coal store that was and of course once that get to certain temperature it blows the walls you don't want to be anywhere near when it blows the wall, it hot and boiling tar and um we ran, and it turn out to be a fifty five pumper, which was the largest piece time fire at the time, and I had the honour of running out of it (laughing)

*My goodness I think I would have run pretty fast as well myself*

Yeah- yeah I don't think to be honest with you I have never every run out of a fire, to be honest with you I never went in to too many either, as a young man I enjoyed it, but err I always had the fortune of xxx saving with some great fire fighters, and we all had our xxx (four tires) my four tires was driving fire engines you know they always be screaming, say if you, this are usually brave men, if they were given new constructive advice from back, say how to do how not to do, you know um you are doing right and um and I just absolutely adore driving and um because u suppose I could do it well, which was nice, and I had a complement xxx(pay to me) this Christmas by another driver who um from a different station, as it turned out and we were socialising together and he turned round to xxx he said um no-no that my nick name, he said no –no, best driver in the London fire brigade, I thought that is really I mean it was really nice, really kind for one driver to say you are better than me, men don't that do they? Um and err so that I was xxx jacking, anything higher, you know anything high that was everybody knew that was my job and dealing with the general public, you know because I tend to they do as they were told, err by getting hot wet and dirty, you know I was been pay the same money, they loved it I say well I will stand out here and drive my fire engine empress the public get them to the right place as quick as anybody else, and then I will do what I had to do, as a xx but basically after the first few seconds I was stand xx uniform had my picture taken you know(laughing)

*(Laughing), it sound like been famous because obviously been a fire man is very prestigious isn’t it*

Absolutely

*Did you like the uniform?*

Ooh yeah

*I supposed been a man in fashion previously you must xxx As well*

Well you are a woman you know what I say, err you know you only get to go out and just mention you are a fire man (laughing)

*(Laughing) not bad love really*

What is it about fire man xxx (laughing?)

*It is just men in uniform in general I think (laughing)*

That is right yeah, but err my wife I often laugh you know you can xxx (television) as soon as the contestant mention they are fire man, xxx I was a contestant on count down

*Ooh really*

Yeah, I xx the days of xxx

*What was he like?*

Err very- very intelligent clever man, what he realised was that, what the dictionary xxx and with xxx and two contestant doing the best they could, the last thing the program needed was another clever xxx so he acted the xxx on the screen but off screen I just founded him very- very pleasant agreeable intelligent xxx we sat through a few recoding, and you know you worked it out, what he was actually doing you know, err yeah I didn’t do too well I must admit, but um

*You clam the fame thou*

Yeah-yeah xx station at xxx I was there by then, and err bells went down count down and he came up, and as we were running for the xxx came up xxx the nine letter word I think it was inspector, and because with the TRIN you know the ending xxx so everybody was looking, I-E-S-T ooh I mean, err you know all the trick of the trade putting all those endings seal those ends S-I-O-N-T-O-A-N um but xxx I went how the fuck bloody hell did, go down the bottom, I thought well, I don't know you know did you get it? And they said no they have take all xxx it just one of those things probably from reading books, and my younger brother and my younger sister scan a page and see the spelling mistake or xxx, without actual reading it, you are totally useless talent, and err they said why not you xxx go on err on count down, by the time my time come up, I have actually retired, I was a retired fire fighter by the time, you know you can, as soon as you mention it you are a fire man, retired fire man you just get treated just a little bit differently yeah

*Why I think you know a lot of people thought you know fire man deserve respect for the jobs that they do you know they put their self in danger for other people don't they*

They don't see that but err others do I mean, police were far more danger then, xxx couldn’t dream of doing that job, couldn’t dream of doing that job, err there is also xxx I had done it for nothing, I really genially would have done it for nothing, and I was xxx I probably could have done it for nothing but err just because you know I was just xxx born with a silver spoon I suppose or whatever you know, my great Grandfather sold a farm in xxx and that formed part of the family fortune for one of the better words no fortune but you know, and we always work as well so it not really been spent it just been used and err my great Grandfather had a bakery in Ripple Road my Grandfather had a general stores in North Street, I got picture of that somewhere, I don't know whether I still got picture of it my Father certainly dose um yeah the old xx street xxx general stores

*They are quite entrepreneur your family*

Yes, yes and they were in to tiles, as well as before and during the second world war, and after second world war was over um my Father come out the RAF they went from tiles in to xxx and err the stores were two shops xxx my great Grandfather xxx my grandfather sold the store and they went into direct manufacture xxx because every woman wear a hat, and um it was just, it was for me it was just a great life, absolutely great life, so that were I come from you know,

*Ok fantastic, if it is ok I will just jump back a little bit now, um and your earliest memories of Barking Park, would you have gone there as a child, do you think*

Absolutely because of I was off Clarkson Road I used to take my younger brother my, sister was not xxx then, and er my err cousins, to Great fields park to used the paddling pool there,

*Ok*

Because with no traffic about, kids could go to the park for a day, with their jam sandwiches and lemon aid water you know xxx for a day, but on a rear occasion we actually had some money, err we came to Barking Park, to err am not xxx when it close but I think it was probably less than that to get on the err paddle steamer, well supposedly paddle steamer, it is a great xxx of err, you obviously heard about the paddle steamer

*Could you tell us about it thou a little bit for the tape if that is ok*

Yeah not at all, it err it was, it sat about forty people on rows, err benches that went from side to side, and it had the xxx and err the steam boat preservation society, came down to save it, when they find it, they were actually horrify, to find out that they had err a xxx diesel engine in it and a propeller, but it was such a great mock up what they done it that they put some peddles at the back on a concentric xxx so that as the boat went through the water, it turn the peddles, the paddles been on the concentric xxx actually push the levers backwards this rods backward and forward they brace on to this err arms so coco tines with xxx inside so as the arms went xxx the wheel went round and push the arms backwards and forwards and the tins the coco tines were brace on to the side of it had xxx went xxx (noise) so that got the noise, and they pump up water out of the lake and pump it in a very-very fine jet into the upright exhaust, so it instantly turn into steam so you got steam coming out of the top you got the paddle going round at the back noise and everybody well most people, the worker not everybody had a cars in those day, I mean it,

*(Laughing)*

Sorry about that not everybody had a cars in those day, so um you know people were not quite, were more naive about powering in those days, and it was only the once that realised you don't start a steam engine up by turning a key (laughing)

*(Laughing)*

You know or stop it instantly by pulling the choke out, to stave the diesel engine, um and that went up to xxx reservoir, I don't think, it was taking up in September to be used on the then new xxx reservoir, um

*Do you know what year that was sorry?*

I think it was 55 but I don't know, it no- no- no sorry, um no sorry

*No problem*

It was certainly late middle to late fifties, and it might been fifty five actually I mean that was you know you first thought of xx best um, and it went up there in September to be used, to be used for the next season, um April by the April they were just as wise then as they are now, they put it at the side of the bank and expect it to still to be untaught, and by the April it been burn out that was the end of that, yeah bloody shame really, yeah so it never got used, err

*What was like actually riding on it did you actually feel like it was an adventure or*

Well yes I mean yes, I mean we are talking about pre nineteen fifty five, so I was born in forty eight so I mean as a five or six year old, err you know riding on it was err it went round the two island twice I think it done a circular rout round the two island, the top island were three island on the lake the top island by Ilford lane, and opposite the middle island err went round there and actually up on till last year the key side of the two metal caps were used to tie up are still there, but that went with all the refurbishment work, which is a shame really, um because in those days the park was used, what else would you do on a Sunday, you know two hours pubs are open for couple house Sunday lunch time and that was it

*Right*

Raining pictures, those who could afford it, jump on the train and went to south end and those who couldn’t went to Barking Park, in those days it was absolutely packed

*So what other kind of things would you do with, um like you say, your younger brother and your cousin over there*

Over there, err really not much, I don't recall we, if we were going there it would only be, our play park

*Right*

Was Great fields, but if we ended up with a birthday err you know, my birthday was April and my brother is in September, if we ended up with some birthday money or whatever as I recall, or whatever as grandparent treat, once or twice or three time a year we would go to Barking park, to ride on the train, and to go on the steam boat you know the paddle boat

*Could you describe the experience of the train for me if that is ok*

Well I don't really recall very much except that, thinking it was a great adventure especially when you know the first time, obviously we xxx find it by our self parent took us over there usually and to get on the train, because in those days we had a turn table at both end, but err to actually get on the train, all by yourself, and wave good bye to you parents, you know and really went through the lever crossing and outside, and every time I used to drive it and when I used xxx by myself I can see this kids faces, because that doesn’t changed, for the very first time of their lives they were actually saying, you know good bye waving good bye for mummy and daddy, they were going on a train ride all by them self, and I recall as been miles and miles (laughing) um

*(Laughing)*

But just for five minute, I was xxx you know and I was err and I could see that in the kids’ faces, when I used to operate it, and I tough I know how you feel you know, this is probably, because the fair every few second you are back round xxx see mum or dad, but on the train on that train, it was away, and as I say the level crossing made it quite special, and then to seat there and while the train turn round on a level crossing, to come back to pull you back up again, it was really, well it only been ten minute from start to finish you know, xxx you are probably only moving about you know three or four minute top wak but the whole experience, the experience you know, going back mum dad still there or whatever you know, yeah so that, so that is how it, that is how it all started, been in the park,

*Do you remember the train going on a slightly different route?*

No

*No ok*

Everybody said it did,

*This is why I thought I asked laughing*

Everybody said it did, and one of the drivers I used to employ absolutely xx black and blue that it run along the back of the park, and maybe it did, but the council don't hold any record of it doing that, have you find out any?

*No, the only place where it say anything about it running along the back, um is from people that I have interview um they all kind of say slightly different thing about where it stop along the back as well*

Yeah

*So it all very confusing*

Yeah I mean I mean I can’t say it didn’t happen, but surely in my err experience, err my life experience I mean I am sixty three, am talking about people who maybe eighty, maybe it did there so many people who say it did, I well I assume it most have done, but I don't see how and

*Because they have even done excavation and things to find evidence of tracks I think along the back and I don't think they found anything at all*

No I don't, I honestly think you know once, I don't think, you are relying on a recollection of tow, three, four year old kids, err they may have gone away for bit and then come back, and some suggested that it run along the back maybe, that would had been, that would had been lovely I must admit, and you know and different circumstance and I did applied to the council to change the rout of the train a couple time, one of them was to put it along the back, because it would had been great to have gone from South park drive entrance to xxx drive entrance, um it would had been a reasonably more interesting trip you know and err but that wasn’t to be, and I suppose that was because you know people think that it would be nice sometime they convince themselves it actually happen you know, that not it didn’t happen but, I know I asked the council for record of this they said xxx well I say I can sort of test the fact that maybe nineteen fifty three or I supposed I was five year old then, my definite recollections yeah you know it was always a steam train that ran up till nineteen sixty, it was always a steam train, that steam train still work running

*Right*

Um xxx that is up at xxx

*Ok*

It run round the road xxx it was coming back to Barking but a chap called err xxx or bloom who own the xxx bless him, err I have made err I got in contact with him and we came to a gentleman’s agreement to bring it back to Barking Park err two things happen, the err both of which err would had killed it standard, the council told me that because it was a smoke xx they wouldn’t allowed steam to run it, and B err this guy Bloom I think his name is err probably dead now his French for man said if that goes I go, so he said xxx obviously I got a Forman here that um I relay on totally so am sorry the deal is off, so xx tails I lose and tails I lose, so that is a shame that never happen, but that was rumour has it, I had no reason to doubt this has been true that rumour has it, that err I know xxx who was err in the an apprentices in the Ripple Road work shop at the time, he was an apprentice and he help built the loco the del-tic one that I used to run, um he help to built it, and err he that was put on the tracks on the first of May nineteen sixty, and err the story goes the council were king to go, the xxx was all out it was everywhere, there was no romance to the xxx because it was what was the only thing we had on rail way so, it was quite normal, um but the diesel del-tic engine was the space age, um space age xxx concept and they where king to upgrade um up read the loco, and the boiler where defective, or become defective on the steam train, and I understand it, it was weight for scrap, and sold as scrap, scrap value, it was then run at xx park, for a while and then sold on to xxx steam, and it is still running,

*Wow, consider something sold for scrap is still doing ok isn’t it*

Yeah

*Wow*

Well never mine I mean that del-tic well mine it was working because I actual bought it, err that old steam train, the del-tic will still be going really, but the park changed

*Yeah*

You know you can’t flog a dead horse so far, you have xxx

*Of course yeah in term of the other facility in the park, things like the lido or the paddling pool or you know the rowing boats did you every experience any of that as a child or that all come much later*

Ooh yes, yes I mean the xxx use to have um paddle handle xxx paddle boats, and they used to love going over there and have half hours on those as a young star, um and um when I was courting as a young teenager you know am my whole weeks err pocket money was taking a young lady over to Barking park, and show off and have a motor boat, about twenty minute I think it was that for seven and six pence, you can have a rowing boat for an hour’s for two and six but err, motor boat was far more impressive I thought, um yeah so I didn’t used that too often, but I used to enjoy you know that was worth doing, um and of causer when my son was born the first thing I did was he was born in seventy five, so he was probably two years old, take him over ride on the train, of course I turn up and

*Ooh*

So I went up to the town hall, and said is the train shut yet I said ooh I will reopen it they said no you won’t, err xxx by nineteen seventy nine I owned it

*Wow*

It got put on the back of a flat I hire a flat back truck and took it up to my firs station, it stood in the appliance room at Holloway fire station xxx for about three month, maybe long and every fire man that have any expertise on electrics and err mechanical engineering or um they all find excuse to come down from their various stations and we all used to get on with that, every nut and bolt on that thing came off, and I used to look at it, and think you know what on earth is going to happen when we put this lot back together again, we going to have a lot of bolt left over, I mean we had all the engine rewind and the motor rewind and the engine was reconditions and all the wiring was replace the break were upgraded, you know it was just because the lads you know it was better than polishing a fire engine, they and it was good for xxx I think xxx it was something that, in the end although it was, it was suppose to be a business, they can see that, there was some community advantage from it all you know so they just turn a blind eye, and err brought it back to the park, err done a few trial with it of course, and buy the level crossing because I can see it is a bit dangerous, and dangerously narrow, and err open up on the first of April nineteen eight, and err basically a fan fair because um I was on night xxx I went on night, it was err no I lied, sorry, the date was about that date but any way I got a xx call on the telephone not the internal telephone I was at the station, from the phone under the stirs, STD phone you know money the slot phone and a woman I suppose I xxx she said “hello my name is so and so and from London weekend television you know the new xxx I understand you going to open the xxx railway in Barking park” I went yeah because I was at the fire station I know, I just spend the last fifteen years at that time, a wind up you know, yeah and err you know I understand it is popular and blab la, I said look all I xxx sorry about this, I said but can I take your number, because I will phone you back, she said ooh yeah certainly, but why, well I said well it is the first of April, you know if you think that I am going to seat in the fire station and come up for this you know, of course I phone the number back, it was the switch board of London television and it was all confirmed, and the next week they turned up during the week we, unbelievable and that was broadcast you know team, we had two or three people, by the time I arrived, they have hook up, dozens of cables into a xxx terminal outside the pavement, you know dozen and dozen this big cables all the way down the whole length of the track on the pavement, camera up trees cameras on top of the vans cameras in you know I forgotten her name now, but a presenter that I recognised…and they spent…all day…just taking a film of me going up and down with people on…and I went to the fire station that night…got in time cos we start at six o’clock in those days, switch on the television, erm London weekend XXXX and there was this fabulous train, I mean absolutely unbelievable I mean I didn’t recognise it, I mean they do have a skill, I mean you know what it is over there but…if you had no idea of what the miniature railway in Barking Park was like, you’d a think well I’ve got to go there that looks fantastic, you know

*They shot it really well did they?*

Oh brilliant so clever, you know I mean it was truthful but you know…you know you can do it right or you can do it wrong and they did it so right and erm well the next weekend it was just ludicrous, it was just…absolutely ludicrous…erm I think…I mean we did it so wrong we had no idea what…we had no concept of running it really cos…we had no idea of running it…we were told we were only doing singles…in our…erm in our attempt to erm play fair with everybody but actually that worked…well that was actually the wrong thing to do if we had actually done more customers if we had done returns cos…you know cos your actually taking time to get them off, they were joining the queue to get back on again…erm my recollection is that we took about a hundred pounds doing totally wrong at ten p each you know and erm…we had, we had absolutely…we were doing so wrong it was taking forever, I mean…ten years later given that same scenario you know, we probably done four times as much, but we didn’t know what we were doing, you know I mean with actually the physical operating of you know…we obviously knew…the mechanics of it all but the mechanics of putting passengers on and off and…running the thing…we did it so wrong but…but anyway that adds to the erm mystic of it I mean people…people were a long it time to get on the train to do one side of a park you know, but they…cos they’d seen it on the ITN news or London weekend…and they’ve come back…kids my age were coming back to bring their kids back on cos it was reopening again

*How did that make you feel, cos obviously the train something that a lot people remember from their childhood*

Absolutely brilliant I mean you can can’t you? I’m thinking Christ this was so popular and I wasn’t…you know I was in the fire brigade, I mean I wasn’t going to give my job up for…it was never in that league but…how on earth am I going to run this all the days that I say I’m going to run it you know…how am I going to be able to run these weekends and school holidays, I don’t want to say I’ll work weekends, school holidays and not turn up because if people turn up and you’re not open once they don’t come back you know, but as it turned out it was erm it was fine, I did it…personal every day that I possibly could and then friends, family you know we all got pitched in and some of the lads XXXX that had actually helped to strip down and rebuild the train were probably more capable of driving then I was

*What was it like driving it because obviously as a child you would have been quite excited just being on the train but to actually drive it as an adult*

That’s right, well the other hand of course that was tinged…you know it’s almost a love hate relationship because…that was tinged with a fact that you were actually responsible literally for the lives of other people’s children and of course being in the fire brigade, it does give you a strange outlook on life…you know you’re always asking the question what if…because when you go out to a incident…ninety nine point nine percent of the time it’s not really anybody that done anything really stupid…you know they’ve had an accident or…you know somebody else had an accident and it’s XXXX on their lives you know…so erm, like the silly things, like when I go to a hotel or a restaurant…erm hotel or…I was waiting for my father…last couple of days we stopped in a pub XXXX and erm…it was really weird I count steps, cos I know when it comes to it, if I have to get out, I want to know not only where the stairs are, but how many of them there are, so when you can’t see nothing you know how important that is, you know a you’re at the bottom or b if you’re at the bottom and you haven’t gone down fourteen steps, you’re not of the staircase you thought you were just on you know, and etc, etc and erm having these…erm these…I was really chuffed that I was able to…do something that maybe not many other people would do…and I was doing it very well…erm but also that suddenly why would I put myself in harm’s way, you know what if…you know what if you know and erm…because being in the park you always get the idiots who put something on the track, you know kids put something on the track or…

*Did that ever happen?*

Oh yeah, yeah hundreds of times, you know but I'm mean…it was all your spotting because you was looking for it…the difficult one to see what when they put stones in the points because we had four sets of points, so if they put stones in the points…on some points it was…it all depends which you’re going, it wasn’t XXXX…erm if they put the stones in the points on the outside one of say the lake station, it wasn’t a problem because you were coming in with a XXXX and when you went round the loop it was only you and the train…so if you and the train went over because you hadn’t spotted it, it was only you, it was when you were coming in with carriages and…the points were…half open because somebody had stuffed something in them or something…and you were taking carriages with on, you didn’t want…that never ever happened but erm…the train was derailed a few times but the carriages never went over erm because you was always…you know you was always looking but there were sometimes when you just really…it wasn’t possible to know erm…but erm we never ever had an accident ever so…we must have been something right, I got a letter from an insurance company somewhere XXXX actually wrote to the council and copied into me that said…well not that’s not true either I ended up with a copy of it of but they wrote to the council and said erm sort of a secret report basically behind my back…and said well ‘we’ve inspected the train, how comes this XXXX is you know…is running this train exactly as we hoped it would be run and you with all your finances were never able to?’ cos one thing I did and I mentioned it before, I worried about the level crossing…now unbeknown to me, the insurance company was asking the council to do that for years and years and years, but it was obvious it was…like three inch gap either side, far too narrow for a child’s head to go between a metal concrete post and a train, a moving train you know but and so the first thing I did was widen that level crossing…erm and you know it was just…we just run it properly and why would I throw away my fire brigade pension

*Of course*

[Laughs] for doing something stupid you know…so erm that was…I run that for the year and that’s after the first year…a there was this erm letter from the insurance company b I had a letter…and the council had actually taken the time and trouble, I’ve got it framed as well somewhere…when I get these things out I’ll send you a copy but…erm it said the following the recent meeting you know with the park’s committee, we’d like to take this opportunity to thank you very much for the way you’ve been…running the facilities in Barking Park…now even in those day the council didn’t take the time to say thank you and well done…you know they were too busy answering complaints and…erm you know other enquires so that was really, really, really unusual and very nice to receive and erm they said well we’ve just lost nine…a matter of public record, we’ve just lost ninety two thousand pounds running the boating lake in the…in the 1981 season…erm we’re thinking of putting it out to XXXX the boating concessions out to tender…if we did that would you be interested, I said oh yes…erm and…erm it did go on for tender and I was…did tender for it and it was successful

*Sorry what year did you say that was sorry?*

I erm, the last year that the council run the boating facilities was in 1981 and they shut Barking Park and Mayesbrook Park down, they gave me, Barking Park because I wasn’t interested in Mayesbrook…and they gave a chap called Mr Johnson…the boating facility at Mayesbrook because he wasn’t interested in Barking Park, it just fell into their laps you know, erm sadly Mr Johnson wasn’t able to…you know realise his dreams of how he envisioned Mayesbrook ended up…and I did run it for a year myself having had my arm twist up severely by Jack Walker the Park’s manager and I said, I went back to him I spent my day in crown court and all the rest of it, it was horrendous…and I said look I don’t care what you say Jack erm or Mr Walker in those days erm I don’t care what you say Mr Walker, there’s no way I'm running Mayesbrook Park and if that means you know you’re going to take Barking Park away from me, then so be it because it’s exactly how I’d thought it was going to be…it’s horrendous…and he said oh great that’s all I wanted to know because I knew if that if you wasn’t going to run it to free…cos they gave it to us XXXX for nothing…if you weren’t going to run it for free, then nobody was going to run it, so now we know…and then that was it, then it was just shut down, just given to…or the equipment over there was given to education, an education run it very successfully for…funded differently…erm for years and years and year and it’s a great, great shame that erm they shut that down, education shut it down…still that’s another political decision…I won’t get involved myself in, but after I opened up Barking Park, or kept it open erm… then I opened the putting course, reopened the putting course, run that for four or five years and following erm a…a debate at Park’s committee about…erm the park and the facility there, erm…I said something like you know well you’re a labour councillor, you know and…you’ve vandalised the swimming pool to make sure that nobody opens it, cos they came in one day convoy because they knew that I was interested in reopening it…cos Bill Smith was the chief executive at the time and I said to him I can’t believe that…you’ve opened er Barking Abbey puddle, you know that tiny little sports centre and all you actually need to do for a fraction of the cost was put a thermostatically er plastic opening roof you know on the lido there and you’ve got rid of all of our, you can open 365 days a year if you want to, all your over night vandalism has stopped er you can be a lido when you need to be a lido blah blah blah and you could see his face you didn’t have to say anything you could see in his face you know why, why didn’t we think of that and er I made it known that I was interested in doing something like that and I just got a no no no no no no and at the same meeting and fair enough okay, when you say yes you say yes but when you say no you mean no and you’ve said no so many bloody times you know I’ll stop kicking a dead horse and literally the next day the side wall came, the side wall was knocked down and a convoy of lorries came in and filled it up with rubble and dirt and just to make sure that when they say no they meant no and uh that was the end of that and I was still banging on about services in the park and making it attractive to people to come to the park because it had chance from a park where when people came for the day they never ever got that the one thing you need in a public park of that of that ilk is a decent cafe, decent cafe and toilets you’ve got people for a whole day, that’s all you need erm and it’s the one thing that we never ever had over there, it’s most peculiar and they’re putting that right I mean I will give them the credit of saying that is the one thing they’re doing right over there. While they’ll have a decent cafe whether it’ll be run properly or not I don’t know, there ought to have been a decent cafe when I was over there but they just were absolutely had the most peculiar people running it. Barking Park, you know in Barking East London woman they’re only going to get ripped off once and you know in those days they were selling a packet of chips for £1 well we’re going back fifteen – twenty years a mum with four kids in tow off the Gascoigne they’re only going to when they could go to McDonalds and get them for forty or fifty pence they’re not going to be stitched up in a park for a pound so you know then we started seeing all the food hampers coming back in but of course any decent toilets in there we really was flogging a dead horse, I remember writing a letter saying we got bored of going to the xxxx forty years ago and with a labour council they’re quite happy for young boys and girls to squat behind trees you know, what the hell is going on here? Is it me? Erm and it really is, was very bad I mean the original toilets had been upgraded but not enough electricity for them I mean people put they upgraded them and put hand dryers in and everything I don’t know if you’ve ever been told this but the first day they opened XXXX I put my hand under the hand dryer, the guy who worked for the council and lived in the flat above lost his electricity because there’s not enough electricity the supply wasn’t good enough.

*That’s terrible isn’t it, to get that far and to put that much money into sort of renovating it*

They never thought to check about the electrics supply, it just wasn’t there. Anyway yeah so that was eh so anyway that was the main the main problem with the park right from day one, although the train was popular of course, the boats were popular um the paddling pool was never that popular you were never going to make a living out of it but it was another reason for people to come and stay, you know. Uh but of course without a decent cafe and decent toilets you were just banging your head against a brick wall and then I had this row with them about the paddling pool and they said well if you think it’s so easy you do it so I said right okay, I will. I though okay they’ve stitched me up like a kipper here so me and another chap who I worked for when away on a pools park management course which meant that we were certificated enough to run swimming pools at the end of that three day course I said to the instructor ‘look we’re running a paddling pool for a few hours of a weekend and school holidays maybe in the summer, what do you think we have to do’ ‘well no you’ve just done this course you tell me what you think you have to do’ and I said ‘well to be honest with you, nothing at all’ and he said ‘you’re absolutely right’ he said ‘you’re putting thames water in there for a couple of hours and then emptying it back out again there’s absolutely, all you’ve got to do to the’ actually in the end well right the way through we were treating it with a substance called ficlaw (?) and it’s like perfect for correlation of the water and we kept the water absolutely bang on we had, because the council were a bit peeved that we were doing it and health and safety or an environmental officer came down from xxxx road, she obviously had an attitude problem she didn’t me from adam she hadn’t worked out the scenario at all maybe she thought I was being paid to run it but I was actually paying, I was operating a paddling pool for free providing this out of my own pocket, I had somebody on site permanently because of the childrens act and because I had someone who was on site permanently I had to give them shelter so I supplied the hut and everything and radio control so we could keep in touch and she couldn’t work it out and after a number of visits she said ‘oh the water’s perfect’ so I said I’m sure it is, why wouldn’t it be? You’re testing that amount of water you test it at the beginning then test it every hour and adjusting it with this ficlaw and she said then she told me about one or two of her experiences with other swimming pools around the borough. I said you’re joking, she said I’m not.

*Was it really bad?*

Well there was one, I won’t tell you the pool well I will because it’s no longer there as it is because it’s been knocked down, the fiddlers swimming pool. She said I walked in there one day she said I could smell the chlorine through the front door so she said she went in there and spoke to the manager and they and what you do is you take a sample of the water you put a tablet in, I mean I’m going back a long time ago now, he took a sample of the water and he put a tablet in and then it degraded colour wise and if it would turn a certain colour in the middle of the tube you knew whether it’s PH was too acid or not enough and you can adjust it with the chlorine and the they’d taken the sample and it was clear they’d put this tablet in and it was clear and they said blimey there’s not enough chlorine in. Now these are the people who run the public swimming pool and it’s all quite evident what you should do in these circumstances but they decided that if they weren’t detecting any PH level then they ought to put more chlorine in and they put more chlorine in and they supply it by a 5 litre drum still clear, put some more in on their first initial attempt what you’re meant to do if it stays clear because you know you’ve put a tablet in there take half the tube and top it up with drinking water so you dilute it by 50%, put a tablet in and see what happens then and then of course you would get a reading because what they’d actually done they’d over chlorinated the water so much the PH level, the acid level was so high that it had bleached the tablet and it was clear so instead of diluting it to see what would happen they’d instantly made up their mind that they didn’t put enough chlorine in and put even more chlorine in and they’d done that twice and in the end they had to shut, she shut them straight down.

*I’m sure there were some very pink eyed children coming out*

Well it cost a fortune because they had to you know dispose of half of the swimming bath water and place it through a meter just to get it down to somewhere that it was safe, incredible.

Anyway I wouldn’t say she stopped coming but she worked out that once again she opened up when I opened up there was definitely an attitude when she first arrived and I’m not quite sure how she liked me and my organisation you get a first impressions that and eh she as I say then she opened up and I won’t say she stopped coming but she knew that there was and I said, I’ve volunteered to run this and I’ve been on the pools plant management, he’s been on a pools plant management you know unless we, unless you consider we are the stupidest people in the world with this amount of water it would be the right thing so we can’t really do a lot wrong and why would I even risk my fire brigade pension, suppose my fire brigade pension was £1000 a month, you know £12000 suppose I survived for just twenty years you know it don’t take a lot of work, why would I throw XXXX and pound away for what, you know and er ah right ok, and then we got on the house you say, I keep on saying house [interviewer laughs] the park itself gradually started to die, the Sunday XXXX just killed the park. There is nothing that you can do about that. Erm I use to say that I could cover all of my expenses on twenty six dry Sundays. Erm but where soon as err where you go to Tescos now or Lakeside erm all those cars and all those people in all of those shops on a Sunday were either at Wester, erm, Southend in the pub for a couple of hours or in Barking park. I mean you could only just be real, I could say you would have to be a real idiot it if you could make err a you know make err it work erm because of course the council didn’t make it work so. [interviewer laughs] But of course they have different err different levels of paper work to stop corruption that I didn’t have. You know they had a manager in the town hall, if they had a manager in the town hall they had to have a secretary. Err he had people who would report to him, so they had to have a site managers. The site managers obviously did not want to get their hand dirty so they had change hands. Charge hands had form or form hands charge hands and they had two or three staff under them erm they basically only made money on a Saturday or on a Sunday. Of course on Saturday or Sundays when everybody’s rate err employment rates went up err as I understand it was double time on Satuday, triple time on Sunday, bank holiday it was triple time plus a day off in loop. And of course all those thing didn’t apply to me because you know, I employed people saying well you know I gonna be good employer but you know you work five days a week and Satuday and Sunday are included in those five days, you know and, you know, you either want the job or you don’t, you know. Erm and err well you know the council had hunted one chap off of me erm he is now of management level erm another chap is in charge of the erm who worked for me, he’s one, he’s now a shunter at erm Hammersmith Underground empire, I dunno about fifty grand a year erm another one is in charge of maintenance who worked the tower blocks of Canary Walf, so I given them all, I mean they are all the young men that joined me that I’ve taken on you know given them experience and the like, ones a project manager at the LSCM we all still get along together.

*Yeah, I interviewed one lady actually you employed her grandson on the boating for a while, erm her names Margret Carrey, I can’t remember what her grandsons name is. Erm but apparently he was walking out of the park one night and he got mugged and he*

Oh Billy Yeah, yes, yes.

*Apparently like, you know, apparently you were quite supportive and you know.*

Well that how the park became towards the end. That’s nothing to do with me. I got a letter from the council erm maybe a year or two.

*Oh she certainly wasn’t blaming you for it.*

No! No!

*She said that you were really good XXXX*

A year or two after I actually took over the boats erm unbeknown to me erm the erm the, it was a there was a report went to the parks committee erm point out the reduction in the vandalism budget in the park. And it was, I mean I hesitate to say because it sounds as though I am exaggerating but it had gone down by hundreds of thousands of pounds. That’s my recollection, it might have been tens of thousands but you mean you know how they seem. But it was thirty years ago it was money that you know you couldn’t, how much that’s not possible and err and the report was [fire engine siren] along those lines of that’s its gone down since Mr Everitt took over the boats because when we first took over them my wife xxxx we stood, we had twenty nine rowing boats out in the water and probably four of them were floating, maybe five of them were floating, and all the rest were sunk. You know kids in the water, oars all afloat, erm my wife said I can’t handle this you know, I said well I’m err a bit institutionalised and a fire brigade erm I didn’t like people misbehaving. And err she said if we don’t sort this out we’ll walk away, I said fine, that’s you know, we’ve either got to be in this together or not. And err and this chap who has ended up a manager at the council he was absolutely superb and he has strong a strong feeling or strong he knew what was, he had a strong belief of what was right and wrong. Erm and err he you know he said right I’m with you then go then, no problem at all. I said well I don’t want to lose my pension but we gotta, this is wrong. We have got to sort this out because all we’ve got is erm people that we don’t want as customers, and the mums and dads and nans and grans walking past because they would come on the lake because there is algae. Should we sort it out, well I said I can’t do it on me own, he said no problem, ha, and err I think we put a deposit on because the council could not do because they had to account xxxx only a small deposit but it was the difference between a kid walking home or getting the bus. Err and then we would err go use the staff boat seaming it was an all day from months and months because it was a seven days a week operation in those days. We would go up, pull along side, no humiliation and say look I’m sorry lads it’s not council anymore this is private, we you know, we don’t want you to be behaving like this. You’re welcome to come back and will give your money back or just behave yourself. You know what’s right and wrong. And ninety nine times out of hundred, I was gonna say nine out of ten, but ninety nine times out of, that’s all that was required. They look around see that everybody else is behaving, and xxxx knew that he meant it, and err you know they would say, you know young lads, so they would say look ok it’s your choice you’ve got your deposit, you know, you either bring it back or you don’t. and that would definitely sort it out. And then on the very, very, few occasions when you still had a problem then we had to do something about it, but if you put sixteen year old over you knee and smack his bum in front of his mates they’ll never come back. I mean we use to get all manner of threats. As they were walking away, but never anything ever came of it. You know and maybe six time times in two years, I was thirty years younger, I grabbed the ring leader and spring xxx and spank his bum. You know I probably could have lost my….. printed over that, but it was case of your not gonna let, I’m, not gonna let you win. And what happened then of course they, that element stopped coming over the park. The hoards of gangs, did have anything to come over, because if they were allowed to go on the boats, there was nothing there for them.

*Did you kindda have like a wall of shame where you put peoples…*

No they just assumed that I would remember their faces. [*Interviewer says “Right”*] There are absolutely, I mean there are thousands of people we saw and they had absolutely no chance remembering who they were, no chance at all. And I had one absolutely fabulous incident, I mean absolutely brilliant. It sort of made the whole thirty years of being in a park totally worthwhile. A young lad errr came over and I suppose he was sort of mid twenties [*Interviewer says “Hmm”*] and he walked through the gate, he didn’t want a boat, err there was a queue there, but he walked through the boat, there was a queue errr xxxx the boats xxxx the fence and he comes up and says “Afternoon”, I said “Afternoon young man”, you know he’s about my stamp and I thought I don’t recognise you, I don’t…..and he said errr “You’re still here then”, and I said [Laughs] “Oh yeah, yeah, yeah for me sins” and he said err, “I just thought”, he put his hand out to shake my hands and I shook his hands and err, “I just thought I’d tell you now, he said, I’m in the err Irish Rifles, or something he said, I’m in the Irish Rifles. So I said oh great, well done. He said, I just thought I’d let you know. I said Oh…brilliant [*Interviewer laughs]* very nice, nice to see ya and he, and he straight back and he sort of turned round walked off. And the only thing I can think of, is that…at some stage ten years ago [Laughs] I’d given him one of my one liners and he….we must have cut him to the quip and he, he just wanted to come over, to let me know that he hadn’t turned out, how I suggested he might have done [Laughs] you know? [*Interview laughs*] Oh and I thought well that’s…you know you can earn money but if you can actually…change people’s lives for the better [*Interview says* “*Yeah*”] and it obviously had. He was obviously a toe rag when I gave him some verbal [*Interviewer Laughs*] and he now he’s, he’s six foot two, he’s got a straight back, he’s full of self esteem and umm just had to come over to tell me, he was alright. Good on him. I thought fantastic!

*Wonderful.*

Isn’t that great?

*That’s wonderful…..*

Yeah

*Like* *really lovely.*

Yeah

*Cos I can imagine you sort of saying, Oh Army’ll be good for you boy, or something….*

[Interviewee Interrupts] Cos I used to say ummm…

*….And then off he goes to the Army!*

Oh well….one of the best ones How old are you mate?.......I’m Sixteen or Seventeen…[*Interviewer says Hmm*] or normally they’d say Fifteen cos they thought then you wouldn’t touch em….And I’d go..I’d sort of shut my eyes and went to them Oh my God….two or three years time you’re probably gonna be somebody’s father. Oh my gosh. [*Interviewer laughs*] And just walk away and let them think about it, you know. And err, and you could see, that really, I, I knew that would really work cos my wife was always sitting in the kiosk and she was always looking at a reaction, you know….. Umm…my…when it was coming close every now and again because it wasn’t all sweetness and light, most days it was….vast majority of the time but I would…had a habit of putting my hands in my pocket. Because I thought by the time I’ve taken my hands out of my pocket and done.. [Interviewer laughs] with clenched fist, I you know with, it takes a few seconds to… throw your pension away and I thought that might give me a chance to think. And my wife will come out and say, look my husband’s got his hands in a pockets, it’s, it’s time for you to go. [*Interviewer says Hmm*] Why? She says well…don’t be [*Interviewer laughs*] ….please don’t be around when he takes his hands out of his pockets. Because he might have a pension to throw away but he…by that time he’s worked, he’s worked out it’ll be worth it. You know. And errr…that would and off they would go. [*Interviewer laughs*] Jus, jus we did, we did have a lot of laughs over there, it was that aggravating. There was a chap I threw off because he was an absolute total utter racist [*Interviewer says Right*] you know and I, and I and then he decided he wasn’t gonna do as I told him and that was a mistake. So I dragged him in, literally physically dragged him out the boat….told him to go away and he stood at the gate and he was giving me this then that. And he said I’m err, I’m not a racist. I work for, I work on the buses or something like that, some old cobblers, you, you knew that was…….and I said, I said look mate just go away, you’ve had a result you’re still walking, just go away because you know, otherwise I’m gonna give you a real good hiding cos I’ve really had enough of you. And I need someone to vent this out on, I’ve had you know, cos to be honest with ya, after a few weeks, err, working over there seven days a week in school holidays, you know, somebody needs to take.

*Drive a saint to distraction wouldn’t it?*

Yes, quite.

[I*nterviewer laughs*]

And instead of a gap there, we had a queue of people there, xxxx he says you can’t hit me, I’m, I’m only fifteen or summit like that. I said no, no, no, no, no, no, somebody’s got to teach you about the correct use of the English, English language, young man. What’s gonna happen, you’re gonna push me too far, he said I am going to knock seven bells of the proverbial out of ya. And when you get out of hospital, the police, you’re gonna tell the police, the police’ll come round and arrest me and I will go to the magistrates court. And I’ll be in a lot of trouble. But in the meantime, you are really gonna get hurt. [*Interviewer laughs*] I mean really gonna get hurt. And he, there was silence and there was silence all around because I think they…this queue of people were concerned that you know this was gonna turn ugly. And he was just about to say summink, turned round [knocks something] and went you know sorta like that….Woah! He’d of beat Linford Christie [*Interviewer Laughs*] and we’ve just, I remember one girl on the spike railings just falling over and going “ohohoh”. He didn’t turn round, he couldn’t afford to turn round, he, he he just, I mean I’d never’ve caught him in a million years. [*Interviewer laughs*] And we’re just, just everybody just fell about laughing and it all turned out to be quite funny and errr but suddenly you could see the bloke, an all the pans dropping off the shelf, oh yeah, yeah, he’s got a point, you know I don’t think I wanna be beaten up. You know? [Laughs] *[Interviewer laughs]* Back in the days…

*He wasn’t all that stupid then? [Interviewer laughs]*

No, No, I, I was the stupid one towards the end.. I er…I’ve had knives pulled on me over there [*Interviewer whispers “Really?*”] and er…oh yeah, you know, you knowand every now and again you know you’re being quote ‘cased’, because people think you can walk out that park will ten thousand pound in cash, you know? And I was always, my wife and I, I was always being told that we were ..lazy driving to the park but of course err we never took, we never took cash out of there, at any time people would think ,we were taking cash out of there. But we had to get out of there …safely [*Interviewer says “Hmm”*] and the way you do it is we had our plans, we would get in our cars, two separate cars to drive here xxxx But we put the central looking on and we both knew what we were going to do in the event of, err a problem and errm and that’s why we went over err in our cars. Cos err especially towards the end, it was becoming quite unpleasant over there. [*Interviewer says “Hmm”*] Errm I errm….I, I remember clumping one chap, and I’m not used to em not going down and he just stood there and went….By this time my wife had called the police. My son who had been over there, had got a right hander and so straight away I’m, I’m away, [Interviewer says “Hmm”, you know, I don’t know what’s it’s all about, but this guy’s going down. And I, and I cornered him and I turned him round and I clumped him, you know cos I used to do and he just stood there and I went Oh my gawd, I’m in trouble now, xxxx, I’m not used to em not going down. And err, the police turned up eventually….and I said well be honest with you, I mean I have…you know he’s hit my son so I’ve caught up with him and I haven’t asked any questions, I mean I can’t believe he went, he never went down [Interviewer says “Hmm”] and he said Yeah, he’s obviously known to, he said you could have hit him with a baseball bat mate, you know he’s, he’s so high on drugs, he has no idea. And he said, we we’ll we’ve not really, you know [Clock chimes in background] never really encountered err….a drunk yeah [Interviewer says “Hmm”]….but not err drugs, it was just totally spaced out. And errr…

*He probably didn’t even know what day of the week it was, did he?*

No, No, No and they said, he, well you know, when he gets some of his senses back tomorrow, well, you know, you know, he’ll…aww…..[*Interviewer laughs*] My neck aches or my jaw aches…and [*Interviewer laughs*] he’ll have absolutely no recollection of what’s happened. Do we wanna press charges for clumping us? Well if he’s spaced out on…basically he won’t even remember he’s hit my son. [*Interviewer says “Yeah”*] Errm…you know..errr he accused my son of err baseballing him, baseballbatting his brother. [*Interviewer says “Right”*] My son err…is not his father’s son, he’s more like you know his mother’s side, I’m very proud of him, he’s done extraordinarily well but he’s not physical xxxx. And err, apart from that, according to the police, this guy had never had a brother, anyway [Laughing] [*Interviewer laughs*] But you know..[*Interviewer continues laughing and says “Oh dear”*] In the last days, we had a lump of wood we would leave in the park, we had a lump of wood over the boat house roof and the chap we was working for at the time, his wife had come to pick him up and it just missed her and the car….and I’m, I’m fifty five I spose summit like, well was I? No, no no that, it wasn’t that long ago, I can’t remember, late fifties. And errr I said Dan you take ya wife home, I’ll sort this out. Ok. Out, off they went and I….chased these guys…caught up them up, outside the park at the zebra crossing near Ilford Lane. Cos by the time they had started running away, I’d won now, you know if you were sensible you’d say right they’ve runaway, they’ve, they’ve yeah, four of them, asian lads…. But I caught up with em, it’s the Delboy thing, you know that…that err…errm.. scenario where Rodney caught up with em and they were running away and then suddenly the bloke turns round and you go “Aahhh” and these four lads thought xxxx this old, silly old sod xxxx who’s been chasing us, you know this is ridiculous, so they turned round and they kicked the shit out of me I errmm [*Interviewer says “Oh my goodness”]* I thought that err, my.. I always thought well what I’ll do, is I’ll make sure one…xxxx one comes in the ambulance with me, [*Interviewer says “Hmm”*] cos if I’ve got one, I’ve got em all. But I mean I kicked one between the legs and errm punched him and just, just thought that’s the one, you know, just picked up the one…But errm absolutely no affect at all. And err I got back all bloodied and errm busted glasses and gawd knows what errm…wife called the police…told em what had happened, they obviously recognised the four lads…and they said that err would you mind, you’ve been stabbed Mr Everitt, would you mind…letting us having a look. I said, I haven’t been stabbed! And they said I bet you have, you know. And I actually had to take my top off and they said you haven’t been stabbed! They, they really went like, you haven’t been stabbed! So no, I told you that I haven’t and they said well…go and pick six numbers then! Huh! You know, it’s your lucky day! If you haven’t been, you can’t believe you taken on them four and haven’t been stabbed.

*So they were known for being in a gang with knives?*

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah that’s what they would do. They would taunt.. white English people and then errm..give them an excuse to use errm errm…I must have been lucky, I must have picked the one, the one that was probably the knifer and I, and I, picked on him just out of pure luck. And oh I’m thinking oh, this is not a good place to be anymore, I’m getting too old for this, you know. I, I remember thinking to myself, who the hell do I see in that mirror in the morning? [*Interviewer says Hmm*] I, I must be still seeing that thirty five year old, fit fireman that [*Interviewer laughs*] can take on the world….

*I think we all do don’t we? So it’s fine.* [*Interviewer laughs*]

Oh yeah, yeah we all do but when it comes to you it’s a bit of shock [Interviewer says Hmm] and that was all.. and erm…yeah, so but that’s it went to a…you know… we had gangs of Eastern Europeans turn up [*Interviewer says Hmm*] and I’m getting too old to, to deal with it now…gangs of Eastern Europeans we had err….gangs of err Africans….it’s just, it was starting to become unpleasant towards the end. I know hopefully they will, by upgrading everything errrr…they will be able to…that will maybe…….errr….errr yeah that’ll, you know, err, select who use the..errr…park by..errr….better and I see their reasoning [*Interviewer says Hmmm*] Errm but on the other hand, we had three hundred err short xxxx bowlers over there and they were all..errm old people. But they were all of a generation, that would get involved, even if, even to the level of saying Oi!, you know and they were all using that end of the park and we hardly had any problems at that end of the park, because you had three hundred people, not all on one day, but…a selection of coming in and out of that end..errm we, we, I mean these people are notorious cowards actually I mean [*Hmmm*] they, they don’t mind ripping up the trail bend on a lamp post in the middle of the night but they wouldn’t do it in front of anybody. [*Interviewer says Yeah*]..Err, so errr, you know the more people you get in there, the safer it is. And for some reason err you know, you would of thought they would have built a facility first, then transferred them, keep those people coming in and then do whatever they want to do after that but errm…that didn’t xxxx, although suggested, that wasn’t.. what they wanted to do but…it’s a shame.

*That’s a shame.*

It is a great shame. It was errm, I thought it was….totally against everything that a Labour Council would would stand for and I had a great respect for the old Labour councillors…mm but errm the, in the old days, when I was, well old days I mean I’m only going back to 1980, but even then you had strong characters that would tell the officers what they wanted to do. Errm sadly that’s...they’ve…I think…I’m, I’m I’m only aware of one strong councillor now [Interviewer says *Hmmm*] Errm and [*Interviewer coughs*] errm basically the officers tell the councillors, this is what we’re going to do, you know….are you going to agree or…lose. [Laughs] [*Interviewer says Yeah*] and that’s….

*It’s more dictatorial isn’t it, I spose?*

Very, it’s a great shame. [*Interviewer sneezes*] Great shame what’s happened, yes. Cos I’m sure a lot of these things…that have happened within borough, don’t really fall, hopefully they don’t fall easily on the councillors shoulders. [*Interviewer says Hmm*] I mean, how can you put a thirty metre whatever it is, white obelisk on a roundabout and light it up with.. pretty lights, all through the hours of darkness, at the same time to tell you, people to turn their television off to save electricity.. and do that whatever costs [*Interviewer coughs and apologises*] between the gas, immediately right in middle of Gascoigne and asbestos of Harts lane, where people can’t get their windows fixed. [*Interviewer says Hmmm*] You know, it’s… it’s just so crass.

*It’s beyond belief isn’t it?*

I know it’s not council money but…people in Gascoigne, the people in Harts Lane don’t..don’t distinguish it. [*Hmmm*] There’s, suddenly there’s this obelisk……err…and you can check this and I think I’ve got it virtually word prop- perfect [Interviewer coughs] to a amblematically represent the historical, multinature- multinational culture of the historically multi- caartol, multi cultural nature of the borough. In other words, if you try and query us and our motives, you will be classed as a racist.

*Oh Christ*.

Isn’t it? You know when ya work out what they say. So you can’t say well what a stupid…

*You kind of feel like you can’t protest against the waste of money….*

That’s right!

….*even if it’s for that cause or yeah…*

Clever isn’t it? Now what is twelve or sixteen pretty.. lights on a white [*Interviewer laughs*] [Laughs] obelisk. What is that got to do with the historical...multi...cultural nature of the borough? Clever.

*If you find out, please do let me know. [Laughs]*

Yes, quite.

*And I’ll do the same.*

And I know it’s not council money but.. they, somebody agreed for it to be done. And the same as the lights, the blue lights on the roundabout [Laughs] I a, when I was driving I, I was with my wife and I literally coming down Lodge Lane, Lodge Avenue and I literally had to pull up onto the pavement cos I was xxxx cos I’d been sold it as well. I was really looking forward to it because according to all reports, errr this special blue lights were gonna make it look as though the cars travelling over the flyover were travelling on a blue cloud.

*Ok.*

That’s how it was reported. And I got to Lodge Avenue and the Fire Brigade sort of sense of humour come in and I thought….it’s like the King’s clothes [*Interviewer Laughs*] Hold a minute, you pillock, it’s thirty two bleeding lights on silver poles, I mean what did you think [*Interviewer Laughs*] what on earth have you come, why did you believe, you know..you..

*I’m sure the artist’s impression of it was absolutely wonderful though.*

I pulled over, I had tears down my eyes, I just, just had to control myself from laughing and I thought, well I’ve just got, I’ve gotta meet this man cos I thought I was a salesman. [*Interviewer laughs*] But I’d like to meet this bloke. I mean what a salesman. [*Hmmm*] I mean so we got….errr a blue, thirty two blue lights, some of which were underneath the flyover…on silver…on silver poles, xxxx stainless steel poles and that’s all we got. [*Hmmm*].

I mean…it…and it brings the whole, the whole council, I believe into disrepute.

*Yeah.*

It’s like umm, I, I cornered Charlie Fairbrass on the steps of the Town Hall, when he was leader of the council. They’d just come out with their ‘Citizen’ newspaper and on, in, in once again your…. I’m not very good with the computers..but your xxxx

[*Interviewer Laughs*] *I’m terrible.*

Oh right ok, well there’s a front page…

*I married someone in IT for that reason, so I wouldn’t have to deal with the computers. [Laughs]*

Right on the front page of the local magazine, the Citizen I think it was called. And it said and I quote ‘Only fourteen per cent immigration in the borough’ and that’s all it had on the front page. The word only [*Hmm*], you know, you think, ohh, I mean as if, as if, you know there was, it was a problem, you know what I mean? You know, only fourteen per cent, as if it was more than that it would be a prob…[*Hmm*] And I said front page of the Citizen, oh what do you mean only fourteen per cent, he says oh well we’ve had a survey commissioned about it. Well I said, well yeah Ok stock answer. But you’ve, you’ve commissioned an answer, you haven’t commissioned the truth. [Hmm] Cos you go into, nobody in this borough, you go into the market, you won’t hear English speakers- spoken, you know errr this, this is…this makes things worse, this is really, really crass because you’re saying that only one in 7 people live in this borough, are ethnic origin. Well the trouble with that it is, that you know lines like that will bring, brings you into disrepute and if you can put that on the front page of your paper, then nobody is going to believe anything you say. Cos they know that’s not, that’s true, not true [*Hmmm*] so and he said, he said you know what and I thought Oh he’s gonna tell me, there’s, there’s obviously a reason for this. His says my names Charles, not Charlie and he xxxx, turned round walked back up the steps, walked back in the Town Hall. I won’t tell ya what I thought but I just stood there and I thought well…I think you’ve just explained everything.

*Yeah.*

And he’s the leader. He was the leader of the Council.

*Crikey.*

It, it makes…it makes the race issue, a problem, it makes it an issue, doesn’t it? [*Hmm*] And we’re all on a, we’re all on a ball floating about in infinity [Laughs] nobody can get off. [*Interviewer laughs*] You know what I mean?

*Yeah* [*Laughs*] *It’s true*.

And, and ya think, well we’re all human beings, you know, errrr….I just, I just don’t get it, I really, really don’t get it and, and um Margaret Hodge, errrr well she was blamed for the BNP being voted in, you know when she said errr about the immigration, or whatever……..and I’m sorry don’t know how many people have moved out of this borough but it’s err….but it’s probably hundreds and thousands of white English people, British people no doubt. Are they really saying that they’ve all moved out of this borough……because they’re all racist? [*Hmm*] You know…..that’s what they’re logically saying? But actually I, I actually maintain..the reason why they’ve all gone..is because it’s not a nice place to live anymore. [*Hmm*] That’s the real problem, you know would you live, would you live in borough, in Barking….nowadays? Which was in 87 when I moved into this place, was still an aspirational borough. Or would ya like to live, ya know out in the, a nice [*Hmm*] errr ya know, out in the whiles of Essex or Warwickshire or…Chester, or wherever it is they’ve moved to… Surrey and East Sussex.

*And I spose partially the point would be that…a lot of the people that’s here I’ve interviewed that are in their eighties and nineties*, [Interviewee says Yep] *back in when they were children it was still quite rural around here.*

Absolutely.

*Umm…so maybe they’re kind of moving out to sort of recapture that sort of rural rather than…*

Yes. Yes. They’re not racists. I mean they, they, they, I mean certain, obviously a lot errrr proportion of them [*Hmmm*] would be, because of the, of the generation thing. But err….I, I escorted an old lady back home, err down to Hurst, down Hurstbourne Gardens here and she, I was chatting away and she moved here when they were first built and she’s lived here ever since. And she remembers, fr from the pub here, the errr Fly house or whatever they call it these days…

*It’s the Royal Oak these days.*

Through that, that side was all fields [*Yeah*] ya know…errr

*It was originally called The Fly house cos it used to be a pig farm there wasn’t there? That’s what I’ve heard.*

Ya know, I’ve got no idea

*No? Ok.*

Quite possibly. Yeah, yeah.

*That’s just what I’ve heard, so I’d thought ya know…*

Yes, yes. I’ve got a picture out there….mmm you must have seen the Bygone Barking book, have you? The Bygone Barking Book?

*Yes, yes, yes.*

And they’ve got a flock of sheep out, out here along Bridge Road, ya know.

*Well what…*

I mean this house is pictured in it, [*Hmm*] in in the Bygone actually, yeah.

What what’s crazy is when you look at places like Upney Lane…

Yes

*And things and it and it was actually a lane, wasn’t it?* [*Laughs*]

You understand why it’s called Upney lane…

*Yes* [*Laughs*]

Yes, yeah, absolutely. [*Interviewer laughs*] Yeah my Great Grandfather had an allotment on my old Grammar school field because you know we had the largest fishing fleet in the country.

*Hmm. Yes.*

And that was basically, xxxx lice fields and yer know on the Grammar school, on the Grammar school grounds. And eerr …of course William the Conqueror…had was in Barking Abbey while he had the Tower of London built or, or extended or whatever. It was a seat in Government…I mean it’s, it’s always been up until…well what twenty, fifteen years ago, it’s always been aspirational borough to go to, but for some reason…whatever happened and what for, what for ever reason, suddenly it just….[Hmm] it’s just plummeted. Bloody shame really.

*It’s a real shame.*

Uh, yeah, never mind. Such is life. [Interviewer laughs] You know there’s nothing I can do. I, I protest now and again, about different things but just only to make me feel better, not saying I’m right. I’m just letting em know how I feel ya know.

*Everyone’s entitled to their opinion…*

That’s right.

*You should be able to express it. Shouldn’t you?*

Absolutely. Yes, absolutely. Yeah.

*If it’s ok, it’s just, it’s just there’s one more thing that I’d liked to ask you? Umm cos I know, you know you’ve been absolutely amazing today, the amount of information you’ve come out…*

Sorry.

*No no please. Mmm but I was just wondering if you could sort of describe a typical working day for me, when you were, when you were working over in the park, if that’s possible? Even if there is such a thing as a typical working day.*

Yes well, for when I first opened up we used to open up seven days a week, at quarter to ten and in the early days I had six lads for us. One was employed err just to keep the rain board, the rain board straight on a Sunday. Errm…and err…this, this is say from 1982 onwards. Errr..errr…errrm then I the train and the boats. Errm we’d arrive at quarter to ten, we’d open up at quarter to ten because that would give me a chance to come off duty at nine o’clock at the fire station and get there, so…errrm and then errm…errrr we’d errr, first of all we’d bring the boats, the motor boats over, with our staff boat and we had err….errr…good grief three groups of five….no we didn’t we had sixteen boats in all we had [Laughs] two groups of five and a group of six. Errm…and they would go onto the side of the ticket office which was on the.. err South Park drive side of the Ticket Office. Errm and errm while one of the lads or two of the lads were taking the sheets off of the motor boats and the sheets weren’t there to keep them dry. Err although that was a handy side effect, there the sheets were there to keep the ducks mess off of the, [*Right*] the birds mess off the boats cos err…yer know you want to hire them out and and because cos in the early days there were people waiting for you to open. Cos they didn’t, cos they knew by mid afternoon, late mid afternoon they’d have to be queuing for a long time. Errm…and while that was going on the err rowing boats were used to keep fourteen rowing boats on the water, two sets of seven. And the other fifteen were kept in the sheds on wheels, just so that were readily readily accessible if we need to increase the fleet as and when…..errrm…they were required and in normally by about, in half an hour all the boats, the err motor boats had been [noise] unsheeted, pumped. Well err they used to do it in a certain order, we used to unsheet them, then we used to fill them up with petrol, the two stroke and then we would pump the out, just in case if there was any spillage into the bills then err it got pumped out with the errr bilges. [*Interviewer coughs*] The rowing boats if necessary used to get, if it had rained overnight of course they’re open the boats, so that had to be tipped of water, umm and any ducks mess wiped off the seats and/or dry the seats. And put errm oars in the rowing boats. At that time it was errm open the gates…first customers in and a cuppa tea. [*Interviewer laughs*] Errm I put large tanks on, when I took them over, all the motor boats had small tanks on, so that meant err…at least one if not two petrol feels during the day, ya know which was never a good idea I felt…and that that’s how the council had run em. So I purchased err larger tanks, which then enabled us then to fill all the boats up before we opened…put the …that’s a fire brigade thing again. End of problem ya know, I mean why, why anybody would…consider it was a good idea. I mean cos there were tanks, large tanks available all the time but for some reason the council err put small tanks on them. Errm…and that was it really, I mean there was normally at least one of the motor boats in the workshop under some form of repair because it’s ya know….a lot of damage, ninety per cent of the damage I suspect was done inadvertently because you’re dealing with people that are not…ya know not the brightest of people.

*Hmm and just general wear and tear I should imagine would’ve….*

Well, well yes, to be fair to them, when twenty, when they had twenty nine on the water and sixteen motor boats on the water and a staff boat floating about…errm sometimes it was almost inevitable that…we had a consultant once who came up with the most ridiculous..errm..in the days of a Jimmy xxxx xxxx, he, he he’d come up with the top island by Ilford being linked as a picnic area. And I was at this pub xxxx to the park xxxx xxxx and I stood up and he said that the lake was rainfed and all the rest of it….I said look, I’m…my names Mr Everitt, I run the boating concession in the park….I said errm..we, we use the islands as traffic islands, ya know, errrm we spend all our time keeping…families in motor boats all going the same way, so that we don’t have head on collisions. So everybody has to stay on the left and he said errr motor boats? I said you don’t know, do ya?

[*Interviewer laughs*] *So he didn’t even have a clue?*

He didn’t. He did a sixty five thousand pound report and he didn’t have a clue that we run them. And he’d said about this, and I said the other thing, I said rainfed err lake, I said so you mean for the last twenty years I’ve been wasting my time managing the level? And he just looked at me, sort of red face and I just went to him, okay I presented him with my card and I said look I’m leaving because you know….I’ll say something I’ll regret [Laughs] Err you and I have to talk, ya know give me a ring. I mean, Cos I mean I’d give all the advice, he he would need, free and and readily.

*The benefit of your expertise really cos you know better than….*

That’s right. Why wouldn’t anybody ask, I mean in my life experiences, if I don’t know somethin, if I go and ask somebody who does, they never ever give me ba- duff duff information. [*Hmm*] They always give me… ya know how did I do this? Well ya know, well ya know doing some metal work or something….ya know you’ll go down to a metal man and say look I’ve gotta do this job, how do I do it? And they’ll errr….

*Yeah.*

I think that sometimes, that they’re quite pleased that somebody’s asked them. Ya know? [*Interviewer laughs*] And errr….but he never did phone. And the council paid him, errr repu- reputedly paid him sixty five thousand pounds for that report….didn’t even know we had motor boats on them and thought the lake was f-fed by rain. Extraordinary isn’t?

*Yeah, absolutely. Well even I know it’s not fed by rain and I don’t, I don’t even live here! [Laughs]*

[Laughs] We used to, we used to errm, errm shut down, originally the motor, the rowing boats were for an hour and the motor boats were for half an hour, so we used to s-stop selling the last row boat ticket at half past four Monday to Saturday …and the last…errr the last motorboat tickets as at five o’clock. And, and to be fair most people, most normal people, Monday to Saturday…errrm…weren’t in a park at five o’clock at night [hmm] there were always exceptions on xxxx but as a general rule, ya know, if you relented to serve somebody after that you was, you was asking for trouble. Errm…and then on the Sunday we went on a hour later but very often on a Sunday or a bank holiday, err in the early days we would be going, I just say to the boys do you want overtime? And they would all say yes. And if I got it wrong, they still got their hour’s overtime [Hmm] Err and if I got it right they just worked until…I mean very often, not very often, that’s errr, sorry I-I’ve used that expression. But sometimes….errr seven or eight o’clock at night we would bring the queue in and say right you’ve been waiting so long, we will guarantee you a boat. But we then used to turn people away that were coming up ya know, cos we’d lock the gate. And I’d say no it’s gonna be dark before ya know, we got serve all these people, we’re not, we’re not. Errm, that, that wasn;t very often but it did happen. Errr…especially if we’d had err, ya know of course when the sun really shone, it really got hot that’s the day when everything broke down.

*Yes, of course. That’s called Sod’s Law I think, isn’t it?* [*Laughs*]

Yeah, instead of working with sixteen boats…ya know you’d end up with running with…ten or twelve cos they were err, the youngest engine that was there when I arrived was eighteen years old. [*Wow*] And I was there I-I don’t know what year I left was, ya know, couple of years ago…and started in err the boats in 82, so…what twenty five years, summit like that? So…forty three years old one of them, the youngest engine…I mean they’re like trigger’s broom ya know, they’ve got so many handles and so many heads but errm, they just needed a lot of care and attention all the time, ya know. Yeah. But they were just a bygone age and I suspect…I got very angry and very upset the way I was treated at the end. Errm, I found it ya know a more obnoxious way of being treated after what I’ve done for the borough, I can’t imagine errrm…. But I think I was being tarred with a, with a brush that errr ya know they maybe or ya know, ya know I’m talking about I mean, we don’t like each other, that’s fair enough. [Hmm] But errm..errm….ya know if they’d’ve come up there with a bit of straight back an, man to man and said Look, ya know you’re, you’re not gonna survive this ya know, we’re, we’re because….well that would have been I would have felt differently rather in the way that it was done. [Hmm] I mean it was just….I won’t, I won’t go into what I would call skulduggery that was going on but it was not err…not a pleasant way to end it up what I thought was an association that benefitted them more than it benefitted me. I mean I made no big, no big thing of being a private enterprise. The council got all the kudos because, as far as everybody was concerned, the boating facilities, the little train, the punting course, the paddling pools all being run by the council and they were getting all the credit.

*Yeah.*

Ya know, I mean I was quite happy with that, that arrangement that was fair enough. They were errr ya know for a long, long time, they were brilliant landlords. They, all the old boys on the committee…who knew what all their problems were…not had all their problems gone away but it wasn’t costing them tens of thousands pounds and they still had, probably one of the premier parks in, in London. And they couldn’t, ya know I suppose they couldn’t believe their luck and I was, I know I was living the boyhood dream, can you imagine?

[Laughs] Get to play with boats and trains all day, it’s fantastic.

Yes, quite. Yeah. Barking park boats and trains, corr blimey. I couldn’t, I couldn’t think of anything better, I mean other people couldn’t think of anything worse but…I thoroughly enjoyed it. Errm….and errr but things ya know, went down hill towards the end, which is a shame because all the, all that knowledge of what it was like, errm was all lost. And the news boy come into the council and all….err…I don’t know what was going through their mind, I don’t know whether they thought I was carrying tens of thousands of pounds. [*Hmm*] Like, like I thought the idiots were thinking….errr…maybe the council officers were thinking, I was walking out of there with wheel barrows full of money. But only, someone only had to come and sit and count boats and they, they knew what, they would know what I was doing, what, what my turnover was. Yes umm and on the good days, in the early days it was very, very good, the turnover.

*Yes.*

It, of course employing people and getting insurance and stuff like that was, ya know all the normal overheads that run the business were…were little bit extra

*But obviously you still had your…fireman*

[Interview interrupts] Fire brigade

*Position then as well didn’t you? So…*

And..ya know…I’ve always been comfortable *[Hmm]* I was I*…*probably the truth is I would never have had to work in my life anyway. But then of course it does take the edge off, because…errm…a) I, I I only did it when I really, really enjoyed doing it, which was great and err if it all went wrong, ya know, it wasn’t like I was gonna lose my house. [Hmm] Or it wasn’t as if I was ya know, there was any sort of real financial repercussions. [Clock chimes] I could take a risk and in every case it worked.

*Yeah.*

But then I could afford to take the risk, in the first place, so it wasn’t really much of a game, you know what I mean?

*Yes, of course.*

So errm…err just, some days I’d think ya know, when I’d dealt with some particular nasty, I mean I had a, I had a…what do they call em…errrm..err..a group when they demand err money with menaces, errm err not a defence errm…

*Like a protection racket or something?*

Thank you. A protection racket move in on me and they were particularly nasty, they looked nasty people and by all accounts I called the local police, they were nasty but….and I went up to the council security offices, a bloke called Lyons….and I actually went into his office, in a civic centre and said like this has happened to me and they’re demanding this/that and you know what he said?

*What did he say?*

Pay em and they’ll go away…..I said I’m sorry, I’m sorry I said, you got absolutely two chances of that and one of thems none. [*Hmm*] and err…

*That’s terrible advice.*

And they came back and err I said alright, ok lads yer know, yeah…I don’ t care what ya, it ain’t gonna happen, there is nothing, absolutely nothing you can do…that will make this happen ya know and, and I just fronted it out…and err they never came back. So they just went onto easier pickings. [*Hmm*] Yes ya know Umm…But I thought..But I

*It’s probably how they did it wasn’t it? Through intimidation, if you were intimidated then obviously you would pay and otherwise…*

Oh, oh I was scared witless to be honest with ya.

*But you obviously put up a good front for them.*

That’s right yeah, just, just fronted it out. I said there’s absolutely nothing you can do lads, I’m not gonna go to the police, errr ya know I’m, I’m not gonna make anything of it. The choice is yours, from this moment on nothings happened. From this moment on if you want it to happen, it’ll happen. [*Hmm*] Ya know, ya know done the old Dirty Harry, ya know? Make, make your mind up job. [*Interviewer laughs*] And err..they said they’d be back but they never, they never came back, so they were just chancing. But were, I- I I thought I was gonna get support from the council, ya know to protect their amenity, yet, yet the the actual err advice was pay em and they’ll go away. I thought you’ve got no chance..err…that’s the one thing that ain’t gonna happen. A) Ya know I ain’t gonna pay em but b) if they did they wouldn’t go away, ya know cos they’ve got themselves a sack up.

*Exactly.*

And on days like that, you think, ohhh I don’t need this, ya know but then of course there are other days when it’s just absolute sheer delight, ya know. Nice people, all saying thank you, oh we really enjoyed that, ya know, ya know…isn’t it cheap? Ya know, no arguing with anybody and you only get, you only need a few grateful errr comments during the day and your whole day is….ya know my wife sometimes said Why do we bother, ya know? Ya can’t imagine the lack of literacy…[Hmm] or, or…I’m not exaggerating you’ve probably come up against it yourself but I, I, I never, I’ve always said I’m not a rocket scientist but….my wife who had to deal with the general public and done it far better than I did. I was good with dealing with staff and keeping things going physically…engines and repairs. Couldn’t deal with the public very well. But the level of literacy and IQ was…like they, they couldn’t tell the time [*Hmmm*] and we had ways of indicating on a time board..number five can’t read, number three can’t tell the time [*Interviewer laughs*] Errr…number nine been problems before. Ya know we had all little marks and scores, so that everybody working on the quayside, knew what we were dealing with, so that everything was done by sign or…err absolutely true and it, maybe it happened half a dozen times…you’d, you’d put em in the boat and the standard procedure is you, you just hold on the boat and say Ok the big clock, way in front [*Hmm*] Ok mate, you’re due back half past three…errr well what time is it now? Hold the boat [Laughs] [*Interviewer laughs*] You ain’t going nowhere…right Ok look you’ve err just, err you’ve hired yer boat for half an hour, as you can see it’s three o’clock now, so….but you’ll give us a call won’t you? Fair enough, right ok mate no problem. Then yer know, they can’t tell the time. [*Hmm*] Yer know. Umm and my wife would know whether they could read or not, so she would let us know, ya know…errm a bell sign we had and that means yer know the people that are coming to now, can’t read.

*Right.*

Cos yer know, yer can tell all the signs, yer know? Well we’ve seen what it is on the board but how much is it? Yer know and yer think, err right so number seven can’t read right but then you say and then, then they, then you..so you go through the whole gambit, ok right yer it’s three o’clock now, you’re due back half past three, stay on the left, yer know cos you show em, stay on the left and errr…keep the boats apart. And you’d look and yer think oh, it’s gonna be the one and they’d say, absolutely on my son’s life, if I have to stay on the left, how do I get back?....Yeah. So very often I’d be sitting xxxx xxxx, bloody young lads would stand up and they’d say right, you stay on the left and then you stay on the left and then you stay on the left [*Interviewer laughs*] and you’re back here, yer know? [Siren in background] [*Interviewer laughs*]Errr we got err....we used to get errr does this steer it? Yer know [Interviewer laughs] what, what did they think? Did they think it was on rails, or something? Yer know? Does it steer it...ohhh where have the swans gone? We got once. And the young lad was a really funny buggar, he went, he ended up as em, he is em in charge of communications on the Navy destroyer now, so, he went errrrrrrrrr noise and I can’t get in touch with him now [Interviewer laughs] Ya know, I mean and and sometimes you just have to…once and I’ll tell you about, I, I as I say I’m not very good at dealing with general public and it that, in that situation and errr my wife had gone to the toilet and I was looking after the kiosk and a bloke comes up and says, errr my wife couldn’t see what I was on about but she says she gets that all day- boat…oh I said good afternoon sir [laughs], would you like a, a motor boat or a rowing boat? Does it look as though I can effing row? [Interviewer laughs] But I thought, don’t tell him, don’t tell him, don’t tell him, right a motor boat sir, ok that’s errr that’ll be ten pounds and you have three pounds, to come back xxxx by a deposit and err he’s got a little sprog in tow and you give him his deposit token. And he hasn’t listened to a word you’ve, thank you very much indeed sir, that gets you, you can tell he hasn’t listened to, that’ll get put it on a bit of string so they put it under their necks so they don’t lose it, [Interviewer laughs] err that gets you your deposit back. Anyway, he goes off and my wife comes back from the toilet, I said right, when chabin number four comes in you disappear, I’m gonna give him his three pound back because he’s just walked off, he’s just snatched this thing and walked off.

*Yeah.*

And she looks at me, as if to say yer know, you can’t educate the whole world [Interviewer laughs] and anyway number four came in and she went to the boat house and I sat in there. And we just looked at each other…and I thought oh, he’s finally, oh, he gave me the xxxx and he strolled in and I said yes Sir, and he said deposit, oh you’d like your deposit back yer know, no problem, I open the till and I got these three one pound coins, stuck between my first finger and my thumb, like a vice. And I’ve put it through the window and he’s tried to take em out of my, out of my hand, my fingers and we’re doing this- we’re pushing and pulling this three pound between us. [Interviewer laughs] He’s trying to take it and I’m not letting go. So we looking, we’re eyeballing each other and I said, in the end, I said Thank you and he said that’s alright mate. [Laughs] So I went, ok fair enough, you win.

*That’s no help for you.[Laughs]*

Why? Why would I even try? Yer know, yer know errrm and err I and err yer know that really, that really defines my ability to deal with the general, yer know general punters. [Interviewer laughs] I xxxx the scouts but I don’t deal with kids [Interviewer laughs] but I’m not that type. My idea…

*Well, you tired your best though, didn’t you? [Laughs]*

Pardon?

*You tried your best with them. [Laughs]*

Err…errr my idea of disciplining the kids way, isn’t allowed, yer see…

*[Laughs] Right.*

So err..yer know the, the these people who give up errr…at least one night a week, put a uniform on and put themselves in harms way of dealing with kids [Interviewer laughs] are just absolute heroes [Hmmm] I mean real heroes. I mean….fanat…I mean they’re absolute salt of the earth, I will, I xxxx in time, make sure everything works for em as I can, makes sure the err what they want they want to do with the kids is properly and well financed but…that’s about as far I, you know…do the boring things, xxxx and stuff. Yer know, I know my limitations and err yer know, I’ve already told you once [laughs], yer don’t get second chance, [makes sound] they won’t let me do that [laughs]. [*Interviewer laughs*] It works, but they won’t let me do it.

*Yeah [Laughs]*

It’s fair enough, yer know.

*No matter how well it works. [Laughs]*

I go round to groups and it looks like absolute total anarchy [*Hmm*] and pandemonium, I think. I’m thinking how could they bear this? Yer know. Err yer know.

*It’s a very special type of person, isn’t it?*

Isn’t it? Isn’t it?

*Definitely*

It’s just, it’s like water of a ducks back to them. Arrgh I can’t stand it, you know, you’ve told him once to go and st- yer know and do this and do that [*Hmm*] and he err…you’ve told him…make sure he does it! Yer know [Interviewer laughs] That’s my, that’s my attitude, yer know, discipline, service and all that [*Hmm*] and that’s the way I was brought up….yer know, you don’t get a second chance, but anyway….yeah that’s errr…It was through rotary…errm I was involved in an East Ham Scout group, twenty fifth Newham, which was quite errr a wealthy group, in those days. And I was in rotary and err I was introduced by the…errrm….President of Rotary in Barking then, to a chap called Alan Dennison. Who is, who was then the District Commissioner, he’s now the errm Chairman of the whole county. But errr he, he was introduced to me as this guy who was gonna start a Scout group, up the Gascoigne estate. I said you’re not, he said I am. Well I said you’re either be, ya know, you’ve either gotta be the biggest hero or the biggest idiot I’ve ever met [Interviewer laughs] in my life. But we need help, so I’ll come and help ya, if you’re serious I’ll come and help ya because I was just wanna see how this turns out, ya know. [*Interviewer laughs*] And errm..that’s what happened and….errrr…ohh…fff….just experiences that you can’t buy. I, they, the errr District, group scout leader was a retired…fireman by then and he’s from Derbyshire, he works for the council now. And errr he took them up to Derbyshire and obviously these kids on Gascoigne are…street wise and he said Look, I’ve, I’ve, he deals with kids, I got all the equipment for em, yer know, I’ve approached other groups and begged, borrowed, stole, rented, whatever….and errr he’s taken up xxxx yer not your pleasant weekend and umm but he’s got em of Gascoigne. And he’s said to the kids, Look errm, I’m only gonna tell you this once and err on Monday or Sunday when we go home, it was a long weekend, I’m going to be dry, well fed and warm. And errr you can be the same….or you can be wet and hungry and cold. [*Interviewer laughs*] It’s, it’s entirely up to you, yer know, I mean, I don’t give a monkeys, it’s only four days, you ain’t gonna die, yer know. [*Hmm*] and errr…anyway he showed em to put tents up, showed em what to..yer know, all the camp craft and that. And errm, by all accounts they had a bloody good weekend and they, fancy going to Derbyshire from Gascoigne, you know what I mean? Wonderful. So err a few months later, in the summer…they wanted to take this…a patrol from Gascoigne…to Gilwell Park, the home of Scouting. For the Greater London North East Camping competition. Can I get em some more, we still haven’t bought our own gear [*Hmm*] Can you get us some more gear? Yep ok, so I made all that happen, I- I made funds available for them to get there and get back and etc etc. And err I’d forgotten all about it and I was over the park one Sunday and the phone rang and I went to the office, it’s this chap called Doc, [*Interviewer coughs*] group Scout leader, and errr he said they’ve won. I said what d’you mean they won? And he said the Camp- oh, oh the Camp competition. Errr…yeah well what part have they won? He said, no they won the Camp competition, I said what pitching tents, or cooking? Or yer know...[sound of sirens] etc, he said no they won. And it was one of them stupid que- stupid conversations cos it wouldn’t, I couldn’t compute what [*Hmm*] yer know. He was saying it quite concisely, they won, but I couldn’t, they yer know I totally ruled out they’d won it

[*Interviewer sneezes*] *Everything yeah.*

He said, well listen, he said they’ve won, I said what?, he said yeah. He said they were up against all the cheque book groups of Corbets Tey and Upminster and Hornchurch and all the big groups from Redbridge and all the…he said this Camping competition has been going on going on for over twenty years [Hmmm] He said….and he said they walked in with a swagger, the Gascoigne swagger, yer know, no rucksacks, plastic bags yer know. Errr we only here for the beer, who wants a fight, yer know? And errr, he said not only did they win…they won with an all time record score.

*Wow.*

And he said err the err…we both got quite emotional and he said errm the assistant Chief Scout, errr they, they all stood to, he said suddenly he said [Interviewer coughs] the assistant Chief Scout, that, that they were all standing to attention, come along to present with them, with their certificates. He said, you should, these lads that walked in with a swagger…who’s only here for the beer and the fight….six foot tall, straight backs, shoulders back, somebody had said look we believe in you, you can…you really can, all yer need is, s- somebody to believe it. And err….errrm, I- I- I made no bones, he broke up, I sat in my office and I bawled me eyes out [Hmm] I thought….yer can’t buy this…

*No.*

Yer know.

*That pride. Yeah.*

Yeah. I thought there you are! [Interviewer coughs] Cos these kids, it’s not their fault.

*Yeah*

Yer know, they, they rebel sometimes cos it’s the only thing [Hmm] they feel they can do. But..yer know those, those, half a dozen kids, will take that memory thro- though from the rest of their lives.

*Yeah.*

Yer know, they might, they might not get their fifty pence from the parents to go to Scouts every Friday…and we make our own arrangements on that one…but, but they got the thirty four/thirty six inch television [yeah] and the whole, complete Sky package, [Hmm] which I wouldn’t dream of having [Interviewer laughs] errrm…and they’re down the pub and errr but don’t get back from Scouts late, yer know. Errm… and errr they have beaten the best and they done it with an all time record score and yer think [tuts]

*It just goes to show, show a little faith in a child and…yer know.*

Absolutely. And yer think well yer know, errm sort of that, just, just that one experience was worth all the…committee meetings, the yer, I’ve got, yer know I’ve got somebody coming round tonight [*Interviewer laughs*] at seven o’clock, it just errm….it just makes it .

*Yes.*

Errrm, and err…oh I’ve just realised the time, I’m awfully sorry…

*[Laughs] Sorry, I will, I will probably will have to stop the tape in a second but errm….*

Right, yeah, err One, one story I will tell yer, about the errm Rotary, well the Fire Brigade, my fire station, used to bring over…handicapped kids, just a few schools [*Hmm*] errr over to the park and we used the train and the boats and we used to bring the Fire Brigade, err bouncy castle round and just made a sort of fun day of it, it’s a free day. Err but it was a physical day…yer know we, we put a couple of kids in the motor boat, oh we can get another one and so another one got lobbed yer know [Interviewer laughs] and he got caught and got put in the boat and off they went. And err I was, we were taking the old folks in rotary to.. errr the Fish and Chip meal at Southend on buses and the President of the day Keith Glenn xxxx xxxx, I was telling him about this being done over the park, cos he was involved with the Fred Aldous holiday xxxx and kids and all that and he’s heard about it and he said but we could do that couldn’t we? I said no…no, [laughs] no…but anyway he talks us into doing it….and the first time we did it, it was always the second Wednesday in June [glass being put down] First day we, first time we did it, we… had errr six hundred kids.

*Wow.*

We had errr, we had the boats and the train….errr we had a clown, we had a steam train…we had a marquee up and yer know errr the police were there and the fire brigade were there, of course. And errm…errr Cribbs brought their horse and cart, funeral thing, yer know And it was absolutely, it was absolutely fantastic because what rotary did they brought money and organisational skills. They didn’t have the physical things but then yer know…errr…it was, it was so much better, it’s unbelievable. And errr I think the next year we had err the, the the xxxx towns were, well they were just totally sold on it, they’d had a, the best day, well one of the old boys, John Stainer/Sterner had been in rotary from the year do, he said that the Wednesday after, he said that was the best day I’ve ever spent in rotary, it was such a worthwhile and err now we have errm, we, we well last year we spent seven and a half thousand pounds…as a club, just giving a thousand handicapped, or special school [Hmm] children a, a free day out but of course we couldn’t do it over there anymore so we moved to Central Park, wasn’t ideal… errm maybe, well hopefully if it’s possible we’re gonna get back there but I doubt it now because…we have so many coaches and double deckers to bring in that amount, cos it’s not a thousand kids, it’s, s-sixteen hundred people with the…

*Jeez.*

Carersand all that…

*Carers and….*

And Special coaches

*probably siblings as well I can imagine…*

Special coaches and all the rest of it, I mean, though that so suddenly that big car park is gone, so I’m not sure we’ll ever be able to go back over there, which is a great shame.. Errr, ,errr so..yer know it might be summit else that’s died but…anyway so we did that from, I suppose that must have been about 1993, something like that, but err that’s whn keith wwas President but err we done that every year and err, it’s just errm got a chap called Dennis Bloomfield now, err there used, there used to be a house in Bloomfield, Bloomfield House [Hmm] but they’ve knocked it down now. But his family have been Barking for several generations....and he now errr, he’s the main organiser within the club....but we have the circus and face painters and a disco tent and a clowns and a road train and Punch and Judy and...errr...yer know etc, I mean if you, if you name it, he find it..oh we have err bouncy castles, bouncy slides....errr fairground rides...yer know trains and it, it you think, and if you can think of it, he manages to...get em there and somehow pay for it all.

*That’s amazing.*

Yeah, absolutely superb. Now that really, and that and the Scout day errrr....some admit it, some don’t but there’s a bound to be a point during that day, where all your problems just pale into insignificance, yer know, you go away and find a little....just go and have a, get it out of your system, yer know.

*Go and have a little cry behind xxxx xxxx*

Yeah, yeah, I used to go in the first shed every year, I mean something would happen cos I built errrm...I built over there errrm..I maintained a p- p- probably errr falsely but I didn’t know of any of any other one, I- I built in the boat house there, me and the guy who’s, who’s the manager of the council now...errrm we built, what we’ve maintained was the first errr roll on roll off....wheel chair boat.

*Right.*

And errr cos we had a chap who used to come over with his kid, errrm...errr had a motorcycle accident and lost the use of his legs and was permanently in, in a wheel chair and we used to..haul him into a motor boat and haul him out and all the rest of it, so we felt, we, we just yer know...what if? So we sat around, well one winter we built this...boat which, which, was, was all buoyancy and it had da rop down side wide enough to get a wheel chair on, with a drop rail ramp [*Hmmm*] and errr you didn’t steer it normally like that, what yer did you steered it, the steering wheel was at the side and if you wanted to go round to the right, you pushed the top of the steering wheel, it was on the left hand side, you pushed the top of the steering wheel forward and the boat turned left, the same as a wheel chair would do. [*Mmm*] And in front of there we put a big...raised gear labour, so yer know could go forwards or reverse with this hand and yer steer it left or right this hand. And err...we got it on the water and we yer know plan a, plan b, plan c, plan...we finally got it working exactly how we wanted it to...err ready for the next season and we never saw him. [Laughs]

*What a shame.*

But on the other hand, it was always used....errr it was used some of the time by some wheelchair users and it was err a God send when we had all these kids turn up, in these big heavy electric chairs that with little bones, that couldn’t be moved, we just had to wheel them onto the boat, yer know..it was incre- that was, that was a nice thing to do. There were plenty of other roll on, roll off wheel chair boats but not ones that the people who was in the wheelchair could use.

*Yes.*

Yer know they could be a roll on, roll off as passengers [Hmmm] but to roll em on and roll em off and then say alright away you go...can you imagine? Yeah they just...

*You wouldn’t see light of dust would you? Or spray, water spray? [Laughs]*

They just absolutely adored it, mmm....not easy as we first thought, so, we thought we knew all about boats and errr worked out what what plan a, but we must’ve got up to half way through the alphabet until we got it exactly...[*Interviewer laughs*] yer know, safe and working it how we wanted it to work..yer know and that was errm summit else good. So that’s it really...

*Ok.*

I mean....I mean with the, the I still run the little dingies and the little xxxx at the other end of the lake in the specially shallow...they were...but those only weekends and school...school holidays, in the afternoons. But everything died of death..errr greatly dead of death...errrrm....errr because errr the the less the park is used, the more the vandalism and that happened, the less the park was used, the less people were about to say Oi! Yer know

*Yeah.*

And errr...yeah it was getting, it was getting difficult towards the end...errrm but yer know it, I would have still been there, I would have still been doing it....errr but not these days, not now. Not under actually any circumstances now, I feel quite bitter about the way it was all handled, yer know. Errm....

*Everyone talks about you with such fondness though.*

Thank you. I’m glad about that.

*Everyone that I’ve spoken to.*

I did....I’ve done nothing really to....I’ve only ever errm yer know put myself out to....to be one of the good guys, you see, you know...

*I can assure that really everyone appreciated your efforts with the boats and train.*

Far too short a life, isn;t it? Far too short a life to errm....

*We need another a hundred years or so really, don’t we, to get everything done?[Laughs]*

Yeah. And my great grandfather as I explained was an extraordinarily wealthy man and he was err in an old people/folks home run by East Ham at Brentwood and as a teen- young teenager I rode my bike to see him, cos previously while my mother was ill with TB, I shared a bed with him. [*Hmm*] as errr....a little kid and errr and he was sitting in the corner, of this old folk’s home..errr...miserable as sin, errr a lot of money..errr, yer know if he wanted a packet of fags, he couldn’t go and buy them anyway [*Hmm*] yer know...and I thought well that’s, he’s spent all his life working and earning money....and he’s miserable and errr...that had a great, great effect, that really did have real strong effect on me. And I thought well.....I absolutely am not going to..be the richest man in that old b- folk’s home....but when errrr the nurse or whatever comes up to meand says Mr Everitt, what are you smiling about? I’m gonna say sit down because this gonna take a life time. [Interviewer laughs] Yer know....I’ve bought fire engines, we’ve, we’ve raised, we’ve gone around Europe, raising money...errrm with our fire engine.....oh we’ve just, oh I mean and the stories that we can tell, I mean the people we’ve met.

*Yeah.*

Yer know...errr

*Plenty to keep, keep you amused for many more years, for sure.*

Oh, well that’s right, you, so you can be a very wealthy but....does you in the end, it does you no good at all.

*Hmm.*

What you want is err memories to keep you warm while you sit down there and think....it’s absolutely, I’ve always said yes.

*Yeah.*

As long as it’s legal.....errrr and it doesn’t harm anybody else, yer know .....it’s not detrimental in that way, just say yes because the bad experiences are stories [*Hmm*] The good experiences are just good experiences but the ones, that you think ahhh.....there the ones you remember, aren’t they? And you get to know whether its good or bad until you’ve said yes. And err...I’ve, I’ve said to my son and I was like I’m sorry mate, yer know.....you might end up with our house or whether we lived in but my intention is not to....leave you any, any money [*Interviewer laughs*] Yer know my intention is to....have experiences [*Hmm*] I mean the, the just experience earning the money has been great [*Hmmm*] Errm but just say yes and just errr.....yer know because if my grand- grandmother couldn’t take it....my biggest hero is on my mother’s side. He was also in the fire brigade, he was Chief fire officer of Margate or Ramsgate, I think it was Margate. He owned and I’ve, we’ve still got the handwritten ledgers, so I, this is all of proveable [*Hmmm*] He owned a hotel in Margate.....or Ramsgate, I think it’s Margate, I always get the two mixed up.[*Interviewer laughs*] And errr...a hotel in Shaftsbury Avenue.

*Wow.*

In 1800 and something......mid 1800s....his Hackney Carriage bill was over six hundred punds, well in 1969, when I joined the fire brigade, my wage, my annual wage was six hundred pounds, so he was...very wealthy man. Absolutely lived the life, and what we can by reading into the stories into what he spent his money on....hmmm....made his own money....and blew the whole lot [Interviewer laughs] on wine, women and song.

*Good for him. [Laughs]*

Absolutely.

*I want that life.*

I really hope that one day, my, my grandfather was bit- on my mother’s side was always bitter...because he’d, he errm....he’d known of the fortune that had been errr....but it wasn’t given to him...this bloke had earnt it and then spent it, so where’s the big deal? Oh he should have left that to us, yer know blah blah.....and errrr I just hope that one day, if, if that, the ways things are.....that I, that I go and I’m able to shake his hand somewhere [*Hmm*] and say...fantastic [*Interviewer laughs*] tell me about it...yer know.

*Fair play. [Laughs]*

Absolutely, cos err an ordinary doesn’t...earn, earn two hotels ...[*Hmm*] and certainly doesn’t blow the whole lot. [Interviewer laughs] I don’t think he lived very, yer know he didn’t live to a ripe old age but by God he must have enjoyed it [*Interviewer laughs*] So anyway..that’s umm..

*Well it’s fantastic, thank you so much for agreeing to see me today, I really appreciate it.*

I’m sorry, I...that’s good grief..[Clock chimes]I told you I can go on....[*Interviewer laughs*]

*I should have booked in a week for this really...*

**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee: Alec Everitt**

**Project: Barking Park**

**Date: 19th December 2011**

**Language: English**

**Venue: interviewee’s home**

**Name of interviewer: Claire Days**

**Length of interview: 146.30mins**

**Transcribed by: Halfig Barry, Aisha Iftikhar, Kara Black**

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