91. Betty

(1) Tell me about your background.

Well, I was born in Hampton, which is a village outside Evesham. I lived there most of my life; worked on the land, for my father, for a good many years. And then I went - during the war years - I went into the National Health Service (in fact before NHS), and I worked at what was then known as Avonside Hospital, and now it's Evesham Community Hospital. And I worked, then, till I retired, when I was sixty four.

Tell me what kind of work you did for your father, first of all.

Well, almost everything that wanted doing on the land. He never had a son, so I was his son! No, I used to do... I never did any really like hard work, like sprout picking, or anything like that, in the depths of winter. But I worked all through the season, and done everything there was to be done. Picking things, you know.

What kinds of things?

Well, Dad grew gooseberries, strawberries, all sorts of soft fruit. And then there was onions, spring onions and leeks. Well, you know, most of the things, because, of course, a market gardener, in those days, used to grow a variety of things as they came into season. And then he had plums; he'd got a acreage of plums, which we used to pick in the late summer-time.

And what kind of work did you do in the hospital?

Well, I started off domestic, and then I went into... started off as a domestic, and then I went in to do... well, I was on the maternity, like as a... more like an aide, than anything, because it was mainly war-time. And then I went back again. I left when the children were small, and then I went back again, a few years after, and I went into the sewing room. And we used to do curtains, counterpanes, uniforms. And I gradually worked my way up, and when I retired, I was in charge of this sewing room.

(2) You said you stopped work, for a while, when your children were small, so tell me about the births of your children.

Well, Nick was born in December 1944. His father was an American soldier. We were going to be married, and we'd got all the qualifications and medical forms, and all the rest of it. And then, of course, just after D-Day, they all went abroad, and he didn't come back. So, Nick was, as I said, Nick was born in December. And then I lived back at home again. And I didn't work much, while Nick was small, except to go up to the land with me father, because there was always... if ever I wasn't doing anything else, there was always a job for me with me Dad. And Peter was born about three years afterwards - yes, he was born in the March '47, '48, yes, '48. And he... Life went on much the same as it did before, and I used to get... I used to have jobs that I could take him with me; you know, there was always domestic jobs, or jobs on the land. And

then I went back to Avonside and worked there. And then Sally - the last, my daughter - wasn't born until 1959, and that time I went to live with my sister, who lived out by Upton-on-Severn. And I worked at Powick Hospital, then, in the laundry, and... Well, that was it, mainly, until... when Nick was going to come out of the RAF, I came back to Evesham, and was on the housing list and I had a council house. My first council house was up Rynal Place, which is in the centre of Evesham, and lived there... we were there about twenty one years, until I got that I couldn't manage the stairs, and so forth, and my legs got bad. And that's when I had this bungalow; came up here in 1991.

Were you always a single parent?

Yes.

How did you manage?

Well, I always worked. And my parents were very helpful, in their way, but I was... you know what I mean: I was independent, living at home. They gave me very little help that I didn't actually work for. But we'd got quite a big house, and I had more or less half of it, and I was almost like living in lodgings, but I was with me parents. Altogether we managed fairly well. We had our arguments, but then... My father was very fond of the boys, you see, because never having boys, so, of course, that used to cause a bit of jealousy, sometimes, 'cause I had two sisters, but we never had a boy. So, of course, he used to make quite a fuss of my boys.

(3) Well, as Nick was the one with diabetes, it's him we'll talk about most. So, tell me: was there any diabetes in his heredity, as far as you know?

No, not in my family.

And you don't know about his Dad's family.

No, I don't, no.

Did you know anything at all about diabetes, before Nick got it?

Not really. Many years ago I had a friend who was young, and I knew that children had it sometimes, and actually my friend died. But I was never really... I never really knew much about it, but ...

Well, tell me about Nick's life, before he got diabetes. What did he do?

Well, when he came out of the RAF, he went in the taxis, because he used to love driving. And he worked on taxis for a couple of different firms, and for quite a while. And he was a real workaholic, and never minded how many hours he worked. And then he used... he first started, he used to drink a lot, he was always thirsty, and he used to drink bottles and bottles of mineral water, you know, and pop, and stuff like that. And then he developed a skin itch, and that's when he went to the doctor, and the doctor said he'd got a - in those days - he'd got a mild form of diabetes. So, he put him on diet and some tablets. But apparently he didn't get any better, because they kept increasing the tablets and

doing more tests. And then they couldn't control his blood sugar, and he went into hospital and had some treatment there, at Queen Elizabeth. And then they told him that he'd have to go on injections - insulin injections - if he couldn't control his... Well, that's when he gave up smoking, and went very strict on his diet. But it still didn't do any good, his blood sugar still kept increasing. So he... the doctor said that he'd have to have injections. Well, he'd got a horror of injections - he got used to them, but still. And he tried his hardest to, you know, bring himself down to normal, but in the end, he did have to go on injections. And towards the end, he was injecting... he used to inject before every meal. He had to have... get up in the morning, then he had mid lunch, dinner, afternoon tea, and an evening meal, and then another injection at night. He injected about six times a day, but... Then, of course, all the other things came along as well. His circulation failed, and he had to have an operation on his legs. And then he had... then he developed kidney trouble, had to go on dialysis. Everything seemed to be ongoing, you know, something kept happening. So, really, it was just one thing after another, as you might say.

(4) Let's go back to his life before he had diabetes. He was born in 1944, and then you mentioned he was in the RAF. When was that?

1961; when he was seventeen and a half, he went in. And he served twelve years from the age of eighteen, and came out in '64.

'74, it would be.

'74, sorry, I beg your pardon, '74.

And he obviously lived away from home when...

That's it. He served... oh, he served all over the place. He was in what was known as UKMAMS. They used to load up things for disaster areas, after there'd been anything. And they used to go out in the big Halifaxes, or... no, Hercules, the big Hercules, and they used to sort of push this stuff out, you know, when they got to the disaster areas. And he went all over the place. Cyprus, he spent two years in Cyprus, which he thought was one of the best places on earth. But he was more or less... not constantly on the move, but he did quite a lot of moving about, you know.

And now that you know more about diabetes, would you say there was anything in his lifestyle that might have led to diabetes?

No, I don't think so, because he didn't drink. That was one thing, he never drank - except shandy or... he never drank spirits, or very, very occasionally a beer - but he wasn't a drinker. He was a heavy smoker, I will admit that much, which he didn't seem to be able to give up. But no, he didn't... And he had no illnesses, while he was in the RAF, at all; he was quite healthy.

And then, when he came out of the RAF, in 1974, he'd have been thirty years old, and he came back to live with you?

That was right, yes. He came back and settled back in again, and, you know, looked around for a job. And, as I said, he used to love driving, so he went into taxis, and he worked for a couple of taxi firms. And he'd got a marvellous memory - he'd only got to go anywhere once, and he knew instantly again where it was - and he was also... didn't mind what hours he worked. And I often wonder if he perhaps worked too many hours with irregular meals. But even so, he didn't seem to show much... you know, any ill effects for anything really, until he just developed this thirst, and then went to the doctor.

(5) You provided his meals at home, so can you describe what your diet was like?

Well, we really weren't... we were quite healthy eaters, really. We didn't have... we perhaps used to have too many chips, or anything like that, but we had quite a balanced meal, because I've always been interested in cooking, I've always liked cooking. And so we used to... nearly always had something cooked, and a dessert, and we were... And then, you know, cereal breakfast, or anything like that, and I sort of cooked round his hours of duty, and that sort of thing. So, I don't think he was... His diet was pretty good, I think, even though he was... he used to work all hours he could.

Would you have had many vegetables or fruits?

Oh yes, we had plenty of vegetables, I've always been fond of a lot of fresh vegetables. And we, as regards puddings and things like that, I'm afraid I tended to be a little starchy. We used to have suet puddings, and various things like that, but he used to like that sort of thing, so I cooked to please him.

You said you cooked for him around his taxi driving shifts, but did you have the other children at home as well?

Oh, yes. Peter was working away in Worcester, and Sally was still at school.

So, how did you mange all these meals at different times?

Oh, they weren't really at different times, because he usually managed to get... I always cooked in the evenings - I've cooked in the evenings, always, for years - and we always seemed to get together at the same time. Or if I had to save it for him, I used to save it, you know, over a dish of water, or something, or else make little casseroles, and leave... he was very fond of chilli, and stuff like that, so I used to do little casseroles and put them in the oven low, so that he could eat when he did get home.

And you said he like starchy puddings. Would you say he had a sweet tooth?

Yes, a very sweet tooth, yes.

What sort of things did he like?

Well, he liked chocolates and sweets, and, as I said, starchy puddings, and all that sort of thing, you know, cream cakes. It came as rather a blow when he had to go on a strict diet, I think.

(6) Now, you reckon he was diagnosed around about 1984, so he was about forty, so he'd had a very long time to get used to his previous diet. How did he change to the new diet?

Well, we went from full cream milk to... down the whatsits until we got to skimmed milk, which he hated! And then, in the end, he got used to it, and he said, if anybody ever gave him full cream milk in a cup of tea, it used to taste horrible! I mean, you get used to almost anything, really, if you wait long enough. And then, of course, he had to go on sweeteners instead of sugar, which was another thing; he used to have two or three spoonfuls of sugar. But, if you know what I mean, he was quietly determined, and you could say to him "you're not supposed to have such and such a thing", and he'd say "I know, I know", and then he'd still have it. But he was very good. We gradually got down to... By that time, Peter was married - Peter had got married - so there was only Nick and myself and Sally at home. So, I used to eat the same as Nick did, because Sally was... she'd got to the stage where she used to grab a sandwich and be off, you know, or something like that - she never bothered for proper meal times - and so Nick and I used to have very much the same diet.

So, would you say that when he was diagnosed with diabetes, you began a new diet?

Yes, I did, yes. I used to get the odd cream cake when he wasn't looking, sort of thing! But apart from that, I did. We ate... well, it wasn't worthwhile cooking for one and cooking for another. I mean, I just did what I was going to do for him, and I had the same.

What other changes were there, apart from skimmed milk and sweeteners?

Butter; he went onto the, you know, these vegetable things, instead of butter. And he had to take all the fat off his meat, which didn't worry him the slightest bit, because he always did; he hated fat. But apart from that... and salt, I had to reduce the salt.

Tell me about what guidance he got when he was diagnosed. What guidance did he get about diet?

Well, he had diet sheets. Then he used to go to the diabetic clinic about once a month, I think it was, to be tested and the rest of it.

Where was that?

At our doctor's, on Merstow Green in Evesham. And he had a lady come out to him - I think she's retired now, gone abroad. Her name was Magda, and she was a dietitian, and she used to come out and tell him off if she thought he wasn't doing what he should do! She was a foreign lady. But apart from that, he was pretty good. I expect he had the occasional chocolate when he was out in the car, which I didn't know about, but still, that was up to him.

(7) As it happens, I think that I've spoken to Magda, who you've mentioned, and I think, rather than being a dietitian, she was a diabetes specialist

nurse. Can you describe what she did on her visits, when she came to your house?

Well, she just used to ask about his general health, and look at whatever records he'd got from the diabetic clinic, and advise him on various things. 'Cause she was still coming to see him when he went on insulin, and she advised him then on injections, you know. But it was more like a, you know, like a little friendly chat, sort of thing, and if he'd got any problems, he could ask her. But she didn't actually give him any instructions. She was more or less, you know, like a support.

But you mentioned she ticked him off occasionally. What sorts of things did she tick him off for?

Well, if his sugar had gone up high, or anything like that, she used to tell him about it. And she was always on to him about cigarettes and smoking, and so on. But she was in a, you know, a gentle sort of a way; she was very nice, I liked her.

Did she involve you much?

A fair bit; you know, if I was sat here, of course I used to join in. But I didn't have a lot to do with his medical things, because he preferred to sort of look after his own. He never involved me in anything, 'cause I suppose... whether he didn't want to worry me or not, I don't know, but he only sort of told me what I asked! But he seemed to manage his affairs pretty well, so I hadn't used to interfere.

Let's talk about when he moved onto insulin. I know you can't remember when it was, but what are your memories of when that happened?

Well, I can remember when he first went on insulin, he just used to have to do... oh, only about one injection a day, I think, or whether it was two, I can't remember. And he... because, at first, it didn't suit him, he used to do quite a bit of vomiting. And he went into the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and was more or less sort of stabilised, and... But he never really accustomed himself to giving himself injections. He never liked it, but he got towards the end when he was doing quite a lot of it.

(8) What kind of help did Magda, the diabetes specialist nurse, give with injections?

Oh, she used to tell him... you know, give him sort of hints and so forth, but... because, I always remember her - he used to have to inject every time before meals, about half an hour before a meal - and I always remember her telling him once about when, if we were eating out, she said "it don't take you long to pull your shirt up and just jab the injection in" she said, "no one will take any notice of you"! But yes, he injected first thing in the morning, and then he'd... half an hour before each meal he had to have an injection, and then he had a

booster at night. And he seemed to spend most of his time injecting himself, towards the end.

You said he wasn't keen on injections at first.

At first, but, of course, he more or less, I suppose, got used to it. He used to be able to do it with... And then he used to have difficulty, because his eyesight failed, and he used to spend goodness knows how long trying to get a needle into the syringes, and oh dear... I used to give him fair warning before I was going to dish up a meal, so that he could get himself all ready.

So, did it have quite a big effect on your life?

I suppose it did. I sort of, more or less, had to sort of look after him more than I had been doing. And, of course, when he started injections, then, of course, he had to give up his job, because he couldn't drive the public when he was on insulin. He could still drive, but not on taxis, or anything like that. So, of course, he was at home more, and it sort of made quite a bit of difference: you know, constant cups of tea and snacks, and so on. But not all that much difference, really, because he could still get about then. And then he had... he knocked his heel, somehow - whether it was getting out of a car, or what it was - and it never healed. He used to put plasters on the back of his heel. And he went to the chiropodist - he used to have to go to the chiropodist regularly - he went to the chiropodist, and the chiropodist wouldn't treat him because of this whatsit, and he sent him to Ronkswood. And they found out that it was like a diabetic ulcer, he'd got in back of his heel, and he went into hospital, then, and he had treatment for it. And then, about that time, he started having black-outs - hypos, as they call them - and so they kept him in. He was in Ronkswood for about... must have been nearly a month. Then they decided that it was his circulation, and they operated on the veins of his one leg - it was his right, that's it - operated on the veins of his leg, and that refused to heal. He had, right in his groin, he had a wound which refused to heal. For about eight or nine months, we had a district nurse, every day, used to come and dress this wound, with occasional bursts of having to go into hospital, if she thought it was inflamed. He was in and out of Queen Elizabeth like a yo-yo for about twelve months. And then they had to do another operation on it, and then it started to heal. But he never got... his legs were never right; he never sort of got the circulation back properly in his legs. They used to swell.

(9) Can you remember, roughly, when he gave up driving because he wasn't allowed to drive taxis?

Well, as I said, he gave up the taxis in about 1998, but he still used to drive. He used to... oh, not for a while, he didn't, because we didn't have a car, because, of course, we used to use the taxi. And then he had a mobility car, which he could... you know, one with hand controls, and he carried on driving. And he gave up driving... ah, now, his eyesight went, as he couldn't see to drive properly, twelve months after he had the car. We had a mobility car for a year, and I might be able to find out when that was, because I've got some... I

couldn't find any papers, but I have got... when he was issued a mobility car, so...

Well, in 1998 he was fifty four, so how did his diabetes progress after that, after he was at home all the time?

Well, rather rapidly, because he got... his legs used to give way, occasionally, and he used to have sickly fainting fits, and so on. But he was still fairly mobile, but his health was very poor, and he used to sit and sleep a lot of the time; sit in the chair, and he'd go away to sleep. And I used to keep speaking to him, because I didn't know whether he'd gone off into a hypo, or anything. But he was just frail, you know.

What did you do if he had a hypo?

Well, I put... we had some Glycomin, I think it was called. It was like a little... You used to have to squeeze a little bit, and rub it round the side of his mouth, and he used come back, except once, when he frightened the life out of me, and I couldn't get him back again. And he was out for a good half hour to three quarters. And I sent for the - I've got a care-line - and the whatsitsnames came, the paramedics came, and it took them nearly an hour to get him back again. And they took him off to hospital, back to Queen Elizabeth again. They kept him in overnight, and sent him back again the next day, because as soon as he recovered and he could walk about, they used to send him back again. But that was the worst one I can remember; that was a very long one.

(10) How did you know what to do? Were you taught by anybody, or did your son tell you what to do when he had a hypo?

Well, he told me. They told him, and he sort of passed it on to me. But... or anything... or, you know, something sweet. He used to use, you know, saccharin tablets in his drink, but if you ever wanted to bring him out of a coma, he had to have sugar. You had to put sugar, or a glass of full cream milk, or something like that. It was all, you know, different things. He had one turn once when we were out, and we were along... outside a supermarket. And I used to sort of pack the... he used to sit in the car, and I used to pack the back. And when I got in by the side of him, I thought "oh Lord, he's gone again". And I sat there for about half an hour feeding him sweets, jogging his elbow, and giving him a sweet, till he came back again, and then drove us back home again. Sometimes I used to get a bit nervous, but still. He was always all right; he always got us back again.

What were you nervous of?

Well, I thought if he went off, while he was driving, we might have ended up on the side of the road. But if he was silent too long, I used to start a conversation, which kept him with me, sort of thing.

Did you get so that you could spot the signs of something going to happen?

More or less, yes. There was certain indications, but not always. They didn't always come to anything, sometimes it passed off. But, by and large, he was... he hadn't used to take me by surprise.

(11) Can you imagine how he would have coped if you hadn't been there?

I don't know. I don't know what they'd have done if he hadn't had someone to look after him. I suppose he'd had to have been in a home. But no, I often thought about that, because... Still, he didn't need to know, because he died before me, so he was all right. He went very peaceful. My grandson, who was living with us then, went to a birthday party, came home about midnight, and Nick's light was on. And he went in and spoke to him, and he was watching... he couldn't sleep for more than about half an hour, an hour at a time, and he used to watch videos and things at night; he'd got his television in there. So, Adam went in and was chatting to him, and he was watching some video or other. So, Adam went to bed - he used to come... he had a blow-up bed in here. And next morning was one of his dialysis mornings, and we used to have to get up at six, as they collect him at half past six. And I went in... on my way past - he usually was awake, because he used to have a alarm - and as I went past, I said "good morning", as I usually did on my way to the toilet. When I come back again, I reach round the door and put the light on. He still didn't show any signs of moving, so I went back in again, and I said "come on then, wakey wakey". And something about him made me wonder, the way he was lying in bed made me wonder, and I went up, and I touched him and shook him, and he was dead. But in one way, I'm glad that he did, because he couldn't have got anything else but worse, and at least he went very quietly. But it was... I mean, that itself was a shock. It upset poor Adam, because I called Adam, I called him in and I said "I think Nick's dead". And Adam went and touched him, and he said "yes, he is". And it upset poor Adam. He spent most of the rest of the morning being sick; it really upset him. And yet, it didn't me, because I sort of... I mean, it upset me, yes, but in one way I was glad, if you know what I mean. It sounds very hard hearted, but it wasn't really. And that will be a year at the end of this month, the 28th of February.

How many years ago?

Well, it will be two, end of this year. It was 2006.

(12) Can you remember how long he was on dialysis?

Yes, about three years, I think. Yes, he was, because he had three Christmases, I can remember, but I don't remember when he actually went on dialysis. I think he went on dialysis in the summer-time, and then he had... I can remember him having three Christmases - because of him taking cards and presents and things - on dialysis, and...

Taking cards and presents for the staff?

Yeah, and the others, because they were sort of more or less a gang, you know. The same ones used to have the same time, the same treatment.

How did his going on dialysis change your lives?

Well, that, of course, he went three times a week: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Used to be collected at half past six in the morning, and he used to go to Hereford, and get back again about two. And I used to have something waiting for him for a meal, if he felt like one, because often he used to come back, what with the dialysis and the journey, he used to come back, sometimes, and he used to feel very nauseous and go to bed. But it was... well, I used to have to make sure he was up, of course, and taken all the tablets he had to take, and had some breakfast, and had his injection, and so on. At least it made me get up in the mornings!

What did he tell you about his visits to have dialysis?

They were... well, they were very boring, of course, because they just were on a machine four hours. He was on a machine from eight till twelve. And he used to say they used to dose off, and they were always allowed, while they were on dialysis, they were allowed a treat. They used to have all sorts of things: a bar of chocolate, a cream cake, because, of course, the dialysis machine was already cleansing their bloods, so they were allowed a little laxity. But he didn't like... it was the... you see, when they go on dialysis, in the first place, they put what they call a... oh, what do they call it... It's in their arm: they collect a bunch of veins together and make a real lump, which is where the whatsitsall go in. I'm just trying to think what it... no, not a fisssure... Anyway, they make up this thing in their arm, which is they sort of join veins together, which is where they collect the blood, and then it's pumped back in again. But before that, when they first... while they're growing this whatsit in their arm, while it's sort of coming to perfection, they had the... this thing used to come out of his chest, the pipes, the things to connect him to. And he never liked that; it always used to itch. But apart from that, I don't think he found it too bad. But that he had to go into hospital to have done. He had the whatsits put into his chest, which used to take all the different little pipes that he was connected up to the machine on.

(13) Did he talk about the people he met?

Oh yes, there was some that he used to say was worse than him, far worse. There was one girl there who'd already had four transplants that hadn't taken, and she was still on dialysis. And he wasn't on the list... He was on the list for a kidney transplant, but the thing was his age, you see. They favoured young people, and he was getting up towards sixty, by then. But he would no doubt have been, if there had been any chance, he would perhaps have had a transplant, but. But he used to be in and out of the Queen Elizabeth, because if he went to Hereford and he was ill, of course, they wouldn't put him on the machine, he used to go straight away off to Queen Elizabeth. I never knew whether he was going to come back from there, or whether I was going to have a phone call. Fistula, sorry, that was... they called that on the arm, they were called a fistula, which they used to have to, what they called, grow. They put, as I said, they fastened

the whatsits together, then they grew into a hard lump, which they could put the pipes into. Well, he had one on one arm, and when that one... I think, after about twelve months, that one failed, and they had to grow another one on the other arm. And then he had to go back... while they were doing that, he had to go back on pipes in his chest. And one time when they went to take the pipes out of his chest, they'd started to grow into his flesh, and he had to have an operation on that. That was another trip to Queen Elizabeth. Oh, he always seemed to be... everlasting, you never knew, when he went out, where he was coming back from, but.

How did he react to all this?

Well, he was very easygoing. He was very, you know, sort of, "if I have to, I have to" sort of thing. He was quite evenly natured, but I think there were times when even he got fed up. He sat here one day, I remember, he sat and he said "do you know, mother", he said "there isn't a part of me that doesn't hurt". He said "I can't find anything that doesn't hurt", because, of course, his legs used to swell up, and his legs sort of went... used to go stiff - he used to have two sticks towards the last. And then he'd always... these fistulas in his arms used to throb. He used to sit, sometimes, rubbing away at them, because they were throbbing. But yes, that's what he said: "I can't find anything in me that doesn't hurt". It was an awful, awful life, really, but then, that's it, isn't it.

(14) What did he think of the medical staff?

Well, he liked... I didn't like his doctor, but he did, he trusted him, so I just... But his doctor was very, I don't know, he was very detached. I used to ring up, sometimes, if Nick had had a sick bout, I used to ring up and say Nick had been very sick and something. And he used to say "oh well. I can't tell whether it's from the diabetes or whether it's from the kidney". He used to say "tell him to mention it next time he goes to dialysis". He was... I suppose if there was nothing he could do, there was no need for him to worry about it, but he was like that. I didn't think he sort of cared enough, but still. Nick liked him, so.

What did Nick think of the staff at the hospital?

Oh, he used to - those at Hereford, at the dialysis - oh, he thought they were all marvellous; they were really good. And he didn't like the Queen Elizabeth. The Queen Elizabeth was too impersonal, but if he had to be there, he had to be. But he very rarely stopped there more than about - except when he went to have his lines put in - he never used to stop there more than about, perhaps a couple of days, and then he was back again. But he quite liked the people at Hereford; they were all very helpful, you know, and friendly. Well, they were like one big happy family, because they were all... I think it was six to a session, and unless anyone died, it was all the same ones came back and back. It was like being friends.

When he was in hospital for a week or so, were you ever able to visit him?

Yes, I went... I used to go, if I could find anybody to take me, because, of

course, we had no transport, in those days, but... He was in the old Ronkswood, before that closed down, and then he was in the new hospital at Worcester. And he's been in... you name it, I think he's been in most of them around here, because if they didn't know what was... Of course, that was the trouble - he'd got double trouble. He was, as well as being diabetic, there was the kidney failure, and never knew which thing was upsetting him.

What were your impressions of the hospitals, when you visited him?

Oh, they were quite good, actually. They seemed to be very caring, you know. But I never went to Hereford, but after he died, they were very... they wrote me a letter, they were very good. But I only went when he was in Ronkswood, and when he was in the new Royal Hospital at Worcester, I went there. I was quite favourably... you know, they seemed to look after them well.

(15) Now talk about your own diabetes.

Well, I don't know, because I don't feel any different. I've got tablets to take. But they had one of these "well woman" clinics, you know, where you went and had a blood test, and everything. And they asked me - because, I've been under the doctor for donkey's years, because I've had arthritis, and I've got angina, and I had a heart murmur, and you name it - and they asked me to go to this whatsit, and had the blood tests and various things. And that's when they found out that I was just slightly diabetic; nothing really to worry about.

How long ago was that?

September, must be about eighteen months or so, I should imagine; yes, would be about a year and a half ago. And I've been to one diabetic clinic, and they just do the same. They do the tests and weigh you, and so forth, which, incidentally, I lost a lot of weight. I used to be a lot bigger than I am now. But I've only got... the only thing to do with diabetes is just some tablets, which I take after meals, so that's the only thing. All the others are all to do with me blood pressure, and various other things, so I'm not really that bad. But I just, sort of, more or less based my diet on what Nick used to have, and just gave up anything that was... I had the diet sheets, but I don't think the diabetes affects me much.

Did you find it difficult to change your diet again?

No, not really, because when you give up anything, you often don't take to it again. I was still on low fat milk, and I don't take sugar. And I tried to reduce my salt, although I'm very fond of salty things. But no, I don't think so, I think I'm more or less the same, because, if I cook for Adam, there's anything that I'm not supposed to have, well, Adam has it and I have something else, or I have a salad. But it's... I haven't found any difference at all, really, as regards myself. But I'm due for another trip to the diabetic clinic, I think, in about a month, so I shall... I can get sorted out again then.

(16) How often do you go to the clinic?

Well, it's supposed to be monthly, but I haven't been going... They've had a bit of upheaval, at our doctors' surgery. They've rebuilt it, and they was in temporary whatsits for so long, and then back again. And I haven't been for a while, because I find it rather difficult to get there, except the volunteer cars take me, you know. But they've got a very silly habit, at our doctor's, of only giving appointments on the day. They won't give you an advance appointment, and I have to beg and beg, and say "I've got to book a..." I mean, volunteers, it's no good me ringing and saying "I've got to be at the doctor's at nine o'clock"; I mean, they want time. So, I have to beg for them to give me an advance appointment, and I've, telling the truth, I really haven't bothered. I think "well, if I don't fell ill, I won't bother to go". But I have got another appointment there, as well, at the doctor's, in about a week's time, I did manage to get that, so... because I think I'm going deaf as well. What with blind and deaf, I shall soon be a real wreck.

When did you begin to lose your sight?

Well, I've had poor eyesight most of my life. When I was a girl, I wore glasses, and then about thirty or so years ago, I had a sinus abscess over this one eye. Well, they took the... I haven't got a bone above that one eye, and when they operated, I lost the sight completely in that one eye. And the other one has slowly deteriorated ever since; it's what they call macular dystrophy. But according to the optician, he said I wouldn't ever go completely blind - black blind, you know. I should always be able to see shapes, which is, I think I've got down to that now, because, I mean, I'm in a continual fog. It doesn't matter what the weather's like, it's foggy. And I'm sitting here, but I couldn't describe your features. But, as I said, I know people's voices and I know people's shapes, so.

How do you spend your days?

I knit. I've got... Monday I go to a club in the morning, Tuesday I go to a club in the afternoons, and Tuesday my girl comes to do my housework. Wednesday the hairdresser comes; I have a mobile hairdresser. Thursday is a free day - I don't see anybody at all. And then Friday, I'm normally taken shopping, if they've got a spare driver. So, most of the time, I'm sort of more or less by myself. But I do knit, and fortunately I can still see to knit, as long as it's only plain. Or otherwise, if I put the television on and sit in front of it, I fall asleep!

(17) Looking back, you've suffered from a lot of illness, and your son Nick suffered from a lot of illness. Tell me how you think about all that now?

We seemed to cope. We were always... When he'd come out of the RAF, he said he'd sowed his wild oats and he was going to have a quiet life! And he did. He used to enjoy a game of darts, dominoes, things like that, you know. And while he could, he used to go... And he was very fond of cards, he used to go to a bridge club. He was fairly busy. And we used to go out, 'cause he used to drive. Even when he wasn't driving taxis, he still used to drive, and we used to go out and round, and eat out in pubs. And we got on very well

together, Nick and I; we were very much the same sort of nature. And as long as we were... I mean, we just carried on; we didn't really need anybody else much. And we used to go to bingo, occasionally, and anything else we fancied. We never went on holiday; I haven't actually been to stay away, but we used to go out days, regularly. He always seemed quite contented. He went to whist drives, if he could find one, and all the rest of it. He was quite happy, I think. He was happy-go-lucky, though; he made the best of everything. Of course, in those days, we were often very hard up, but never mind, we still got through.