

24. Margaret

(1) Tell me about your background.

I was born in 1949. My mother was a housewife; my father began work in the coal mines. He then left there and went and worked on the railways.

Where was this?

In Doncaster. Then, he worked for the Yorkshire Electricity Board for many, many years. I was brought up in a council house. In fact, the first house that I remember when I was very small was a prefab that was built just after the war when there was no houses. So, they built the prefabs, but I was quite ill at the time, because the damp of the prefabs caused me to have pneumonia two or three times in about three years. So, my mother was advised to move house so that I would be upstairs and not at ground level. So, we moved, when I was about seven years of age, into a council house, which was then off ground level - a three-bedroomed house, which had coal fires in each bedroom. I also, as I moved, re-got pneumonia and had to have poultices wrapped round my chest with some awful smelly cream on, that... it smelt like winter-green or whatever it was, and it was dreadful. And I just remember not being able to breathe properly.

Had you got any brothers and sisters?

I have one sister, who is three years older than I. We both have diabetes now, but I was the first one to get it in the family.

Who else in the family has had it?

My grandmother had it in later life when she was about seventy six years of age, but that was an onset of being old. That's all I remember having diabetes. But now, myself was the first one to have it, my sister got it about ten, fifteen years after I. Her son - my sister's son's got it. Now her son - his little boy's got it,

(2) so it's gone down from my sister to her son, and to his little boy, who is about seven years of age now.

Looking back on your own childhood, would you say you were reasonably well-to-do or not?

No, not really. I remember that when I first left school at fifteen years of age, I was working as a seamstress for Montague Burton's, and, at the time, I didn't realise that my father was bringing home ten pounds a week. And with piece-work, the more you do, the more money you get, so my mother thought it was lovely. I worked very hard and I handed all my pay-packet over to my mother, and didn't realise that I was bringing home fourteen pounds a week, which was more than my father. So, I used to hand my mother the money over, and she used to give me so much back for my bus money, and so much for my pocket money, and the rest my mother kept, which went away for our holidays, so.

Before your money came in, then, were you quite poor as you were growing up?

Yes, I would say that. My mother did a lot; and my father. Although we didn't get very much, we always went on a holiday. Generally it was in a caravan, and also we always went for a daytrip. And when my father was on the railways, they put so much a week away, and you had one day out. And when you got to the station, they gave you a carrier bag, which had a packet of crisp and two sandwiches and a cake, and we thought that was lovely. And when we got on the train, they all gave us - I think it was - a ten shilling note each, for each person, and it was absolutely brilliant. At the end of the day, to get back on the train from either Cleethorpes or Bridlington, whichever they decided that we'd go to, we was given another bag to go home with, with sticks of rock in. And it was really marvellous, you know, the day out.

What was your schooling like?

Schooling - because I was sort of suffering with illness in my younger years with chest... breathing problems of pneumonia, colds - colds after colds after colds, I lost a lot of schooling. And I remember going to Doncaster town centre to go to - I can't think what they call it - it was called Sunlight treatment, of where you went in, you got undressed, you wore a pair of goggles, and I had to stand in front of these hot lamps for five minutes, and then turn my back for five minutes - you had to keep turning round. But the only problem with that was, after I'd had the treatment you went out into the cold air again, which wasn't beneficial, because the heat that you'd got didn't do anything because you went back out into the cold air.

- (3) Also, at the age of nine years of age, I'd lost that much schooling I couldn't hardly read, and I went to a special school called the Open-Air School. And it had a lot of children there - people with Polio, people - I don't know what they call it is when they cough a lot of sputum up and they have to have their backs packed. And I remember every morning we was given Maltalene and Iron - a big tablespoon full - before we started our class work.

Was that a day school?

Yes, that was a day school. And also I had the sunlight treatment there, which it was all closed in, so that, when I left the treatment, I went down a glass corridor back into class. We also had our lunch. Then afterwards, we all laid down on these cast iron beds and we was made to go to sleep for one hour, and then get up and then go back to our classes again to give us a rest.

Why was it called the Open Air School?

I really don't know. I think because it had lots of grounds, where, in the break times, we could run around and do all active things, as well as being in the warmth when we needed it for our treatments.

How long did you go to that school?

I went to that school for... I was nine when I went there and... eleven... yes, 'cause I went to the secondary school in a normal school. And I was there - they taught me to read in that two years - that I was able to go to a secondary modern school straight away, which was very good. I even remember a little poem, all that many years ago, and it's called Ducks' Ditty, and it was "All along the backwater, through the rushes tall, ducks are a-dabbling, up tails all! Ducks' tails, drakes' tails, yellow feet a-quiver, yellow bills all out of sight, busy in the river!". But it's just little things like that that sticks in my mind.

How did you find it adjusting to a normal school?

I found the adjusting to the normal school very hard, because the people that I knew in the infant school also knew that I went to the Open-Air School. And they picked me up in a bus

- (4) to go to the Open-Air School, and the children at school thought that I was different from them, so they treat me differently at the time - there was something wrong with me - when all at the time was that, you know, it was just the illnesses that I'd had. But otherwise, I got through it quite well.

How did they treat you differently?

They sort of grouped together in their groups, and I sort of was left out on a limb, sort of trying to go and talk to them. And sometimes they would just run off in cases, or just not want to bother with me. But otherwise it was all right.

Did you manage to get any qualifications after all those years of illness?

No, I didn't get any qualifications at all, really. I was good at housecraft and needlework, and therefore, when I left the secondary modern school at fifteen years of age, I went into the best subject that my mother thought was good for me at the time, and that was my sewing. So, I went to work for the Montague Burton Ltd making men's trousers, inserting side pockets, and I stayed there for quite some years. Then I went to SR Gents Ltd in Doncaster, that made nightdresses and lingerie for Marks & Spencer's. But the more we did for that firm, the more they wanted you to produce. As soon as you reached the target that you were able to make, they said that to pay you the money, you had to do another twenty five or another fifty; they kept upping the contract. So, that was quite something, so I didn't stay there very long.

At what stage did you develop diabetes?

Then I met my husband to be - John. My father was very strict, at the time, and he didn't like my sister or I to talk with boys; it was just not done by my father, you just didn't do it. My sister was the first one to go out with a boy, and I do remember her having to be in for

- (5) nine o'clock at night, because that was his thing - you had to be in for that time. And we was never allowed, at the time, to wear makeup, nail-varnish or anything like that. But when I started going out with my boyfriend,

and I asked my father if it was all right to go out with this boy, and he said that I had to bring him home so that he could see what he was like, which I did. John was in the Air Force at the time. My father, also, was in the army, years ago, and also went to Burma. So, he realised that John would have had to have gone through vigorous training and bull nights, and doing everything that my father had done, so he thought he was a good candidate, so. I started going out with John and getting my bus home, but I managed - my bus, at the time, was ten o'clock from Doncaster centre - and John asked my father if he could get me on the ten o'clock bus, instead of being in for nine o'clock, 'cause if we wanted to go see a film at the pictures, then if I had to be in at nine o'clock, the film would not have finished and we wouldn't see the end. So, as soon as ten o'clock come and you all stood up for the anthem at the end of the film, I had to run out of the cinema to get back to the bus stop so that I could be in for that certain time.

And then what happened after that?

Then - I can't remember how old I was... about eighteen, I think - and we was never told about sex at all. And I did have intercourse with John, only once, and I didn't like it at all, and I thought "oh dear, oh what have I done? I don't like that". Anyway, a few months went by and another few months went by, and I was passing a lot of urine and it was getting hotter every day. It stung me, terrible.

- (6) And so I told John, and I said "you know we had that sex?", and he said "yeah", I said "well, I'm really sore below", I said, "and I hope I haven't got anything, because my father will be absolutely furious with me. And I daren't tell anybody; I daren't tell me Mum". So, he said "well, what do you mean?", and I said "well, I'm drinking an awful lot of water". And I went to see him at the RAF station, and I remember going into the NAAFI and saying I want a drink of milk - and a half pint tumbler and I just drunk it straight down, and I was still thirsty. And John says "you can't be thirsty" - "oh, yes please, I want another one", so I drunk another one. Then I wanted lemonade, and he said "oh, this is ridiculous". And I drank a whole pint of lemonade, and he said "why do you keep drinking?", he says "you've only just drunk that, you can't need any more drink". So, I was sort of putting it in my mouth at one, and then flushing it out again every time I went to the toilet. But every time I went to the toilet, it hurt so much, I could have screamed in agony. And it was so bad that when I was at home, so nobody would know, I got in the bath, because when I got in the bath, all the water, it sort of washed all the - which I didn't know was - the sugar that was in the water away. And so I decided that I couldn't carry on any more, because it was so painful to pass urine, that I made an appointment with my GP, but generally my mother's always been with me because they were the family doctor. And I thought "I don't want to see Dr Glover at the time, I'll go and see Dr Willis", because Dr

Glover was my mother's doctor, and I thought Dr Willis - I'll go and see a different one. So, I saw Dr Willis, and he said "what's the matter?". I said "I'm drinking a lot and I feel very tired. I've got no energy and I've lost an awful lot of weight, 'cause I was nine stone seven and I've gone down to eight stone

- (7) three". And he said "right". I said "but", I says "oh, I'm so sore. When I pass urine", I said, "I can scream". And he said "up on the couch", he said "my dear", he said "and I will have a look. Don't you worry". So, I didn't like to take my pants down, and he got a blanket and he said "now, you're all right", and he was so good. And he looked, and he said - he only took one slight look - and he said "that's it, pull your pants up now". He said "get off the couch and sit down a moment". And he started writing a letter, and I thought "oh dear, he's going to tell my mother - oh dear". But no, it wasn't. He said "I think I know what you've got", he said, "but I want you to go, you leave here now, and you go straight to the Doncaster Royal Infirmary with this letter. I will phone them to say that you're on your way, and hand it in". I handed it in, and they said "oh, you're the lady they think has got diabetes", and I didn't understand what diabetes was at all, and I thought "oh dear, what is that?". And they did a glucose tolerance test, of where they measure... they give you so much water, or they leave you so many hours with nothing at all, test the blood, and every so often they tested the blood throughout the day. And then told me to tell my mother that a letter would be coming, going back to my doctor's, and she must go with me to say what would happen - it would be in the next couple of days. So, therefore, I had to go home that evening and tell my mother that I'd been to the doctors and that I'd got diabetes. So, I went home and told my mother that I'd got... she said "what do you mean, you've got diabetes?". I said "well, that's what they've told me at the hospital. I've been to the doctor", I said, "because I was red below, and I didn't know what it was". So, she said "oh, right, well I'll go to see Dr Glover tomorrow". So, my mother went to see the family doctor, and they told me that I had the diabetes - I would be

- (8) receiving a letter in the next two days to go into hospital straight away.

How did you feel about that diagnosis?

Well, I still didn't understand what it meant, and I didn't know until I'd got in the hospital, that, when I got in, the nurse said "do you know what diabetes...?", and I said "no, I don't know what diabetes is". She said "it's when you've got too much sugar in the blood stream, and what it means is that the pancreas has stopped working or it's very deficient, that the pancreas that produces insulin has stopped producing the insulin to make the sugar levels come down. So, therefore, this means that they will try you on a diet and tablets for the first couple of days, and if that doesn't make any difference at all, you will have to go onto an injection". And I was terrified, and I thought "oh, no". The next couple of days I went on tablets, but it didn't do anything at all, and the doctor came

round and said “I’m very sorry, but we’re going to put you on one injection a day. The nurse will come with a large Jaffa orange and a glass syringe and a steel needle. You will put it on the end of the syringe, and then we will fill it up with water, and then the nurse will show you how to put it into the orange of the skin, and you will press the syringe, and that will be like going into the same skin and texture of your legs”. So, I tried this, and I thought “oh, there’s no problem to that at all, I can do that”. But when it came - the nurse, next day, gave me an injection in to my leg, and said “right, you’ve seen what I’ve done and I’ll show you how to fill the syringe up. Tomorrow you will have to do it yourself”. So, I did it myself the next day, and my stomach was turning over and over and over. My hands went clammy, all sweaty, my forehead was dripping wet, but I managed to do it, and I’ve carried on doing it ever since.

Was it like injecting an orange?

I would say the texture, because my skin is quite tough skin. My sister’s skin is very, very soft and supple, but my skin has always been on the more coarser side, and it was just like injecting into an orange.

At what point did you stop worrying that your illness had something to do with sex?

Straightaway, when they said that that was, you know, the sugar. . . the pancreas has stopped working, then I realised it was nothing to do with having sex at all. And we’d only had sex once. I’d been going out with John for a year before we attempted to do anything, but it frightened me to death thinking I’d got something or not knowing about anything about sex. My mother and father never said anything to us, and also school never told you anything about sex, at the time, so I didn’t really know what was happening to my body. I also found it was a relief to have diabetes and not anything else, at the time. It was thinking “oh, that’s all it is”.

(9) How long were you in hospital?

I was in about one week, in hospital, still doing the injections. After one week I was sent home. They gave me just little leaflets of what things I shouldn’t eat and what things I should eat. I found it quite hard, ’cause I liked sweet things at the time. But there was no such things as diabetic chocolate or anything like that, so I found it very hard not to have the chocolate that I used to have. Also, I found out a lot of things, ’cause my mother did the shopping, and to the fact that, I think it was mustard and sauces and things have sugar in. Tinned peas, at the time, did. There was different things that all related to sugar. Also, the diet side was - it was in grams, and it used to be in ten grams carbohydrate. And they said that I could be on a hundred and fifty grams carbohydrate at the time, so you had to work your portions out as ten grams each portion that you had, until it mounted up to the hundred and fifty grams for the whole day.

How did you work out the portions?

They gave me – in fact I’ve still got it - a little disc, and you pulled this little

disc round, and there was biscuits, cereal, bread, potatoes. And as you pulled it round, it told you how many calories was in that portion of potatoes and how many grams, so that I used to use this dial and just pull it round, and it would tell me, on most of the things that I ate, that how many grams was in each.

But you must have been used to thinking in pounds ounces, so how did you manage to measure grams?

- (10) I had a little tiny white weighing machine and it was just as big as a small saucer on the top, very small, and I used to weigh my things - it's what the hospital actually gave me - on this little weighing scales.

And were you taught about monitoring your sugar levels?

Monitoring sugar levels was sort of, you just pass water into a test-tube and then you stuck what they called a urine stick into the urine to see what colour it went to. If it was blue it was negative, green just over negative, yellow was going on the higher, and then the orange was really high, so it really had to be between blue and green, which was the lowest.

And how did you find having to do all these things - injecting and measuring and weighing?

It bothered me at the time, because the thing was, everybody was sort of getting up, having their breakfasts, going out and not having to do anything else, and I thought "oh, I've got to test my sugar". Got first sample in the morning, then having my injection, which I had to do fifteen minutes, I think, before I had anything to eat, and it was so different from other people just going about what they did in their lives.

How did other people react to the fact that you'd got diabetes?

Well, one of my aunts - 'cause I think it was the first Christmas - had forgotten I'd got diabetes and she'd bought me some chocolates, and my sister thought "oh no, she's bought Margaret some chocolates and she can't eat them", so my sister said "oh, that's all right", she says "I'll have those"!

Did people know about diabetes?

No, I don't think so. A lot of people didn't understand it at all. In fact, it was very hard. I was given a kidney shaped dish,

- (11) of which was to sterilise the syringe and the needles. And you unscrewed the glass syringe and put the items into the water and put it on the gas stove. Also, the steel needles - but the only thing was, after you'd sterilised them, when you come to use the needle time after time after time, it got blunter and blunter and blunter, until I got bruises. And my husband - 'cause I was now married - said "oh, you can't keep going on like this - it causing bruises". And they'd just started to bring out - I think it was by Gillette - some disposable needles, and at the time John was earning about thirteen pounds a week, and I think it was about half of his wage that... to

buy these at the chemist you had to ask for them, and then they sold you a box for about seven pounds ten shillings. But now, thank goodness, that we can have these things free on the National Health.

It must have been a fairly terrific husband to spend half of his pay-packet on disposable needles. Why did he feel it was so important?

He's always been very good. Anything that's been the matter with me, he's always helped, or if I've been worried about anything, he's always helped out and tried to get me to go to the doctor to find things out, or he would find things out for me. So, to give so much of his pay so that I don't have all this bruising was quite something. In fact, I didn't use... the disposable needles, you should only use one. Because they was so fine to the horrible steel thick needles, I used them quite a few times, and was very careful that the needle didn't break off, because it tends to bend after so many uses. And then I threw it away and did another one. So, the hundred needles, really, lasted me a long time.

(12) Can you remember what year it was you first used these disposable needles?

I was married in 1969, so it would be 1970 when I first went on disposable needles. I was still at Montague Burton's doing the sewing then, and then I left there and went to the SR Gents Ltd for Marks & Spencer's.

How did the people at Montague Burton's and SR Gents react to your having diabetes?

When I got diabetes and lost all the weight, I was off work for a few weeks, until they knew that I could do the injections properly. I went back to Montague Burton's, and I was on a sewing machine at the time. But when I told them what I'd been diagnosed with, the manager said "I'm sorry, but I'm not going to allow you to work at the sewing machine any more", because if anything happened or if I got my fingers under the needles then he wouldn't want to be at risk. So then, instead of earning all the lovely money that I had been earning, I went down to the end of the belt, as we called the moving belt, of where you sew a garment, then you throw the basket onto the top of the belt and it moves along until it gets to the end of the belt. And then the person at the end of the belt is like a quality control manager and they check everybody's work, which would be zip flies, button flies, side pockets, before it went onto the next belt for them to do the side seams. So, therefore, I was checking at the end of the belt, which halved my money from about fourteen pounds to about six pounds ten shillings.

(13) Did you think of complaining to the union or anyone?

The unions was all right, but hardly anybody went to the union at all. The only time we went to the union was when - the factory was all glass, and in the summer they used to paint the top of the roof in like a big black mass of - I don't know what they called it - it was just to darken the sun off the roof. But it was so hot. It got to about a hundred and two or hundred and three in the factory, all the windows was open, and the sweat used to just run off the people's back



and face. And then we went to the union and said “we can’t work in this heat, it’s just unbelievable”. So, we used to go to the union, and then walk out onto the grass front of Montague Burton’s and sit outside, so that we could have an extra break of ten or fifteen minutes to have a drink because it was so hot.

How did you manage your diabetes while you were at work?

My diabetes was all right. As I say, I had my breakfast, I did my needle before I went to work. And while I was at work, there was a good canteen, of which sold pasta and cooked small dinners, and so I had no problem at all with meals at that time.

Did you have any hypos?

No, I didn’t have any hypos while I was working. But when I got married in 1969, and I went from Montague Burton’s to SR Gents - John was in the forces at the time -and I had a couple of hypos then, which was too less sugar. The hypos weren’t very severe at all, at that time. It was just knowing that my stomach was saying “I feel hungry”, and I got clammy hands and sweating an awful lot. But it sort of told me that I needed something to eat, so it didn’t go into a dramatic hypo, at that time, for the first few years.

(14) Now, you’ve got two children, can you tell me how your pregnancies went with both of them?

My pregnancies was fine. I was treat by the RAF squadron leaders at the time. My first child, Tracey, was in 1971. She was born in Cambridgeshire in the Ely RAF hospital. But, at the time, the doctors said that diabetic people always produced big babies, so, therefore, that I might not go full time with my child as they would bring it on earlier by one month. But I stayed in hospital about five weeks beforehand, before I had Tracey, so that they could monitor my sugar levels so that nothing would go wrong at the time of giving birth to Tracey. So, therefore, Tracey was born one month premature, but the weight of Tracey was only six pounds five ounces, so really she wasn’t too big at all. My second child, David, was born in Cyprus in Akrotiri Hospital, as John was stationed in Cyprus at the time. My pregnancy, again, they said they would start me off early by one month, but the only thing... and I thought that the time that they’d given me for my son was later than what I thought it would be. One night they put me in a side room, and there was a little bell. In case anything happened to my sugar or I didn’t feel very well, I rang this little bell, and I thought “oh no”, and my waters had broken. They was going to induce me that next morning, but there was no chance because my waters broke the night before. So, everything went fine with both children, and David was seven pounds nine ounces.

Did you breast feed your babies?

No, the doctors wouldn’t allow me to breastfeed the babies. They said they had to be given small bottles. I don’t understand why, but they said “no, diabetic are not to feed their own babies”.

(15) And what were the RAF hospitals like, where you had your two babies?

The RAF hospitals was very strict at the time, and so, so clean, that all the tables at the bottom of the beds, the trolleys, all had to be in order, all in single file, and they all used to be sort of in line, especially when the matron come round. And I even remember they said “what are you doing, Mrs Bowden?”, I said “oh, nothing at the moment”. “Oh, well, if you’d like to help one of the nurses”, because it was just something, really, for me to do, and it would keep my sugar down, also, as well, keeping active. And I used to love doing. . . you had to get sort of a spray and spray all the plastic mattresses so that was perfectly clean, and then get the crisp cotton sheets and do a corner fold and then tuck it underneath. Also a rubber mat, then another sheet, and I quite enjoyed doing that.

Was the matron very strict?

Yes; even the doctors. And when they were coming round, if she noticed anything that she didn’t like, she would point it out in front of them. Even on the window ledges - if there was a glass on the window ledge, it should be on the side of the lockers at the side of the bed.

How did the doctors and nurses treat you as a patient?

The nurses were very good. The doctors, when they did their ward rounds - group captain or squadron leader or whoever it was that was coming round - instead of talking to the patient themselves - whether it was different for the men that was in the forces, or the women, the WAFs that was in the forces - whether they treat them differently, I don’t know. But I found that when they came to my bed, they said “good morning”, and then they looked in your report and just said “oh, you so. . .”, your name and what was wrong with you, and they talked in-between themselves without talking to the actual patient. I found that really different to what it is nowadays.

(16) Did you do any paid work after your children were born?

No, I never did any paid work at all, because, as John was in the forces, that we moved house quite a bit; he was stationed at different places. Also, went to Cyprus for three years, but when the conflict was on, I was sent home with the children while John stayed there another six months. So, it was hard to sort of go out to work when I’d got the children to look after.

How did you manage your diabetes when you’d got young children to look after?

Well, quite normally. Just carried on, you know, one day at a time, just quite easily. The only thing that I remember when my son was growing up was, I was up in the bedroom one day, and my son was stood in the doorway watching me do my injection. And I never thought about it, really, but I thought, well, it must sort of make him feel uneasy. But now, although he has injections and needles and things, it. . . well, I don’t know whether, with him seeing me do it when I was so young, whether it bothered him or not.

Do you think it's made it easier for him?

Yes, I do, now. I think it... you know, he doesn't bother at all. I mean, if I was ill or anything like that, you know, he'd know what to do.

How did your diabetes develop as the years went by?

It wasn't too bad. After I'd had my children, I was put on - the level of my blood sugars went higher - and they said it would be better if I went on to two injections a day, which would be one before breakfast and one before tea. So, therefore, I carried on with two injections for quite a number of years. I've now had it about thirty-seven years, and now in the last year, I would say, I've gone onto four injections, where it's a total different insulin altogether. One is NovoRapid, which I take before each meal, and the other one is a Glargine insulin that you take before bed, and that acts as a twenty four hour insulin that keeps it level all through until the next morning.

(17) Did you have any bad hypos?

When my son was about five years of age, and Tracey seven years of age, my husband was going out for work, and I was still in bed. And I remember my son coming to the bedroom, and I was trying to shout my husband and I found it very difficult to call his name. "John, John", but no answer. And I think my son came and ran downstairs, and said "Daddy, Mummy wants you". When John come to me, I'm trying to speak to him but the words were very erratic; I couldn't make sense of what I was saying. I called John - "John". He came round to the bed and said "Margaret, what's the matter, what's the matter?", and he felt me and my head was really wet and sweating. And he didn't know what to do at the time, because I'd never had a hypo like this, and it was early hours of the morning. He got hold of me and tried to lift me onto my feet, but down one side I couldn't control my body. I felt as though I was like a spastic person that had no control over the muscles, and my leg was bent up and my arm was wavering about in mid-air and I couldn't stand. So, John put me back on the bed and called a doctor, 'cause I'd never had a reaction - I just felt paralysed all down one side. And the RAF came out and said that my blood sugar was low. And I remember... I think I was given something very sweet, and within a matter of fifteen minutes I was normal again.

Why do you think it had got so low?

I can't... I don't understand why, that when I've had these hypos, they've always sort of been generally in the early hours of the morning. Whether, say, I'll get very tired at night time and I'll think "oh no, I'm not hungry, I don't need anything to eat", or I'll go without cream cracker or something, and then in the night it must drop very low, not knowing.

(18) And how's your health been generally over the years?

Not too bad, really, but I've had a few things. 1984 I had a breast lump removed, but it was benign, so it was only a small lump that they removed at the hospital.

But while I was in the hospital, they found that I'd got anaemia, so I had a blood transfusion. Also, later on in 1990, my hair sort of started going very thin and my skin was dry, and I went to the doctor's and they said that I'd got hypothy... is it hypothyroidism? And then the year later I had a hysterectomy done, and I was quite young - about forty - early forties... forty, forty one, had a frozen shoulder. Also, while John was in the forces, I had sort of bending in the fingers, like a hoop movement, which caused pains going up into both arms, and I couldn't understand it. And when I felt the arm, it felt as though I'd got an extra muscle, and it was so hard and the pains that were shooting up my arms, we couldn't understand it. Even the hospital didn't know what it was. And they said that they'd operate, so they cut inside of the arm to about seven inches long, and said that the muscle actually just bursted out when they slit the skin. But what it was caused by, to this day, nobody knows. But it released the tension in the fingers - there was no more hooked up as though the fingers was all tightening. So, both arms were done - one on one month, and then a couple of months later I had the other arm done, but now they're fine now. Then I had in 1995 just frozen shoulder, that you couldn't

- (19) undo the back of your bra. It was so awkward - not being able to reach your hair to brush your hair because it was so painful, the shoulder joint. And so I managed to do movements at the hospital to get the shoulder to work again. In 1997 I had pains, again, in the hands and the arm, and the doctors said "well, you've had your arms done". And I had pins and needles, mostly at night times, I had pins and needles in the arms and the hands, and they said I'd got carpal tunnel. So, each hand was cut into, into the palm, about four inches long - one in about November time and the other one in January. Then, in 1997, I was walking into Thame, where I live, and I got short of breath. And I just carried on and thought "oh", and I had pain going down my left arm. I thought "oh, I'll be all right", so I carried on, did my shopping. And at the time I thought "oh, I'm sweating", and I thought "well, I'm all right, it isn't my sugar", because I'd just eaten before I'd left home, "so it can't be my sugar". So, I thought "I don't feel so good, I'm going to get a taxi back", but at that time, twenty minutes I waited for a taxi to come, but one didn't arrive. So, I thought "well, I've got to get home, so I started walking home from Thame, got about five hundred yards from the house where I live, but it was a gradual incline, and I thought "oh dear, I've got this pain running down my left arm". And I thought I'd eaten an apple for lunch and I felt as though it was stuck in my chest, and I thought "that's silly, you've not eaten an apple. I only had a yoghurt after my sandwiches". And it was like a tight band round my chest, and I wanted to undo the bra just to release the pressure. I got home and sat in the chair. I felt
- (20) slightly better. I rested. Then my husband came in and said "what's the matter?". I said "oh, I don't know" I said, "I feel as though I've got an apple stuck in my chest" I said, "and I've got pain going down my left arm". John said "have you got it now?", and I says "yeah, but not as bad as

what I had it before". I got up to go upstairs to the toilet and I was out of breath, and when I came down I was still huffing and panting. And I said "what are you doing?", he says "I'm ringing the doctor", I said "what for?", I says "I've only got indigestion", I says "I must have had something" I said. But John wouldn't have it, and the doctor came, and I went straight to the John Radcliffe Hospital, where they put me on a monitor and said that I'd got angina. So, they kept me in overnight, and then put me on tablets the next morning. And so, now, I have tablets for the angina, and they found I had got high blood pressure at the time - also gave tablets for that. Also, in 2002, the fingers on my hand have started tightening and they're twisting, and I also had a scan at the Nuffield hospital to find out that I'd got osteoporosis: the thinning of the bones.

Have the doctors said that any of these illnesses were connected with diabetes?

Some doctors say that the carpal tunnel compression is to do with diabetes; also the angina could be an onset of diabetes. Another thing they say is to keep looking at the feet to see if there's anything, because you lose sensation in the feet generally, and if you stand on a stone or anything sharp you may not be able to feel it. Also, another thing of the feet is if you go in a bath, always put the cold water in first and then the hot water. If you was to put your feet in hot water, you may scald the soles of your feet and not know because the feeling is not the same.

Have you had any problems with your feet?

Generally all I get is small cracks, 'specially in summertime when I tend not to wear tights and you wear open sandals, and the skin goes hard and then it tends to crack if they're not being treated with creams.

And what about eyes, have you had any problems with eyes?

To say I have had diabetes all this time, I've been told that my eyes are very good. I do have glasses but don't wear them all the time; it's just on odd occasions. But the eyesight, really, for the time that I've had diabetes, are very good.

(21) How do you manage with so many different illnesses?

I manage quite well, really; it's just remembering to take all the different tablets that I'm taking. I'm taking Alendronate, which is one a week, and it's similar to Didronel.

And what's that for?

That's like a calcium for the bones. Also to go with the Alendronate, Calcichew D3 tablets, you either suck or chew them. Evidently the D3 is got a vitamin also; instead of it being a calcichew on its own, it's got also a vitamin as well. Besides those two tablets, I am on dispersible aspirin to thin the blood down. Also, I'm on Coproxamol four times daily when I had a lot of back pain, and that's what they said it was the osteoporosis. Also, isosorbide monorate, which is two a day, and I do believe that that tablet is to open the... is it the valves

or the blood vessels to allow the blood to flow? Also, Premarin, one a day, and that's just a hormone. Ramipril and Simvastatin.

What are they for?

Simvastatin is to lower the cholesterol, and Ramipril, I'm not quite... I think that's high blood pressure. And then at night time I'm on Atenolol, one at night. Also, Simvastatin, so I take the Atenolol and the Simvastatin at night time only. I also got an under active thyroid gland, of which I take Thyroxine. For the heart problem, if I'm out and I get out of breath

- (22) or I get any pain, I have a spray of which I spray one puff under the tongue, which is called a Nitrolingual spray. Also, I'm on water tablets, which is Frusemide. So, that's quite a lot of tablets, really.

Yeah, I've just been counting - that's a dozen kinds of tablets, and that's in addition to having your insulin?

Yeah! Yes, that's right, so that's about a dozen tablets plus the insulin four times a day, which I find the four times a day used to be hard, 'cause I couldn't remember... At first I only used to do it in the morning and at teatime, and now with it being four times a day, twice I forgot to take it at lunchtime. That's when I first started, but now I'm into it now, that I know that every meal that I take it. It was when I went out with my daughter, and she said "are you all right, have you done...?", and I goes "oh no, I haven't done it", so I was about an hour late in taking the lunchtime. It was only the lunchtime ones I forgot on two occasions.

How do you feel about being on all these tablets?

I wonder... sometimes I think "well, do I really need all these tablets?". But if it's doing me well - I don't see myself had any side effects with the tablets, so, therefore, they must be doing me good. If I'd have had side effects, I think I would have asked about them.

And how much contact have you had with medical profession over the years?

Quite a bit. In the forces hospitals - the slightest thing wrong with me and they took me in straight away. But now, with the civilian hospitals, because, you know, they're so busy with so many patients from all different areas - where the forces hospital just had the forces people, they had more time and more beds - but now, when I'm in the civilian life, then they do... If there was anything wrong then I'm sure that they would take me in and do the treatment that I needed, but I find it very hard

- (23) to know the difference between the two hospitals. And I think it's because there's so many people to be seen in different areas - it's just not one part of the country, because people travel a lot to get heart things done, and, you know. The only thing that I worry about is... what I wouldn't like to happen to me would be to have anything wrong with my kidneys, so I'm hoping that my kidneys will last out a lot longer. I would hate to be

or have to go on dialysis. That's one of my fears since I've been really tiny and I've watched the television, and I see all these people on these dialysis machines and think "oh, I hope nothing goes wrong with my kidneys".

Have you noticed any differences in the way medical staff have treated you over the years?

No, not really. I found in the forces hospital, the nurses were there all the time. They was always in the ward or in the section doing things repeatedly. But I found... I'd been in a civilian hospital, and you could go from the day room and walk around, and you wouldn't see... there may be only two nurses on, when I'd been used to six or eight nurses, male and female nurses, in the forces hospital. But yet it's cut down so much now that you only see about two nurses in a civilian hospital, and then one at the desk, so there'd be three. They're doing a lot more work, nowadays, to just, you know, odd number of nurses.

Have you noticed any difference in the way they relate to you?

Really... to relate - they don't seem as though they have time, because if a patient is ill and they've got to monitor them, then they seem to be around that patient quite frequently. And the other patients - they may be in for their foot or their arm or whatever - and it's... you're just there and you're fed, and till the doctors come round, you just might see a nurse every so often. But at least they are there for the people that are being needed and cared for, that's got something dramatically wrong with them.

(24) Have you noticed any differences in the National Health Service over the last decades?

The only thing I've found - it's being so used to like the forces hospital. If there was any little thing wrong with you, you was in, but I mean in only matter about a week or four weeks and you would be in the hospital. But I find that if there's anything wrong now, unless it's a breast lump removal or something that's urgent, then you can wait for quite a few months before even being sent an appointment. And then when you get the appointment, it will be another two or three months, when you get the letter, before you are actually seen by anybody. So, therefore, if that's the case of waiting so many months before you get a letter, then another couple of months before you're seen, it could be another however long on a waiting list before you've actually got your problem seen to.

How has your diabetes been in recent years?

Well, I've had two bad hypos. I've had a few in the night time, of where my husband's found me and I've been sweating, and he's thought "oh no, Margaret's having a hypo". But there is a Glucagon injection that can be put into the arm now, but before these came out, when John found me sweating, he used to try and get some sweet liquid down me, like lemonade or something like that. But if I was so unconscious... and when I come round from the unconsciousness I used to tell John "please don't give me fizzy drink, because I feel as though

you're trying to choke me", because the fizziness and trying to swallow, I could choke. Because, when I actually come round, my nightdress, my face is covered with all this sticky lemonade, all down the front of me where he's been trying to get it into my mouth. And when he's got so much down me and he say "drink, drink", and he's managed to get some in, and then I start to come round. Then he'll go and get me some cereal or something like that.

- (25) Another hypo I had was where I'd been into Thame, shopping, one Tuesday - it was a market day. I'd come home and I'd vacuumed all the downstairs, and I thought "ooh, I feel a bit hungry", so I thought "well, what I'll do is I'll get my lunch ready". So, I got my salad, my ham and my bread all ready to eat on a tray. And I thought "oh no, if I just do the stairs and up in the bedrooms, I've finished, and I can put the vacuum away; I don't have to sit downstairs with the vacuum out. I'll just quickly go upstairs and do the bedrooms". So, I carried the Vax up the stairs and started doing the bedrooms. Then, I remember going into my own bedroom, and then I can't remember anything. Everything... I just can't remember. And I remember coming round and thinking "oh no, I'm not feeling right", and I saw something white in front of me, and actually I thought I was in the doctor's surgery where the couches are, with the white blanket. And I thought "well, what am I doing int' doctors surgery? I can't be int' doctor's surgery". And then I don't remember again, and then another flashback, and I grabbed hold of this white sheet, or whatever I thought... And I grabbed hold of it, and I thought "oh", and it was flashing, and I thought "I'm in my own bedroom", and I thought "oh no, my sugar's gone too low, I'm not well". And I was laid on the floor, and I thought "oh dear, how can I get somebody to help me?" - I couldn't get myself up from the floor. And I remember that I'd got a Glucagon injection in the bottom of the bed, in the drawer. I managed to pull the drawer out and get the Glucagon kit out, and how I managed to get the liquid into the tablet and draw it up, I'll never know, but I managed to jab it into my arm
- (26) and press it, and it went in. And I got myself rested up against the bed, and I lay there for a good ten, fifteen minutes, and I started to slightly come round. My head was buzzing round, and I thought "oh dear". And it was twelve o'clock when I went up, just to finish the vacuuming upstairs. And I managed to pull myself along the landing and bump myself down each step, until I managed to get down to the bottom step of the stairs. I dragged myself up onto the end of the banister pole and grab hold on the wall, and walk along the wall into the kitchen, to see that my dinner, or salad - ham salad - was still there. I looked at the microwave clock, and saw it said three o'clock in the afternoon. And I thought "oh, I went up at twelve o'clock, 'cause I'd done my lunch". So, three hours later I managed to eat my lunch. I pulled a chair out and sat myself down to eat my lunch, but the Glucagon injection was already working, that I managed to eat my lunch. At that time, my daughter had had a day off work, as it was a day off, 'cause she works Saturdays as well. And she knocked on the door and



came in and saw me, and she says “are you all right, what’s the matter?”. And all one side of my face was looked as though I’d had a stroke - it’d all hung on one side. Whether it was because I was laid on the floor in the bedroom and it had pressed against my face... but it did look quite funny at the time.

- (27) And then, earlier this year, I had another bad hypo. And that was also, I’d been out, I’d cleaned up before I went out, and I’d gone into the Thame. And I’d walked round and round and round, doing the shopping, carrying heavy shopping with me. I came home, and I thought “oh, I do feel tired”. I came in the house and sat in the armchair, and I thought “oh, I’m so tired”. And that’s what it feels... now I react that when I feel really, really tired, I need something to eat. It just as though your body seeps, and you get really, really tired, and really, really tired. And I should have realised and gone and got something to eat, but I thought “oh no, I’ll just sit here a moment”, and I must’ve either gone to sleep or I’d gone unconscious. The next I remember is waking up, or coming round, with my head on one shoulder, and all wet round my mouth, where my mouth had... saliva had been dripping from my mouth. And I tried to lift my head up, and found it quite heavy to hold up. I thought, “oh no, it’s a hypo, and there’s nobody about”. And then I could hear children playing in the background, and I thought “oh, my neighbour’s at home”. So, I tried to shout: “Teresa! Teresa!”, my mouth got louder: “Teresa!”, because it’s very hard to be able to speak; to make your brain call somebody. And I shouted and I shouted as loud as I could, but couldn’t be heard. I waited for a moment, and thought “I’ve got to do something myself”. I leant myself forward till I fell on the floor, of which my husband had laid a
- (28) wooden flooring, which was slippery. I dragged and pulled myself round the chair, dragging myself into the kitchen, thinking “I’ve got to get something out of the cupboard”. I was unable to stand up, and I grabbed hold of a knob of the kitchen cupboard, at ground level, and pulled it open, as I do cakes. And I saw a little jar of glycerine, or glucose syrup, so I knocked all the tins out of the way to grab hold of the glucose syrup in this jar. Managed to pull myself back, but still laid on the floor, unscrewed the top - very difficult to do - and put my fingers in, and try and wipe it across my mouth, ’cause my hand was all wobbly. And I just wiped it into my mouth, all the glucose syrup, and it was just like treacle, all wiped all over my face, all down my front. And I lay there, I don’t remember anything else for the moment, and I lay there for another five or ten minutes. And then I started to feel slightly better, still not being able to stand up, dragged myself back into the room, because I could hear the children playing outside. The door was ajar, into the hall, and I dragged myself into the hall and rested myself against the radiator, waiting and waiting until I felt strong enough to be able to pull myself up at the radiator and the door latch... so that I could just release the door catch. I managed to do it, after a while, and the door was ajar. Then I shouted the little boy next door, and he went and got his

mother, and I knew I was safe then - that somebody knew I was there.

Do you feel unsafe now?

Now, I tend to put... thinking to myself, if I was upstairs, I've got the Glucagon in the drawer of the bottom of the bed. And I hadn't realised, before, that you're not able to stand, because you're like, like I say, you're like a spastic person that's just got no control over their muscles at all. And your arms and your legs just fly about, and it's just impossible to stand at all. And now I keep a packet of glucose tablets where the glucose syrup was, so that if I'm in that difficulty and am able to pull myself there and get something straight away.

(29) How does your husband cope with your diabetes?

My husband copes very well with it, really. Generally he... once he's left home he doesn't worry about me at all, because he says he can't worry about me, because it would stop him doing his job correctly. He knows that in any circumstances, whether it was to pull the phone off the hook and shout down 999, or whatever, that I'd be all right. Because John leaves home very, very early in the morning, when I used to have the hypos in the early hours of the morning - one or two o'clock - then he'd say sometimes that... Now he's learnt to give this Glucagon injection. 'Cause John didn't like needles at all, and I said "you must, instead of trying to pour syrup liquid down me, please give this injection, and you'll have no worries with me that I will come around in about fifteen minutes". So, I don't know what happened, but one night he couldn't wake me, he couldn't get any liquid down me at all, so he managed to read the label inside the Glucagon and he managed to put it in to my arm. And then I remember seeing a bright light, and John says I was sort of moaning when I was coming around. But he said that when I haven't quite gone really unconscious, if he tried to give me a drink or anything, in the previous before the Glucagon came out, I would fight him. Not knowing, my arms would be flying about, and he says he used to think "oh dear", you know, as though I was going to hit him. And he'd say "come on, drink this lemonade, drink, open your mouth, drink!". "No, I'm all right, go away!", I used to say, "Go away!", and my arms used to fling out, and he used to hate it. He used to say "do you know?" he says. I says "oh", I says "oh, I've had a hypo again, haven't I?", and he says "yes, you have", he said, "I've been up for

(30) last hour and a half, trying to get you round". And it was so difficult for him, and I thought, you know, and it kept him out of his sleep, because I mean he leaves quite early in the morning. I mean, one time it happened about three o'clock in the morning, and he'd got to leave the house for about six o'clock, so to get back to sleep and then re-wake up again, it was quite hard. But he says "do you know you was flinging your arm?", and I don't remember anything at all. I don't even remember saying, you know... only when I'm sort of coming round, and my brain's knowing what I want to say but it comes out very strange.

Do the doctors have anything to say about these dramatic hypos?

They don't like me to have these low... I've never, never had high readings, not to the extent of where it's hyper-thyrisim. Evidently, it's said to take a few days. The sugar goes higher and higher and higher, and you gradually get tired and then go into a coma. But I've never had them high. My problem is them going too low, whether I've been out and my lunch has not been on time, or I've not stopped in the middle of the day and thought "I'll have a Rich Tea and I'll have a drink". Perhaps I've been busy in doing something, and I've thought "oh, I'll just get this done, I'll just get this done", not realising that the time was moving on. And yeah, that's the main problem. The doctors said that with this injections that I have now - three in the day time and the fourth one at night - that it would level the sugars levels out a lot better, which it has, and they're slightly higher. So, therefore, it's done well, instead of having high and then dropping low. Also, I found out recently - that I never knew in all the years I've had diabetes - was when the sugar drops very low - I've had it go down to one-point-seven and one-point-nine - and I didn't know that your own body - I don't know if it's the liver, now,

- (31) I don't know - it's something that makes your body, like, respond, to make the sugar go high, which I never knew; never ever knew that in all these years. And then when I come to test my sugar, when it's been one-point-seven or one-point-nine, you can guarantee that the next one that I'll take is about fifteen, because it's shot up really high. And I never knew, in all that time, that that's what the body actually did, because I couldn't understand why it could be one-point-nine and then it go really high.

Can you describe a typical day in your life, now?

Yeah, I quite enjoy life now. My children's... they've left home. My son's got a family, lovely family, and wife. My daughter's also got a partner, who's very nice. I get up in the morning, see my husband off to work. Not every morning, but most mornings I do - I get up at six o'clock. And then I have my injection, and my breakfast, do the housework. I also like doing cakes when it's anybody's special occasion. The only thing there is, it's this icing - rolling out the fondant icing. Now, the doctors have told me - but I can't see it myself - but the doctors have told me that it wouldn't make any difference, but I know for a fact that when I knead this glucose icing that it goes through the skin. And they said "well, do you wash your hands?". I said "yes, I do wash my hands", but it seems as though it goes in, that when I prick my finger to test the blood, it goes high. So, that's the only problem that I have, but it doesn't go, you know, really high, but it goes higher than my normal fives or sevens. I mean, it'd go to fifteen. Well, it's generally it's not... generally, you know, my sugars are quite... fives, sevens, threes, fours. But when I do any of these cakes, they tend to go up to about fifteen, so I've got to be careful on that note.

You've shown me photos of these cakes, which are really works of art. Isn't it an irony that you're

(32) diabetic and don't get to each much of them?

Well, I don't eat icing or anything like that, but at Christmas time especially - I mean I've had diabetes all this time - and I think to myself "why should I go without a mince pie or a piece of fruit cake at Christmas?". So, what I tend to do is, I think "well, I'll have a mince pie", just the pastry and the mincemeat inside, no icing sugar or no custard, nothing on it, and I really enjoy that. And I tend to give myself extra insulin to cope with the mince pie that I've had, or the piece of fruit cake that I might have over Christmas Day or Boxing Day, and I cope quite well with that.

Have you always felt that you could adjust the amount of insulin you had in that way?

No, in the earlier years I wouldn't alter the regime at all. The doctor says "you take that, you take that", and I wouldn't alter it in any way. But now, as I've got older - and I think, well I'm getting on, not too old, but I'm getting on in years now - and I think "well, I am going to have just that little bit", instead of being without all the time, thinking "no, you can't have that, you can't have this, you can't have that". And in the hospitals - now, earlier on in the forces hospitals, it was "you can't have that, you can't have this, you can't have that" - and then I went to a hospital, I think it was Pontefract at the time...

When was that?

That was in 1970, I think it'll be 1970s, yeah. Early, very early, when I'd just got diabetes, I think it would be. And they brought me, I think it was peaches, and I said "I can't eat peaches" - tinned peaches in the syrup - and I says "I'm diabetic", and I says "no, I'm not allowed to eat that". "That it what is down for you", she says, "you've got to eat...". And I thought "no", I says "I'm not allowed it, I can't eat it". And they says "oh, yes, you can you alter your regime of your

(33) insulin". "Oh no" I said, "no, I've got to keep to the same insulin. I can't be doing different things with me insulin. No, it's got to be right". So, you know, I wouldn't have it. But now, I have had a mince pie or a piece of fruit cake, or something, but altered the insulin.

Then talk me through the rest of your day, when you've done the housework or made a cake.

Generally, it's sort of cleaning up. And I like to go into Thame. I like Thame, and I walk round most of the shops. And then I think to myself this week "oh, I'll have a day out in Oxford", or then "I'll have a day out in Aylesbury", so I get myself on the bus, and then I go, you know, to the nearest shopping centres around. And then I come back, and then I start preparing a cooked dinner, 'cause with John having just snacks in the mid-day, then he tends to eat his dinner at night time. But otherwise, it's, you know, just sort of a regime that I get into. I don't have a job. I would like a job, if I could, but it's just... with the age that I am now. Also, I really don't know how people carry on with

diabetes, 'cause before, you'd say to a manager "oh, I've got an appointment at the hospital, I've got to go...". "Well, do you really need to go?", I says "oh yes, I've got to go". And now, whether in business that they're more flexi-time with the people going for their appointments and that, but years ago, it was a no-no. You couldn't have a job and keep having to go to a hospital, or check-ups at your doctor's, or prescriptions - keep getting your prescriptions, or your needles and your... You know, the doctors finish at five o'clock, and it was shut, so you had to have an hour off, or something, to get the medication that you needed.

But your cakes are better than any I've seen in shops, so I should think you could make a living from making those.

My husband said that! I've just done them for friends really, and mostly relatives. A couple of people in the street that I've done them for, otherwise it's just been aunts, uncles

(34) and my mother. But people that have seen them say "well, why don't you take it up and do some more?", but I don't know, I haven't got the confidence. If anybody asked me for something that I've never done, you know, I'd find it a challenge. But I know it would turn out, in the end, all right. You know, when I've finished cakes, people can't believe how thin the icing is on the petals of the flowers and things, 'cause generally in the shop ones, they're quite thick - the petals and things, and they are quite thick. I've seen them in Oxford itself.

What keeps you going with diabetes, and these other illnesses, and twelve lots of tablets a day?

I think, family. I haven't got any worries at the moment. John is so good. Although I would have liked to have worked a lot more, you know - I've had a couple of little jobs, working in Thame Mill Laundry for a couple of years, and they let me go to the hospital, and I really enjoyed that. It was about five hours; just a half a day, it was. And then it closed down and they knocked the building down, so that was no more, so, around Thame, there would be only shops that I could work in. So, really, I haven't got any worries. John has been very good, you know, paying all the bills and everything, so I'm quite lucky really. And, you know, the things that he's done for me: he doesn't say "you've got to go out to work", or "you've got to do this, you've got to do that", so, in that way, I'm very lucky. And I've got a nice family; that, in need of my son, his wife, or my daughter and her partner, they would be there. Just that call and I know that they would be there.

What message would you have for anyone diagnosed with diabetes now?

I would say, just listen to the doctors and the nurses. I had a very, very good... like I say, I didn't know that when my sugar dropped to one point seven or one point nine that it would kick in and make it go high again. And I only found that out in the past year, when I spoke to - I don't know whether she's a nurse or whether she's a diabetes... - she's not in uniform - a diabetes nurse that I

saw called Isobel. And I do believe... And that was... hospital... I'm trying to think what they call... the metabolic, was it the... at the Oxford Centre for Diabetes. Her name was Isobel and she was very, very good, because all the other nurses I've seen over the past years, either they've only just started or they don't understand it, or... And she told me, when I went on these new injections...

- (35) Isobel told me that, when the sugar dropped to one point seven or one point nine, that it would automatically kick in and go up, but you must always have food, although the blood sugar is climbing. And then it will read high, but don't worry about it. I says "well, I do worry, because I always keep mine about five, seven", and if it goes to fifteen, shoots up to fifteen, I think "oh, what have I done", or anything. She says "no, don't let it worry you, because it will level out again, and the main thing to do is not allow it to get down to one point seven or one point nine, because you know, now, that when it does reach those levels, that your own body will kick in and then it will shoot up high". So, I try not to let it go that low, now. And I'm also finding, as Isobel put me on this new insulin of three in the day time and one at night, is that my sugar levels was sort of seven, five, at a level. But if it drops, because they kept it sort of at a medium level, that it if drops now any lower than five, say, I realise because I feel really hungry. And before, when my sugars was too low, my body didn't realise that I needed something to eat. Because it was kept at a low level all the time, my body wasn't telling me "Margaret, you're hungry, you need something to eat", because it was too low. Because they've stepped it up to a higher level, therefore when it does drop to four, three, I think "oh, I'm hungry and I must get something to eat". Before, my body wasn't telling me that it was low.

So, do you think you're managing quite well?

Yes, I am, now. I feel a lot better. Although I didn't want to go on four injections a day, I'm coping with it, and it's a lot better regime.