

21. Ron Craythorne

(1) Tell me about your parents.

My father was carpenter and joiner, and he served apprenticeship seven years, and then the firm that he served his apprenticeship finished, so then he started his own business. And he run that for, well, from when he started to when he died, and then I took over at twenty-nine, and then I've run it till now. And then I've just retired now, so the firm is actually finished, 'cause there's nobody else to carry it on.

Did you learn from your father when you were a child?

Yes, I served apprenticeship with him, 'cause we served five years, and Dad did a seven year apprenticeship. But now they do about two years now, but, as I say, when I did apprenticeship, it was five years.

Tell me about your schooling.

My schooling - I went to the ordinary juniors at Burbage, then we moved to the infants... from the infants to the next stage up, and then I went to Westfield boys' school, then, till I left school. And then I did two years at the Tech on the building side for the carpentry and joinery.

What was your mother doing all this time? Was she working?

No, mother was a nurse. And then, when she married, obviously, she'd got the three children to look after, and at that time, women didn't work like they do now. So mother stopped at home and did the cleaning and cooking and made clothes and that, and then looked after us while we were at home.

How did you come to be diagnosed and when?

Well, I was diagnosed February the sixth, 1951. And the doctor was our local doctor, but he picked it up pretty well straight away, 'cause sometimes, now, it takes them a long time to diagnose it, but our doctor picked it up pretty well straight away. So, as I say, I was diagnosed pretty well straight away.

What were you symptoms?

Well, thirsty and drinking a lot of water and losing weight.

Had there been any diabetes in your family?

Well, according to looking back, me grandfather had it, but at that time they hadn't got the insulin, so I think that's really what killed him. But there was no insulin or anything about, and then before then, it was a killer. But now, with the insulin and that, it's -

(2) if people do as they're told - it's no trouble at all to live with it.

Were you admitted to hospital?

No, they sorted it out. And mother, being a good cook and that, she'd got all the diets and that, and sorted out what I could have and what I couldn't have, and she worked it out. And then we went to see the specialist, Dr Joan Walker, at Leicester Royal Infirmary, and she told mother what to do with the diet and how to sort it out and that, and we sort of took it from there, and I didn't have to go into hospital.

So how did you learn about injections and monitoring your sugar?

Well that, injections, it was just with the syringe, and they used to have a plunger and that, but I couldn't get on with the plunger. And then the diabetic nurse came round and showed me how to inject and that. And then, as I say, they were long needles at that time, but you get used to it and you just have to put up with it. But now, the needles are that much better that it's no trouble at all.

You say the diabetic nurse. Was this a specialist diabetic nurse in 1951?

Yes, they were diabetic specialist nurses, 'cause they still are now. They go round, and anybody got any problem, you can ring the clinic up, and the diabetic specialist nurse will come round and give you a hand and advise you where you're going wrong and what to do to put it right.

Can you remember how you were taught to do injections?

No, not really. It was just... you just got to pinch your flesh and just stick the needle in, so it was just trial and error and get on with it.

What about monitoring blood sugar?

Well, blood tests, it was... they weren't blood tests then, it was urine testing. And the thing is with that, you couldn't get it that accurate, so it was a job to keep it dead right, whereas now, with the blood testing strips, you can get it dead on, and you know exactly where you are and what to do with it. And with having more injections now, if you're high or low, you can adjust your food and insulin to what you need to do to keep you right.

Most people I've spoken to, who were diagnosed as early as 1951, were admitted to hospital, sometimes for weeks. Do you think it worked well without your being admitted to hospital?

Yes, I've got no problems at all with it. No, it worked out. You see, as I say, I was playing sport and that, and it was just a case of having extra

- (3) food and that, something sweet before you played sport, and then just testing as I was told to do. And I didn't go into hospital at all with it, so it just sorted out all right. Whether I was just lucky, or whether it's with my mother looking after me so well for a start.

Did you go straight back to school?

Yes, I can't remember having any time off for it, no.

Can you remember how you coped at school?

Well, the thing is, the children now, they don't seem to want to do as they're told, but, I mean, our age, if you were told to do something, you did it and you didn't argue. So, I mean, what I was told to do, I did, and got on with it. And, as I say, it's never really affected me, because, I mean, I've lasted fifty three years with it, so, I mean, if you do as you're told, it's no trouble. But, you see, the youngsters now, they want to be in a crowd and they don't want to be different, and that. But, I mean, you're not different really, but you've just got to watch what you're doing, and remember to eat your food and take your injection and that, and stick to what you've got to do.

You mentioned sport. What sports were you doing when you were at school?

Well, I played football and cricket, and did quite a bit of cycling. We used to go cycling, perhaps eighty miles a day, on tours to different places. We were in a cycling club, and the club drew out leaflets and that, where they were going to, and if you wanted to go, you could go pretty well anywhere. And they run this club through the summer, and they even went out in the winter. I can remember going out in the winter one year, and it was that cold that everything froze. And we had a job to get back, really, because we were... it was foggy as well, and we were following the road, and we were going in and out the kerbs round driveways, because it was that bad we couldn't see in front of us. But we managed to get back all right.

And how did you manage to combine so much cycling and other sports with your diabetes?

Well, at that time, I was only having two injections a day, so you had one injection in the morning and then one at night. So, you know during the day what food you wanted, and if - you could usually tell whether you were low or not - so if you were low, you just had a bit extra or a bit of chocolate or a sweet or something sweet, just to tide you over and pick you back up again. And then, when you got home then, you'd sort out what had happened, and then you know, then, whether you're right or wrong again. But when I was diagnosed, we'd got a cycling tour arranged, going youth hostelling round the country. And we was doing it in the summer holiday, so it didn't affect school, and we got this booked up to go round. And when I was diagnosed, my mother said "ooh, you can't do that, 'cause of your injections and food and that, and you'll be away for so long", so I had to forfeit that one and I couldn't go on that. But I still went out the odd days, so that I was back at night, so that it didn't affect anything.

And did you manage to go on tours subsequently?

Pardon?

Did you manage to go on tours after that?

No, we only went out for the days. We didn't go out longer than a day.

(4) How did people at school react to your having diabetes?

Well, they just accepted it, and you got on with it. I mean, you've got to do what you've got to do, and, I mean, it didn't really bother me what other people thought or said, 'cause I knew what I'd got to do. And I just got on with it, 'cause it was for my benefit and nobody else's. So, you've just got to look after yourself and get on with it.

But diabetes wasn't so common in those days, so can you remember how the staff or other pupils reacted?

Oh, one or two of the lads used to look at you, and back away as though it was catchable, but apart from that, the staff and that didn't really take any notice, 'cause I didn't tell anybody at that time. 'Cause, I mean, now, the more people you tell, if there's anything wrong, they've got more chance of putting it right. But at that time, I was pretty lucky and I could look after meself pretty well. And with having reactions and that - my eyesight went a bit blurred, so I knew that I was low - so, I mean, all I'd got to do was just have a bit extra food to bring me back on level plain again.

Can you remember the first diet you were put on?

Well, no, not really. It was... everything had to be weighed. We'd got a small set of scales, which I've still got, and we used to have to weigh the food and that, for a start, to get your carbohydrates right. But once you get used to it and that, you look at a portion and you can tell whether it's about what you want. So you didn't, once you got used to looking at it and guessing the weight, you could about guess it dead on, so you didn't really bother weighing anything.

Were all the instructions just about carbohydrates or about other kinds of food?

Well, that's right, because dairy products were "free"; you didn't have to bother with them. I mean, cheese - you could eat as much cheese as you liked, and beetroot and anything like that, where there was no carbohydrates with it. It was all extra, so you could just fill yourself up with what you wanted, and it didn't count for any carbohydrates. But you'd just got to be careful with the bread and potatoes, which were your main carbohydrates. So once you'd had that, if you were still hungry, as I say, I used to cut a lump of cheese and bit of beetroot and just fill up like that.

Was that a big change for you?

Well, not really, because when I was at school, I mean, a lot of children, they eat no end of chocolates and stuff like that, but I didn't bother with sweets and chocolate and that. So really, I didn't miss not being able to have it, 'cause I'd never been used to eating it.

Tell me about leaving school.

Well, when I left school, I went to the Tech for two years full-time, 'cause I was apprentice carpenter and joiner. So, I did two years full time at the Tech, and then started me apprenticeship course after. So, it was just the same again, the Tech. I mean, you told people you'd got it, but it didn't really bother anybody,

because everybody had got their own problems, like they have now, and you just get on with it and you don't bother with anything.

And did you manage to keep yourself quite stable while you were at work?

Yes, pretty well. I had one or two hypos, but whoever I was working with knew what the trouble was, so if I did go too low and that, they'd soon get me a bit of sugar and water and that. And that soon brings you round and brings you back on level pegging again.

Did your kind of work combine well with having diabetes?

Well, not really, because if you've got an office job, you know exactly what you're doing. But with carpentry and joinery, one day you can be doing a load of work, and then another day, you're not doing so much but you're thinking more about it, so obviously you don't use as much energy. So, it was a job to gauge it just right, because it varied so much with different days with what you were doing.

Did you vary the dosage of insulin at all?

No, I usually kept the insulin the same, but I varied the food a bit, so that I could balance it out with that. I used to have more carbohydrates if I needed it, and then that balanced it out, so that I kept pretty well level.

(5) Did you have much contact with the medical profession during your early years of diabetes?

Well, actually, I saw Dr Joan Walker at Leicester Infirmary, and she was ever so good. And she said, like, I was one of the earliest ones she'd had and she looked on me as one of her babies. But she, when we did the tests and that, she kept saying "oh, you're a bit high this time" and "you're a bit high" - 'cause it varied, I was up and down. And then I said "well, I'd had a cold", and she said "oh, that's funny, you've had no end of colds, haven't you?". She said "I think we'd better do a nose x-ray and see what's happening", so I said "oh". And anyway, after that, I never had another cold, 'cause really I'd used a cold as a good excuse for being a bit high, because, I mean, usually I was high and that, and I balanced out pretty well. But sometimes I was high, and, as I say, when I went to the Infirmary, it was a good excuse to say that I'd had a cold, when I hadn't.

Did you feel guilty if you were a bit high?

No, because with testing as it was, you couldn't be that accurate with it, and usually you try and keep it as best you can. But now, it's a lot more better because it's more modern with the blood sugars, and you can keep a more accurate check on it. But, at that time, it wasn't that accurate and you didn't know whether you were up or down with it.

How often did you see Dr Walker?

About every six months, unless there was something that she wasn't happy with, and then I went more, but usually it was about every six months.

What was she like?

Oh, she was smashing, 'cause we... she retired then, 'cause she'd been on the panel for years, and then she retired and she went down to Lyme Regis. And I said to the district nurse that I'd had a bit of trouble, and I rang her up a time or two, and said to her about Dr Walker, and she said "oh, she's down at Lyme Regis". So I said "do you think she'd mind if we called and seen her?", and she said "no, I bet she wouldn't". So, we were down that end in Dorset, and I said to my wife "we'll go round and see if we can find Dr Walker". And we went on the front and found the house and knocked on the door, and she'd got a housekeeper then, because she was about eighty-eight, going up for ninety, and knocked on the door, and said "is it possible to see Dr Walker?". And she said "well, I don't know, I'll have a word with her". She said "who are you?", I said "well, I was one of her patients at Leicester Infirmary years ago", she said "oh, I'll have a word with her". So, she went and had a word with her, and Dr Walker said "oh, bring them in and let's have a look". And when I went in, she said "oh, I remember you, you were one of me youngsters, weren't you? You were the lad that the parents were in the building trade", and I said "yeah", and we had quite a chat and that. She made us a cup of coffee, and we stopped with her for a good hour, and we had a real good old talk.

What was so good about the way she treated you?

Well, she was straightforward, and you could understand what she was on about. And she didn't look down at you, and she just treated you as a normal person, and tried to help you if you were in trouble. And she was ever so good; she was a really good doctor.

Would she have ticked you off if she felt you weren't doing the right thing?

Ooh, definitely, yes. She had no... she'd got a good idea what was

- (6) going on in the long term, but she was quite good, but she soon put you right if you weren't doing as she was told. And I tried to do as I was told, because, I mean, it was for my benefit and not for hers. So, you do as you're told and try to do your best, and I think you get on a lot better then.

You mentioned the district nurse. How much contact did you have with district nurses in the early years of diabetes?

Well, district nurses that... the one that we had was quite good. And if you'd got any trouble, you could ring them up and tell them what the problem was, and if they were out in the area they'd come round and see you and sort your problem out while you were with them. And it was quite helpful, really. And then the next time, then, when you went to see the doctor, they'd tell the doctor what had happened and you could take it from there, and then sort it out as you went along.

Can you explain how district nurses helped you?

Well, the district nurse would know what insulin you were on. And if you tell her what your problem was, she'd either tell you whether to adjust your insulin, or you could explain what food you were having, and they'd explain then whether you wanted an extra lunch or whether you wanted to cut some food out or whether you wanted more insulin. So, you could adjust your insulin to what they said, and then if it didn't work out, you could give her ring and say "well, look, I'm not happy, it's not working out", and she'd come round and see you again, and then either adjust it a bit more or alter your food and that. And it was quite helpful really, 'cause it saved making an appointment to go in to see the specialist diabetic doctor.

Did the district nurses seem to know a lot about diabetes?

Oh yes, they did. I think they knew as much as the doctors did, because, I mean, they were actually working with the doctor in the clinic, so they knew exactly what was happening. So they were really specialised in it, and they knew exactly what was happening, and they'd been on courses and that with it, because they specialised in diabetes.

(7) Tell me about meeting your wife.

Well, we met at a dance club, and we went to this dance club regular. And we started courting then, and then I told her that I was diabetic. Well, then she came over home with me once or twice and had meals and that, and then me mother explained what to do with the food and how to look after me with the food and that. And, I mean, actually, we've been married forty-six years, and she looks after me brilliant, 'cause without her help, I shouldn't be half as well as what I am now.

Is that really true? I mean, how has she made you more well, then?

Well, because if I walk in and she'll say "oh, you're a funny colour", and you know you want a biscuit then. But, I mean, sometimes I can't tell that I'm a bit low, but, I mean, she's only got to look at me and say "oh, you want a biscuit", and straightaway, and then I'm okay, I'm fine then.

When did you get married?

1958. And we had two children, one fairly early on, two years after, and then another one three years after, so. Both girls: Sarah and Sue. And they've been brilliant. They know all about it, right from an early age, that if I wasn't right and that, they knew what to do. So, I mean, they've looked after me as well, as well as me wife.

Have you ever been completely out with a hypo?

Yes, once or twice I've been out. I collapsed on the floor in the dining room and nobody was about. And the wife had been out and she didn't come back till six o'clock at night, and when she came in, I was flat out on the floor.

So what happened then?

Well, she just gave me sugar and brought me round. Now that they've got like a glucose strip that you can put underneath your tongue and it dissolves, 'cause when I had... when I used to take sugar, you naturally don't want sugar, because you know you're not suppose to have it, so you spit it out all over the place. But with this glucose, it just melts under your tongue and you don't know you've had it, and it soon brings you round. On another occasion, I had a hypo in the middle of the night, and the wife couldn't bring me round, so she rang the doctor up. And the doctor came round and he gave me an injection, glucose injection, and I started to come round. Well, when you start to come round, you can't get your words out properly, and the first words I said was "fancy bringing him out at this time of night", and the doctor looked at me. And anyway, when he went, the wife said "that wasn't very good of you, was it?", and I said "well, fancy having to fetch him out in the middle of the night". So, I went round the next day and apologised to him, and said "I'm sorry for what I said to you", and he said "oh that's all right". He said "you look a bit better than you did last night", and he said "don't worry about it; it's all part of the job"!

Did you find that GPs knew much about diabetes in those early days?

Well, actually, I didn't really get involved with GPs, because it was easier to get hold of the diabetic nurse, so I could usually ask them. So really, I don't think they did know a lot about it at that time. But if there was any problem, I went straight to the diabetic nurse, and if there was any problem then, you could get to see the diabetic doctor. So really, I don't think they did know much about it then.

(8) Can you describe your life with young children?

Well, we went on holiday and that, and we took them swimming, and did most things that you normally do with children, so it didn't really affect me. And I played a lot of sport, 'cause when I was diagnosed at fifteen, I was ever so interested in cricket. And I said to me father about it, "I shan't be able to play cricket because of the afternoon tea and that", and he said "well, I know the electrician that does the work, he's diabetic and he plays cricket", he says "I'll have a word with him". So, he came round to see me, and he says "no", he says "don't worry", he says "you play your sport all right, but", he says "always take some sugar or something with you, so if you need it, you can have it while you're playing". So, I carried on playing cricket, and I played cricket from fifteen till I was sixty two, and I didn't miss any games at all. And it didn't really affect me at all, because you could tell whether you were all right or not. And then, 'cause the tea was at a special time, well, if it didn't suit you, you could have a bit extra before you had your tea, and then adjust your tea to suit what you'd been doing.

What kind of teams did you belong to?

Well, we played South Leicestershire league cricket and I played in division one. And that year we played in that, I won the batting average in that, so I was quite pleased at that, because I was thirty two that year. But then I've played up and



down the leagues in the South Leicestershire, and played friendlies, because we used to play most weekends.

Any other sports?

I started playing badminton when I was thirty six, and I played that till I was sixty five, but I've just had to give that up now, because I'm not very well at the minute with me shoulder, so I can't really play at the minute. But I'm hoping to get back to it, 'cause I played quite a high standard at badminton.

Football?

Football I played till I was twenty-two when I was married, and then, with the energetic side of that, I didn't fancy that much, so I gave that up when I got married.

And how energetic has your work been for most of your career?

Well, it's been really energetic, because you can be fencing one day, digging post holes and working away at that, and then another day you could be doing flooring, and then another day you could be doing wardrobes. So, you can be doing all sorts of jobs, and you've just got to adjust and have extra food if you're doing extra hard work, and then not have so much food if you're not doing so much hard work.

And how did your diabetes develop? Were there any complications?

- (9) Well, actually, I've done well, really. I've not had anything wrong with me at all, and I can still read the paper without me specs now, so it's not really affected my eyesight or anything, so, really, I've been very lucky. But, I think if you look after yourself and do as you're told, the doctors - it's not for their benefit, it's for your benefit - so if you don't do as you're told, you can't expect them to help you, but if you help yourself, they'll help you.

Do you think your work has kept you fit?

Oh definitely, because I've had such a variety. We've built houses complete, doing the woodwork, right through from floor joists and putting the roofs on, where at that time, there weren't trusses and that; everything was done by hand, and you had to do it by hand on site. And then you go through floor boarding, screw it in, fitting doors and doing the job right through. And then other work, you just do odd jobs - fitting wardrobes and fencing and flooring, and anything to do with woodwork, we did. With doing a small firm, we did every job there was to do that was involved with wood. And actually, now, people seem to specialise in one particular job. They specialise in kitchens or wardrobes or doors or roofs or one particular item, whereas when we did the job, you did everything involved with wood, right the way through. You didn't specialise in anything, 'cause you could turn your hand and do anything, 'cause it was no trouble. You were used to doing it, so it just came natural.

So, do you miss it?

I do, really. I still do odd bits and bobs, but I only do small now, because I'm retiring age, so I just do small jobs, but nothing very big. But I definitely miss it. And I've taken up woodturning now, and I enjoy doing that, and we do shows. We've done, for five years, we've done shows for charity, and we raise quite a lot of money for them, and we do one every year. And then we're involved with three wood turning clubs, so we go round and see different professionals demonstrating, and we pick different ideas up, and then we do them at our show that we hold in the workshop. And we open it up once every year to raise money for charity.

What kinds of things do you turn?

I turn fruit bowls, goblets, vases, anything.

(10) Can you tell me about your work with charities?

Well, we've been involved with the Leicestershire Hospice for about five years, doing charity work for the woodturning and that. But my wife's been involved with it for a lot longer than that, and she helps out at the charity shop in Castle Street, where they sell stuff that goes to the hospice. So, she's been involved with it a lot longer than me, but we've done it with the woodturning for the last five years.

Have you helped with any diabetic charities?

Well, actually, we formed a diabetic club for the local Hinckley area ten years ago, and we're just coming up to our tenth year now, so we formed the club ten years ago. And we've done charity work and that, to raise money for diabetes. And we meet every month and have different speakers come, and the club is involved with raising money for diabetes, to help people with it.

How did you set about setting up a group?

Well, there was quite a few people interested in a group, because a lot of new people that are diagnosed say they don't get help at hospitals, and they don't know what to do. So a lot of us that have had it a long time can advise people what the best thing to do, and to try and help them to get them on the right way, and not get too downhearted. 'Cause it's like everything: if you've got something, you've just got to live with it and get on with it, and do the best you can.

Did you advertise for members?

Well, we advertised for members, but I think you only get the certain few that are interested. It's like every charity and that. People, if they're interested, will come on it, but those that aren't interested don't want to get involved. So, we've picked quite a few members up that are really involved and help out at the charity dos to help raise money, but a lot of the people just come to the meetings and aren't involved with anything else.

You said that some of the more recently diagnosed people feel that they don't get enough information from the hospitals, but you felt, when you were diagnosed, you got a huge amount of help. Do you think that's a change?

Well, I think so, because when I first had it, I think the doctors hadn't got so many patients to look after, and there was just diabetic specialist doctor, whereas now, the General Practitioners do a lot of the work for diabetes. And to me, it's not right, because they don't really understand completely about diabetes, because everybody's different. You talk to members in the group, and everybody... it seems to affect everybody different, so I think everybody wants different treatment. But if the doctor doesn't know about it, they can't really treat it.

(11) What changes have you noticed in the National Health Service over the years?

Well, actually, I had a bit of bother two years ago. I went out to see me daughter's... well, we went out to see me daughter at Leek, and I said I didn't feel very well. Well, I came back Sunday night and I didn't want anything to eat, which is unusual, 'cause I usually have my supper and that. And I didn't want anything to eat, and I didn't feel very well at all. Well, they hold a clinic, Monday, at a diabetic clinic, so I said "I'll go round and see the doctor Monday morning". So, I went round to see the doctor Monday morning, and said I wasn't very well and I didn't know what the matter was, and the doctor came out and saw me. And he said "oh no", he said "you're not right". He says "I'll get you into my clinic at the Infirmary". So, they rushed me off to the infirmary, and they did a test on me, and I was fifty five. So, what they did was, then, I was on an insulin drip for about three days, without any food or water, and then they managed to get it down to a reasonable level. And then they sent me home, then. But really, that was a good help, because I didn't know what was wrong, and I couldn't understand why it was so high. And I couldn't get a reading on my blood monitor, but no wonder I couldn't, 'cause, as I say, it was fifty five.

And, have you noticed any changes between when you were first diagnosed and, say, that episode you've just described?

Well, actually, when I was first diagnosed, if you'd got any trouble, you could ring a district nurse up, the specialist diabetic nurse, and she'd come round and have a word with you. But now, if you've got any trouble, you can't ring anybody up at home. You've just got the works number and you've got to hope that somebody will get back to you, and they don't always get back to you. So, if you've got problems, they can't really sort it out like they could when they'd got more time and they could spend more time with you.

And has anything changed in what happens when you go to visit the hospital?

Well, you have to wait longer to see the doctor. But really, I've been going that long now, me notes are that thick, that it doesn't really affect me a lot. But some of them say they don't get time to see the doctor, and when they see him,

he doesn't advise them what's wrong and what to do and that. And there was somebody at the meeting the other week was on about that they'd got to have insulin, and nobody had showed them how to use a syringe or a needle or what to do with it. So, I think, really, it's slipped back a bit, because obviously they haven't got the time to spend with you as they used to have. But Dr McNally, I find, at Hinckley hospital, and he's branched at Leicester Infirmary but he holds a clinic at Hinckley every Monday, and he's ever so good, 'cause if you've got problems with him, he'll listen to you. And he's really helpful, and he can really advise you and put you right on where you're going wrong. And he's really brilliant at his job, Dr McNally is.

For the benefit of any medical students listening - well, doctors or nurses - what advice would you give to them, then, to be good at their job?

Well, I think to listen to what the patient's got to say, and try and look interested and try and help them. And another doctor I saw - I usually go with me wife, because if there's any trouble with the food, she can sort out what's wanted, and we know, then, between us what's wanted. And we walked in to see this particular doctor, and we both sat down, and the doctor said "who's the diabetic?", so I said "well, I am", so he turned round to the wife, and he says "do you mind waiting outside then till we've done?". And I think, really, that's a very bad idea, because the wife usually comes in, because she usually does the food and knows exactly what I'm eating and what's wanted. And I think it's a good thing for both of you to sort out what's best for you.

(12) Tell me about the experiences of some of the other people in your local diabetic group.

Well, actually, there's one lady, that's on her own, that had a hypo in the middle of the night. And she went to get up, and fell out of bed and broke her ankle. So, she had to have that in plaster, and with being on her own, it made it ever so awkward. So, she tends to look on it now, that she'd sooner be a bit high when she goes to bed, to make sure that she gets through the night on her own, 'cause she's got nobody to look after her.

Are most of your members quite positive about the health service?

Well, I think there's one or two that grumble about it, 'cause you don't seem to... a lot of people say they don't seem to see the same doctor every time. Well, the trouble is, if you don't see the same doctor - I know the notes are down and that - but the same doctor knows who you are and what you've been doing and that. And I've been very lucky, really, and seen the same Dr McNally every time I go, 'cause I usually have to see if I can see him, and then he knows exactly what you're doing and where you're going. Whereas if you see a different doctor, I can't understand how they can know about you without seeing you before.

And is it important that they should know about you, things that are not in your notes?

I think, definitely. If you know a person, you get to know them, and then you

know exactly how they're coping with it and what they can do to help. Whereas, if you don't know the person, you don't know what their attitude is, and whether they're positive or whether they're not. So, if you don't see the same doctor, I don't see how they can understand what you're going through. There's one lad in our group that has been type one diabetic for a long time, and he does triathlon and he does marathons, and he's done the marathon to raise money for the diabetic juniors. But he doesn't eat food; it's all fuel. He looks upon his food as fuel. And when he's out running, he knows exactly when he wants something to eat, and he takes a special bag with his food in that's prepared to cope with what energy he's using. So, on triathlon and his running, he knows exactly when he wants to eat and what to eat, and he really looks after himself well. And he's quite good at looking after himself, with the food and that, but it isn't food to him, it's fuel.

How do you think your life would have been different if you hadn't had diabetes?

I don't think it would have changed much, because I should have still done the same job with running the firm after me father died and serving apprenticeship with him, so I was always going to be a carpenter and joiner. And when I got married, I don't think it had made any difference anyway to what I've done. And my sport and that, I've not had to miss out on anything, so I don't think, really, it's stopped me doing anything that I would have done. The only thing is, you've got to eat meals at regular time, which does restrict you sometimes to what you do, but otherwise it doesn't make any difference. And now, with the injections you get now where you have before meal, you can alter your times of eating and that, which isn't so bad, as when I first had it, you'd got to eat regular to balance the insulin out. But now, with altering the insulin, now, so you have one before meal, you can have your meals at different times now, and it doesn't affect you any.

(13) Have you noticed any differences in people's attitudes to diabetes over the years?

Well, I think people know more about it now than when I first had it, and people are more involved with it. I did a job five or six years ago for a fellow, and he said "oh, I like to go to the pub for a drink", and I said "well, I can't drink", and he said "well, why's that?". I said "I'm diabetic", he said "oh, I didn't know that". So, I'd finished the job and I was tying the ladder on the van, and he said "you're not right". I said "what do you mean?". He said "you've been tying that end on there five minutes and", he says, "you're still no nearer tying it on". I said "no, I'm all right". He says "you're not". And he disappeared, and then he came back five minutes later and he says "come in here with me, you". So, I went in the kitchen with him, and he says "sit down there", and he gave me three biscuits and a glass of milk, and I says "ooh, that's better". He says "oh, you look better now". I says "how did you know?", he says "well, I went across the road, and the girl across the road is a nurse", and he says "I told her you were diabetic". And it was just by luck that I'd told him. If he hadn't said about going to the pub to drink, that I shouldn't have said about the diabetic.

And it was just by luck that I mentioned that, that he knew and he went and sorted it out. So, I should have been in a mess there, I think, if he hadn't have helped me out. I think, as well, there's been more in the paper about it. And people recognise, now, what it is, because there's been more said about it, about overeating and watching your weight and doing exercise and that. And I think people accept it more now, and are a bit more... a bit better with it now than what they were when I first had it, because nobody knew what it was. And you told 'em you'd got diabetes, and they looked at you and backed away, as much as though it was catching. Well, I think, now, with people reading about it more and seeing it on programmes and that, they know more about it now and they accept it more.

Did you worry that your children might develop diabetes?

Well, actually my grandfather had it so it missed a generation, so I think it seems to jump two generations. And our children haven't had any children, and I think that they're not bothered, because they think that the next generation down might catch it anyway. So, we think, really, that it seems to jump a generation and then you've got chance of catching it again, but otherwise it doesn't seem to affect anybody.

How do you see the future?

Well, I shall enjoy woodturning, and I've got more time to spend at that. And I enjoy going to the shows and doing the charity work and giving some money to the charities. 'Cause the hospice, when we raised the four hundred and twenty pound the last one we did at the weekend, they sent us a smashing certificate back saying how they appreciated it. And we thought, well, four hundred and twenty isn't much money, but if everybody raised four hundred and twenty pound it would soon add up. And we really enjoyed doing it, and everybody likes the workshop, with it being out of the ark. And they enjoy coming in home for a cup of tea and mince pie, and having a look at the wood. And we sell quite a lot of the wood, and we've... it's been advertised well in the hospice magazine, and we've even had people come as far away as twenty five and thirty miles to see us. So, we've really enjoyed it, and they come in to the workshop, and they can't believe it - they think it's out of the ark. But we really enjoy doing it, so I shall carry on doing that for as long as I can, because it's nice to be able to raise money without a lot of effort and seeing it go to some good charity.

What about your local diabetic group. Do you think that will continue?

Well, actually, it's like all committees. They don't seem to want to be involved on the committee, and if you haven't got a committee, you can't... don't matter how many members you've got, you can't carry on. But we're coming up for our tenth year, so we're really hoping that we can carry on longer, but I think it just depends on how many members we get. And you could do with younger members, but they all seem to be older members, and none of the younger diabetics seem to be interested in joining the club, which is what you want to carry it on.

And what about your own health. How do you think that will be in future?

Well, I've been very lucky, really. I'm sixty eight now, and I've had no trouble with it at all; just the odd hypo here and there, which is absolutely nothing. But I've been very lucky, and with keeping fit and active and playing sport, I think that's helped a lot. But I should like to carry on doing work for a bit longer. And we enjoy doing the charity work, and I think it's something to look forward to, and it's interesting to talk to people and meet different people and get different ideas.