

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Transcript

Title Page

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Collection Title: Voices of Volunteering

Interviewee's Surname: Kathleen

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Poynter

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

Volunteer 1982-2007, Swindon, Wiltshire

Lunch Club

Hospital Tea Bars

Children's Holidays

Project Manager Meals-on-Wheels

Child Contact Centres

Fundraising

Project Manager Wheel Chair Escort Service

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Interviewer's Notes:

Kathleen Poynter (KP) talks about her time as a WRVS volunteer in Chiseldon, Swindon, Wiltshire between 1982 and 2007. KP comments on being involved with Luncheon Clubs as an unofficial and official WRVS member and then being asked to help at Princess Margaret's Hospital with the Coffee

Bar and Blood Donor Clinics. At the same time KP was involved with the Swindon Clothing Store and Children's Holidays. Kath then had some time away from WRVS due to illness but came back to help as a Meals-on-Wheels (MOW) Project Manager, Helping in Child Contact Centres and as a fundraiser. KP also talks about her time working with the Hospital Escort Service and receiving an MBE. She concludes with the changes she experienced in the organisation and her most memorable moments as a volunteer.

[JENNIFER HUNT]: This is Jennifer Hunt with Kath Poynter on the 7th April 2015 at her home in Chiseldon, Wiltshire. Kath, would you just like to introduce yourself?

[KATH POYNTER]: Yes. My name is Kath Poynter and I am seventy-five years of age now and I was in was in the WRVS for twenty-six years.

[[JH]]: And when did you join WRVS?

[KP]: I think it was around '72, 1972 I think, I'm not quite certain, age has caught up with me I'm afraid. [Laughing]

[[JH]]: Mm, mm. So sort of around the '70s, '80s?

[KP]: Yes it was, yes.

[[JH]]: Why did you join WRVS?

[KP]: Mm, well I wanted to do some voluntary work and I went along to help at a luncheon club in Chilseldon and I liked it. And I was talking to Pat Purser who was the organiser of WRVS at the time. And she said 'Come along and see what we do', and I went along and from thereon I never looked back. And she said 'Well, come along to Princess Margaret's Hospital to help at the coffee bar first', and, and I loved that, doing that. Then I went two days a week, I went Monday's and Friday's in the mornings and helped do the coffee bar first. And then it got to I was doing the Blood Clinics and so I would go from the coffee bar to the Blood Clinic in the afternoon. And, and I thought 'Well, this is good'. So, [Laughter] and then Pat said 'Well, would you like to help out in the clothing store'? So I went and helped in the clothing store and that was good, that was very good. And I liked helping there and I'd sometimes go and help in the office as well in the, at Savernake Street. And, and I was there one day and Pat said 'Would you do me a big favour and would you take some children away on holiday'? And I said 'Oh I don't know about that, where to'? She said someone called, somewhere called Goblin Combe which is near Brean Sands', she said 'it's a minibus and you collect up, they're underprivileged children and there's ten of them'. So I said 'I'll have to talk it over with my family'. Well, I didn't talk it over, I just told them, 'I'm going to be away for a week and I'm going to take some underprivileged children away and you lot can look after yourself'.

So off I went on the Monday morning and I didn't know what I was up for but it was five hard working days but five rewarding days. And we collected the children up round Swindon, and I took another young girl with me from Chilseldon to help as well and as a work experience because she, I knew she was going to go in to nursing experience. And so off we went and we picked up the children. Lovely children, beautiful children from all different class of families, different circumstances. And we got down to Goblin Combe and settled them in. And after the first day the leader of the camp had to come to me and say 'Look, I'm sorry Kath you're going to have to take your group home if one of your boys don't stop hitting the other children'. So I pulled him to one side and I, I'm not going to say his name because it's not fair, but I pulled him to one side and I said 'Look darling, you've got to stop hitting the younger children, if you don't you're going to spoil the holiday for other children and you're going to spoil it for everyone and for me'. So I said 'If you, when you get angry if you come to me, if you must hit someone hit me or smack that wall or do something but don't hit the other children but come here', and I gave him a cuddle. I know years ago you could do that but you can't do it now.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[KP]: So I gave him a big cuddle and he cried on my shoulder because I think it was the first cuddle he'd had in his life. So, and I said 'And what I'm going to do is I'm going to make you team captain of our team'. Oh, he was absolutely wonderful, that was wonderful.

[00:05:02]

So off he went and a couple of times during the week we had a little upset and he came over and I had to give him another cuddle and off he went. And by the end of the week we had a fun day where they did teams, and our team came on top and they had the silver cup, and at the end of the day he came up to me breaking his little heart and he said 'We wouldn't have got this if it hadn't of been for you Kath making me team captain', and he was sobbing. Well, I thought 'God was on my side', he'd helped that child, you know. And when we got home as he got off the bus he gave me a lovely hug and I shall carry that in my heart for the rest of my day. And I, and I often wondered what was going to happen to that child, you know, because as he got off the bus his mother was there waiting for him and the first thing she did was hit him, she said 'You haven't had a clout for a week have you?' And I thought, so when I got back to the office I had to report it so I don't know what happened after that, whether they reported it or not that was up to them but I'd done my duty.

But we took all the rest of the children home and some parents were waiting there, waiting for them to come back, glad to see them home and it was lovely. So my duty was over, but unfortunately a few weeks after that I was taken ill and I had to have six months off and I thought 'No, I'm not going to give up', so I went back, and by this time Pat Purser had given up as the organiser and Alice...

[JH]: Cleland?

[KP]: Cleveland. No, no. Pat was still there. No, Alice had taken over. So I went back and I'd, and I'd done my fifteen years in The WRVS by this time. And I went back and I'd had my fifteen year medal given to me and when I was being given it I said to Alice 'Alice, can you find me something to do from a wheelchair?' So she said 'I'm sure we can'. So she introduced me to the Contact Centre, which I went along on a Saturday morning and, and I would take the names on reception of people coming in to the Contact Centre, which I found very rewarding again. And I, although I didn't have a lot to do with the children I had a lot to do with the parents and I could talk to them and I found that

rewarding. And I did that for several, well it was about three years, and that was very rewarding. So, and I carried on that for, as I say, for three years and then I left that to go on to, go on to the fundraising. And Alice asked me if I would do fundraising and I thought 'Well, what can I do now'?

So the first thing I thought about putting on a show at The Wyvern. So we got a little team up together and we thought 'Well what shall we do'? So the first thing I did was contacted Sheila Howard, the, from the choir, her choir, Sheila Howard's Choir, and she said 'Yes, I'll put my junior choir in'. Then I contacted Judith Hockaday School of Dancing, 'Yes, I'll put some of my girls in'. So then I contacted the Commonweal School and they, he said 'Yes, I'll put my steel, steel band in and I'll come and conduct, conduct it'. And I thought 'Well, I need a compere'. Well, by this time I'd been awarded, unknown to me The WRVS had put me forward for the MBE so I'd just been awarded by our Queen the MBE so I, and I'd been interviewed by, by the Wiltshire Radio. So I thought 'Well, I'm up there I'll ask the DJ to be the compere', so I asked Sandy Martin. And I said to Sandy at the end of the interview would he come and compere our show? He said 'Well, yes', and I said 'Well, you won't get paid, I'm not paying anybody, this is for charity'. And he said 'Won't I'? I said 'Oh no, you won't get paid'. But Sandy, bless Sandy's heart he came along and he compered it and we raised a lot of money.

[00:10:11]

And we also did a big raffle and I wrote round to Dyson's and Sainsbury's and different people and then I got a friend to go round the shops in Swindon to get raffles and we did a big raffle as well and it was a success. This followed on by a Mad Hatter Tea Party down at The Landmark, it was a hotel down the road, and we had this successful party. And then we did two more Mad Hatter Tea Parties after that which were a big success.

So, and then we did, I also helped out do two bike rides, you know, sponsored bike rides and I got the Army Cadets to help, I didn't want to have to pay out for stewards so I got, my son's in the Army Cadets, he's a sergeant-major in the Army Cadets so I got his, his little crew to come and do all the stewarding for me free, I thought 'That's one way to get round it'. And they, and I got some nurses from the hospital to come and do the first aiding, saved paying for first aiders, I just give them a little tip and they come and done the first aiding so we saved on that. And I've got a friend who's got a fish and chip van and they come and done the catering for me free. So we were, again we raised quite a bit of money that way. So in all the fund raising went well.

So, and I said to, 'I don't think, I don't think Alice, I can keep on, I think my name's getting a bit wore out in the town at the moment begging'. So she said, and then she come up to me one day and she said 'Oh the hospital', because we'd now got The Great Western, 'they need a manager down there to organise the wheelchair escort service'. I said 'Well, 'escort', I'm not keen on the name'. She said 'Well, that's the name it is, and that's the name we're keeping'. [Laughter] So I said, she said 'But you've got to be the manager, project manager'. So I went down and I looked at the chairs and they were hopeless. So I said 'Well, we need new chairs', she said 'Well, we haven't got any money', and I said 'Well, we've got to get some then haven't we'? So she said 'Well, it's up to you'. So, and I had to also get some new volunteers. So I advertised for volunteers and I got volunteers, and with the volunteers' help we organised some raffles at the hospital, breaking all the rules I must admit, but we got round it by there was then a little shop in the hospital for the, in the shop with The WRVS so we always drew our raffle in the shop so that we were off the, off the grounds of the hospital. And I used to get a surgeon to come and draw the raffle. So we got enough money to buy some more chairs, so they've got a lot of chairs there now and they, and we had a good team of volunteers and that escort service is still going. And I had to retire due to my health deteriorating in 2005, the saddest moment of my life, and I'm sorry when I had to retire. So, but it was good years, good happy years and if I had them all over again I'd do it again, I really would. Yes, I really would.

And the young man who I helped at the holiday camp, when I got my MBE and it came out in the paper he rang me and he said 'You won't know who I am now but I', he gave me his new name and he said 'thank you for helping me and you deserve what you've got. I am now in the Navy and I am a', he gave me his rank and everything and he is doing well, and he said 'and it's all due to that cuddle you first gave me', God bless him.

[JH]: Mm. And going back to when you first joined WRVS what did you know about the organisation?

[KP]: I knew nothing, I knew nothing about them. I, I've always been a Christian you see so I've always done everything for the church. I knew nothing about WRVS at all so it was a new thing for me, but it was a good thing because I was going in blind and I, I learnt everything, you know, from the start.

[00:15:17]

[JH]: On the job?

[KP]: On the start. Oh, and I, I did go in to the Emergency Service as well, yes, I did, and so I went out on Emergency Service as well, that was fun, that was fun. Got called out a couple of times on a couple of fires and that. So I forgot that, yes I did the emergency team, yes. I don't think there was anything in the Emergency Service that I haven't done and been part of thanks to Pat Purser and Alice Cleland.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[KP]: They dragged me in to everything, they really did. They were two very good leader, team leaders, they really were, they worked hard theirself and they worked hard with their volunteers and I couldn't, you know. And when I was put forward for The WRVS, for my MBE it was the, mm, Chairman of the Lady Toulson, the Chairman of The WRVS who put my name forward. And as far as I know it's the only time it's ever happened for a Chairman of WRVS to put a name forward, which was a great honour, so she must have thought I was worth it. I mean when I got the paper from Buckingham, Ten Downing Street I thought it was a hoax I couldn't believe it, I just couldn't believe it because why me, I'm no different to anybody else who works for The WRVS? But they must have thought so. And I never let The WRVS, and I still do, you know, support what I've done in my, and anybody else, you know. And I did get them a lot of members, you know, I did.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And even now when I go down to the hospital and any of my team what are still there they, they still say 'Stand by your beds boys, she's here', [Laughter] you know.

[JH]: [Laughter]

[KP]: I did run my team with a rod of iron, I did have a good team and I did love doing it, I really did. And I loved it. I loved the fundraising, I loved doing the tea bar, I loved everything.

[JH]: And when you started you started the luncheon club?

[KP]: Luncheon club? Yes, we were in a chapel up at Chiseldon Chapel, Methodist chapel, a room at the back and the meals used to get brought in. And then that stopped and then we decided to cook it ourselves and there were about eight of us and we did it once a week. My, my meal was, I used to cook plaice with parsley sauce and mashed, creamed potatoes and peas and then I would do lemon meringue pie with cream, and they loved it, I used to make eight lemon meringue pies every time and I used to do it and I used to, my husband used to take me to Swindon early in the morning and I used to get the fish fresh and I used to get them to bone it for me and so there wasn't a bone in it and I used to get that for them. And I always got the white backed, but I never had no black back plaice so it was nice for them and I could roll it and they loved it, they loved it. And I would make sure the, the mash never had no lumps in it for them. And I loved cooking it, I just loved cooking it. And we'd get it dead, there dead on half past twelve and it was nice and hot and it was lovely. And I used to get all these lemon meringue pies and then somebody else would cook a different meal. Every eight week, every week they had a different meal. And then all of a sudden Health and Hygiene came in and said no, we could not no longer cook in our own homes so we had to put it to the school to do it, which was a shame because we did enjoy doing it, you know. And then they stopped that and so now we have it up at Chiseldon House. But I still do it under the banner of The WRVS. Yes, I do do it under the banner of The WRVS because I'm the only member that's there now.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[KP]: But they do us proud, they do us proud. But yes, they do, yes. So yes so...

[JH]: And how many people used to come to the lunch club when you first started?

[KP]: I think when we first started there were about thirty, and there's twenty of us. Well, between thirteen to twenty now. So, and, and they, they have like a two course meal and then they have a cup of coffee or tea afterwards, yes. So they have a nice afternoon, you know, and they have a natter amongst themselves. And they're nearly all people who are living on their own and sometimes it gives them a nice get together. And the conversation's all sorts. Go back to the war years, go back to their childhood and you hear about mum bathing them with the car..., carbolic soaps and, and, oh, we have all sorts of conversations.

[00:20:26]

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And we have a singsong and at Christmas we have a Christmas lunch and we usually ask the vicar to come along and he sings the carols with us and it's a real good time.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: A real good time. And we, and it really is good, mm, [Coughing] and the conversations are lovely because they can, they can talk about their old times, they can talk about their childhood, they can talk about the politics like. And like this year, last week it was politics because of the, you know, they get a bit heated sometimes and, you know, and it's lovely, it's lovely to hear them. They tease each other, it's really lovely, it's really lovely.

[JH]: And it's a nice social atmosphere?

[KP]: It's a nice social atmosphere, it really is. And, and like the, and they all make sure they can all get home each other, they all make sure they can get there. It's, 'You're coming with me in the car, you're not walking home'. One old lady, she's ninety-two, she wanted to walk up to the church last week. We said 'No, you're not, we've, you're going in the car'. 'No, I want to get there early'. 'No, and it's too far for you to walk, you're going in a car'. 'Don't bully me', she said. 'Well, you're being bullied', [Laughter] it was lovely, it was lovely. You know, we all look after them, they're my children to me, you know, because I'm the youngest one there. [Laughter]

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Yes, they're all in their nineties. Yes, it's lovely. And when anybody's ill we'll send them a bunch of flowers and a card, yes. And if anyone dies, we've had one or two die, we make sure we go to their funeral to support the family. We send them a prayer card to say how sorry we are. I usually write the prayer card myself, yes. So...

[JH]: And also after you became an official member of WRVS and you're in the lunch club, then you moved on to the hospital tea bar at is it?

[KP]: Princess Margaret.

[JH]: Princess Margaret Hospital? Mm, how would you describe the, what the tea bar looked like?

[KP]: Oh that was lovely, that was really lovely. It was hard work because you didn't have tills that added up for you then, you know, and I'm, my Maths not the best, you know, so I used to add up on bits of paper. People were very good, you know, and, but because some people would have rolls and, and everything, you know, and, but some people were very good but the atmosphere was lovely and the staff were lovely. And, but the tea, the tea bar was lovely but I always used to like tidying it up and clearing it up and everything. But the tea bar was lovely and it was always a nice atmosphere and you met mostly nice people and met other volunteers and that, but in the end you had your own team who you worked with all the time. And Pat, I started off working with Pat Purser up there and everybody used to say 'Pat's good at giving orders', because she was, but Pat was also a very good worker and I've seen Pat Purser get down on her hands and knees and scrub that tea bar floor, you know. She was a brilliant person, yes, she was.

[JH]: And was she the County Organiser, yes.

[KP]: She was, yes, she was, she was, yes. So she was great though, she was great, yes, yes, she was. But she never let, she, if there was a job to do it she'd do it. She did yes, she was good. So, but I loved the tea bar, I was sorry when I, you know. But it was when I became ill I had to give up, you know. But she never let, oh, that's right I did the Meals-on-Wheels here at Chiseldon too, organised, that's what I did from my wheelchair.

[00:25:02]

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And she'd always find you another job to do, she'd never let you sit still, a bit like Alice. [Laughter] But, you know, she, she was fantastic for letting you, she, once you were a member of The WRVS she'd always find you something to do. She was a true member and she made, you did your job, you know, she was good. And it was after my mother died, Pat said 'You're not going to sit there moping. You're coming along and doing something', and that's what made me do it, yes, yes.

[JH]: Mm, mm. And what did you use to sell from the tea bar?

[KP]: Rolls, cake, biscuits, coffee, tea, soft drinks. It was lovely and, oh, hot soup, we, we started doing hot soup in, you know, you'd make it up and it was nice, you know. And, and, you know, you'd get, sometimes you get policemen come in where they'd have to come in and take someone to identify a body or something and the policeman would come in and say 'Can you give us some tea'? And me, I know I broke the rule there, but I'd always give it to them, I wouldn't make them pay. Because I remember when I had to do that with my own mother how grateful I was when they did that for me, you know. So you knew how to be kind to people and I'd always warm up bottles for babies and things like this. And, you know, it's hot pies, we used to do hot pies in the microwave too. And it was, because at lunchtime people didn't always have time to go and get something to eat, you know, because you know how appointments are and they were always welcome, you know, there. You would always try to help people. But it was nice, and you always kept the counter nice and clean and the, and the displays clean and it was nice, yes it was really nice, yes. People were good, you got some people who were a bit difficult but then you had to realise they were ill, you know, and that, but everybody was good. The worst time of it was if you had a big accident up there the reporters could be a bit difficult, you know, but you learnt to handle it, you did learn to handle it. And I did, we did. I was up there twice when we had that happen but you learnt to handle it, you know.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: You didn't put up with rudeness, you didn't go back being rude to them you just handled it with kindness and that seemed to, you know, calm people down, yes.

[JH]: So you got quite a variety of people using the tea bar, not just the patients?

[KP]: Yes, no you did. You had staff, you had doctors, they'd come in. They'd get to know who you were and they'd get to know your name and you got to know what they liked, and as soon as you see them coming you'd start getting it ready for them. And they didn't have long you see, so if it was a quick sandwich they were going and you even knew what sandwich they were going, you would have it ready for them, you know, and their coffee and that, and you knew what coffee they were going to have and if they liked it milky or if they liked it black. And I used to get it ready for them as they were walking up towards us, okay. And they were good, they were good, yes, yes. And they, yes, yes, and the doctors, and even the patients, you know, and the little children you knew whether to just give them a small cup or a big cup and that, and yes, yes. And yes, you, you helped them out

the best way you could and you were kind to them. I think kindness goes a long way, yes. I know we were there to make money for The WRVS but you also had to be, show kindness and that is, it goes a long way, yes.

[JH]: What did you do with the profits from the tea bar?

[KP]: The profits went back in to the hospital you see so the hospital gained from it. Yes, and we gave a lot of money to the hospital, a lot of money to the hospital and that's what I liked. Yes, we, The WRVS gave the hospital a lot of money. So we didn't really gain from it, we, we gave it back to the hospital and that's what I liked, you know, so, and we bought no end for that hospital.

[00:30:00]

And one of the surgeons said to me 'Well, I don't know what we'd do without you', and that's what I was surprised when we lost the contract for the coffee bar at the next hospital, you know. Although we kept the shop we didn't keep the coffee bar, you know, and I was sorry for that, you know, so. But still we got the escort service and so we did keep something, yes. So yes, and we, there in turn we managed to get coffee and give it to the patients there, you know. Weren't supposed to but we did, yes we did.

[JH]: Do you remember some of the things you bought for the hospital with the money that was raised?

[KP]: I don't know what they did because I wasn't on that side of it, I don't know, no but they did buy some very good things like I think they give something towards one of the scanners. Yes, yes, I think they did, yes. I think you could find that out from Alice.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Yes.

[JH]: And when you went down to the Blood Donor Clinic?

[KP]: Mm, mm.

[JH]: What were you doing there?

[KP]: I was making the tea afterwards and giving it to the patients as they come out, as they came from giving their blood I'd give them a cup of tea and a biscuit and make sure they were okay, make sure they didn't leave too quick before they, you know, because some of them used to be quite pale when they came off the table from giving their blood. We had two or three faint and if they did I'd fetch a nurse and, because they, they're not always very well after they give blood I had two or three fainters and, you know, just generally chat to the patient after they'd, you know. It was quite interesting but yes. And amazing how many people do faint after giving blood and you have to watch them, they don't always know how pale they are until they get their colour back you make sure they don't go, you know, and it's making, making cups of tea and cups of tea and cups of tea. But it doesn't matter how many cups of tea they have you've got to keep them there until they, you know, they're well enough to go out so, because they don't always know how it's knocking them about, you know, yes. Because it's good that they're giving their blood, you know, because it's so badly needed. It was a four hour stint but I, I always used to do four hours at a time, you know, but they came, they came in the building and, you know, I was always on my own there, you know. Sometimes I'd have another volunteer with me but mainly I was on my own, yes. And the nurses were kept busy, very busy, yes, yes. But I'm not a lover of blood so I could never look over at the blood, [Laughter] that's one thing I'm not but I was surprised I volunteered for that one, but yes, but I did do it, yes.

[JH]: And how long were you involved in the hospital?

[KP]: In the hospital altogether? I was involved all the time I was in the, in the service that some way or other I was involved in the hospital the whole time. Oh yes, you know, all the time.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Somewhere in the hospital service I was involved, yes, yes. Yes, I was always involved, yes.

[JH]: And also Pat asked you to do the children's holidays which you spoke a little bit about before down at...

[KP]: Yes, down at Goblin Combe, yes.

[JH]: Yes, Goblin Combe.

[KP]: Goblin Combe, that was lovely, that was, we dealt with the children. We were all in huts [Coughing] which we had a team from Rover, they did, they gave up their holidays to do all the sport, you know, they came and they, they looked after the children and took them off and did the looking after them in the day. They took them on cliff, doing cliff work and they did all the sports and all that, and we looked after them doing the food and everything else. They were wonderful, the team from Rover, and they were, they were fantastic. And we would have to go and make the beds and do the cleaning and that, we were sort of the cleaning side of it.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And they were good at doing the entertaining side of them. And they were what, well they were wonderful and, you know, we had to do all the cooking and all of that so, and the breakfasts and the lunches, and they'd take them off for days down to Brean and, or take them off for doing, they liked the rock climbing the children did.

[00:35:05]

And in, and in the nights we had a wood at the back of us, that was Goblin Combe and they'd go looking for the goblins and that, and we had one little boy who swore blind he saw a goblin, you know, and, oh, we had, couldn't get him to bed at night, you know, one of our crowd and, you know, he had this goblin in his sack and he had, oh, he had a lovely imagination, he was a gorgeous boy, he really was, yes. And then on the last night we all sat round a big open fire, we had a singsong round the open fire and we had sausages and all that, and the children toasted their chestnuts on the fire, and it was a, oh, I've had a, it was a wonderful holiday for those kids, you know.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: It really was. And I, I've never seen children's faces so happy. And, and we took clothes down for them from the clothes store really and we give them all a bundle of clothes and they all went home with a bundle of clothes so happy that they had new clothes.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: They weren't really new clothes but they were good clothes and they were happy that they were going home with a bundle of clothes each and been given pocket money to go home with. Well, we, we called in on the way home at the caves, you know, at, what's the caves? The Cheddar Caves.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And we took them, they were taken down Cheddar Caves [Coughing] and they spent some of their money, they had a good time. [Coughing] And then we got them back here about eight o'clock at night. They had a really good week, they had a good week, you know, and then what they went home to I don't know, not, not good. [Coughing] Sorry.

[JH]: That's alright. [Pause]

[KP]: I would, I would have loved to have done another one, I would have loved to have done another one but, as I say, I'm still in contact with one.

[JH]: Where did the children come from?

[KP]: The poorer parts of Swindon, the poorer parts of Swindon, that's all I can tell you.

[JH]: Yes. And were they referred by Social Services?

[KP]: Social Services, yes, yes, yes. And I think some of them after the reports I gave, I think some of them were taken away from the parents, yes, yes.

[JH]: And did you provide anything for the children, toothbrushes or wash bags?

[KP]: Yes, yes. Wash bags, yes, yes, we had to, had to, yes, yes, yes. Some of them only came in what they stood up in. We had clothes we took down, we took bags of clothes down out of spare clothing store, yes. Because a mother said 'Oh I'm not giving you any clothes, they can provide' as they got

on the coaches, yes. Some brought, we had two little children come, they, they'd come from two fathers, they had two fathers and they were lovely men, they were lovely men and they both cried as they put their children on the car, in the bus and they give them kisses and cuddles and they were lovely and they said 'You will bring our children back', you know, and the two children were well dressed and everything, it was just because they were what they were gay men and they were frightened they were going to have, lose their children, and I said 'There's no reason for you to worry about this', and because I haven't got no preference, you know...

[JH]: No.

[KP]: It doesn't make any difference to me. And they were two of the nicest children we had there and they were lovely. They were brother and sister and they often come up and give me a cuddle and they said 'You won't make us leave my daddy will you'? you know, both of them and I said 'no, we're not going to make you leave your daddy but you have a good time'. And he was the one who always said he saw the goblin and they were lovely children and I don't know why they were chosen to come but, because I didn't get that report.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And, but they were lovely children and they were the only two well dressed ones we got. But, and when I give my report and I could find nothing wrong, nothing wrong at all. They were well dressed, well spoken, they were polite, they ate their food, they were, everything was right, so when I went back I just couldn't put nothing wrong, you know. But yes, but I think it was because gayness sort of wasn't known then much about.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: But they were lovely and their dads were waiting for them when I got them back and they run to their dads and they cuddled them and, oh, it was lovely, but they were the only two I... And another, another mum when we got there, she was an one parent family and she was doing the best she could and she was waiting for her children and she cuddled them when they got back and it was lovely, but you could see she was poor and she was so grateful for their bundles of clothes.

[00:40:22]

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Now that I loved, I loved but that other woman, oh, I never forget the way she hit that boy, no, I shall never forget it. But he was taken away from her and he has done well and I'm so pleased I cuddled that child, so pleased. Why not? I don't know if you'll have to cut that out but I hope not.

[JH]: Okay. And you mentioned the clothing store but you also did other things in the clothing store as well?

[KP]: Well, we had to sort of sort through the clothing store.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: To make sure everything was good because you do get some rubbish given to you, but you do get some very good clothes. And you didn't only have children to clothe you had adults as well because there are some very poor adults in this town, town, you know. Because I wish the clothing store was still there because people come along and they have nothing, you know, and people used to come in and, and they had no, no proper shoes on their feet and that, you know, and you'd, and you'd clothe them up and they would go away with bags full of clothes and it was good, it was good because families, families are poor and were poor, they are still poor.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And I think we could do with clothing stores again, yes, yes, I do.

[JH]: And where was The WRVS clothing store?

[KP]: In Savernake Street. Yes, it was when I did it. I think there was one up down town earlier but in Savernake Street it was. And they, they were nice clothes, they were nice clothes and we put it in sizes and shoes and everything but they never had rubbish given them.

[JH]: No.

[KP]: They didn't, they had good clothes, yes. Men's, women's, children's, youths, all, all sizes and it was sized up and it was all clean, you know, it was all clean, yes, yes. And it was nice and they were never looked down on. Nobody was looked down on, nobody was sort of, oh, you know, 'What have you come for'? And they used to queue up for it I'm afraid but why not if they were poor.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And I never looked down on people, never, no. Because there for the grace of God could go I, and we always say that, you know. So no, I don't think you should look down on people. So no, I was glad I could help, yes.

[JH]: And what happened to the clothing store?

[KP]: I don't know because I had left beforehand and I think that was one of the things that went when Savernake Street got closed down, yes, yes. Because I'd moved on to other things, you know, but the government closed a lot of these things down, you know.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: So I don't really know what happened to the clothing store but I wished it hadn't closed down, yes. No, I wished it hadn't because there are people who need it. Whether The Salvation Army took over I don't know because that's where I pass everything on to now, to The Salvation Army, yes. So, but it was a good thing, it was a good thing. Of course, it started years ago in the wartime, that's when it started. So, but that's when it all started didn't it?

[JH]: Yes. And you, after you'd done the children's holiday you had a rest, well, sort of a rest from WRVS for six months?

[KP]: Yes.

[JH]: And then you came back and did Meals, organising Meals-on-Wheels?

[KP]: Meals-on-Wheels out at Chiseldon, yes.

[JH]: And what did that involve being the organiser?

[KP]: Well, I just organised it and I had a team of about ten and they used to take the meals round to the houses and I used to collect the money and then pay the money in for the meals. And that wasn't enough for me so then I asked for something more so I went on to the Contact Centre, and that was lovely, that was really rewarding.

[JH]: And where did you have the meals delivered, which area?

[KP]: Well, the meals they would go up to the school and collect them and they were all boxed up in little boxes and I would tell, I'd have a, you know, I would have the list to say where they would be going and then they'd come back and let me know, you know, they'd bring the list back to me and let me know if anybody was ill or anything and I would have to report it if anything. And they would bring the money back to me where they would collect the money off them and then I would pay it in. And they would have the meals three times a week, and then occasionally I'd have to have a sample meal to taste myself to make sure it was okay. So yes.

[00:45:24]

[JH]: So you had almost like a tasting session?

[KP]: Yes, yes, you had a tasting session every now and again. And they were lovely meals, they were lovely meals, yes.

[JH]: And did you choose the, what sort of meals they would have?

[KP]: No, no, no, they, they always did it from the school. And, and they were very nice meals, they were very nice meals, yes. Yes, they were sort of two courses, it was a meat and veg and a pudding every week, every day but they were very nice, you know, like a stew with some meat, you know, and then there would be a, and sometimes it was a little roast in there or. But it's just a little box and they, and I think they paid about two, two pounds seventeen or something like that, it wasn't a lot, but it was in those days to them but they were having, and they were and it had to be a certain temperature and, and every now and again somebody from head office would come and they would go out with them and they would test the heat for them because I couldn't go because I was,

couldn't get out then and so they would go out with them and test them. And they were always on, the heat was okay, yes. Everything was under, you know, all specifications was done. And then I don't know what happened they, the people stopped having them because these firms started up like Wiltshire Farm and that and people started having them frozen ones and they felt they liked them better so the Meals-on-Wheels sort of stopped round here, so, you know. And that's when the luncheon clubs started up and... No, the luncheon club was going before that, and the luncheon club more or less. So, so the school done the luncheon club for a while, you know.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: It all, it all, the luncheon club just kept going and going and we, we just kept going, you know. But the luncheon club got smaller and then the chapel closed down so we moved it to pubs, in different pubs and hotel and that. And then it nearly closed down again. And then I, I got so much better and then I, and I moved it to The Chiseldon House and there we've stayed, yes and we like the, we like the poshness of it.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Yes, it's nine pound fifty for a meal but they like it, they like it and they, they do like it. But we had poached salmon last week, it was lovely, beautiful.

[JH]: And because I, with the Meals-on-Wheels I read somewhere that Age Concern took it over, took it over actually?

[KP]: Then they took over, they took over, that's what, that's right, it was Age Concern taking over and they wouldn't take me over because I wouldn't, as organiser, because I wouldn't become a paid member and I said 'No', I, if I couldn't stay a voluntary member I wouldn't carry on so they just finished with me and I didn't want to be a paid member so I just stopped.

[JH]: Yes. And were you still in the Contact Centre at that time?

[KP]: Yes, oh yes, yes, I loved the Contact Centre, yes.

[JH]: And what was the Contact Centre?

[KP]: The Contact Centre was where mainly men came to visit their children when they're separated from the parent, from the mother and they, or that could get quite heated at times because one wouldn't be speaking to the other or the grandfather would be turning nasty. We had two or three fights down there, we had to call the police and that. And, but the other volunteers, especially the elderly, most elderly volunteers, they would stand up to these men, you know, and yes. But some of it was quite pitiful, you know, the men who'd come to see the babies and they would have their babies there for a couple of hours and then the women would come in and just snatch them out of their arms and that, it was quite pitiful. But it was nice to think that they were being able to see their babies and that, their children. And then you'd get the odd occasion where the children would turn up and the other, the partner wouldn't turn up. And if they don't turn up for six weeks then they haven't got to come any more. But it's not fair to the children then, but as long as the child turns up for six weeks, if the other one doesn't turn up then they don't need to turn up anymore.

[00:50:01]

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: We did have that a few times, you know. But, and then sometimes they can come and they could go out in to the town and then come back. And we never had anybody who'd run off with a child, that was one thing we never had. But then you had one father who would come every week and he'd bring an Argos book and the children would choose what toy they wanted the next week, and it got bigger and bigger and we said 'Look, this is getting silly, this is getting out of hand, you know, your, your children are just using you as a...' And he couldn't see it, you know.

[JH]: No.

[KP]: It was just getting ridiculous. And then one week he came and he said he wouldn't be buying them any more toys so the children said they weren't coming any more so we could see what was happening, you know. And he caused quite a stink, yes. We used to have some scenes there but mainly it was nice, it was nice. You could hear the parents playing with the children and it was nice. You know, we got to know them quite well and they were grateful for somewhere to come and see the children. It was nice, it really was nice, yes. And sometimes I would just sit there and talk to the parents who were waiting and you would hear their side of the story and then you, you couldn't take

sides but, you know, and I used to say 'Well, I'm just grateful that you, you're just grown up enough to be able to let him or her see the baby'. It was always nearly the man come to see their child.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: it nearly always was the man, you know. Because some of them would come from London and Birmingham and places like that just for two hours, but they would come, they would come, which was lovely, you know. And then another time they wouldn't come, and the children would be six or seven and they'd got so excited and didn't turn up and that would be sad, yes, yes, so yes. The worst time was when the grandparents used to interfere, that would be the worst time, yes. It would always be the grandfather, you know. So, so then we put a ban on grandfathers coming in, you had to.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Yes. So it was, you just, it wasn't fair to the children, yes. So, but I enjoyed my time at the Contact Centre but then the Social Services took it over. [Coughing] They took it off of us and we had to stop it.

[JH]: And was that around the same time WRVS were closing some services down?

[KP]: Yes, yes, yes. I gave it up when I took over at the escort service, yes, I gave it up then, yes because I couldn't concentrate on doing both. Because that, that escort service took a lot of my time up because there was a lot of concentration on that.

[JH]: And were you organising that from home or the hospital?

[KP]: I was down the hospital nearly every day, yes. My husband would take me down and I would be down there in my wheelchair. And, because I'd brought in a lot of stiff rules down there and that. Because people were coming in and just taking the chairs out willy-nilly and I brought a rule on that only people could have the chairs if they were escorted by a vol..., volunteer, not just people coming in and taking the chairs off whenever they liked. And the nurses were coming in and using them on the wards. So then my husband was a lot, because my husband suffers from Alzheimers you see, I didn't know at the time. So I got him down there early in the morning at eight o'clock, well half past

seven, eight o'clock and I got him going round the wards and getting all my chairs back. And he knew all the nooks and crannies in the wards where they would hide them so he'd go down and get them in, early back in the morning and get them back down to the West Door. And the nurses got used to him they'd say 'Lock the doors quick', and he had a card, he could get in to the door and he said 'He's here', you know, and so we got all the chairs back. And I put a banned on it that only patients could go in the chairs if they had a, a volunteer take them.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Nobody could just come in and say 'I want a chair'. And I'd, and I'd sit down there and I'd, you know, and people would say to me 'Who are you?' I'd say 'I'm the manager and I'm, what I say goes', and I went down week after week after week and I, I really threw my authority around because I thought 'We've paid for those chairs, those chairs are over a thousand pounds each'.

[00:55:00]

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: 'And I'm not just having them left around the hospital, you know, willy-nilly'. There's porters chairs there, if they want a porters chair they can have a porters chair but they're not having our chairs. And I, and I got my own way in the end. When the nurses used to come 'Can we have a chair?' I'd say 'No'. 'But we always have had your chairs?' I said 'Well, you're not having them now', you know, I said 'you go and get your own'. 'But we've always had your chairs'. I said 'Well you're not having them now'. So in the end they got 'Oh the dragon's here now', they'd say, 'she's got hers'. [Laughter] So, and I wouldn't, I wouldn't.

[JH]: And did the volunteers who were working for the escort service did they used to take patients to different appointments?

[KP]: Yes. They took them to the appointments and then they'd ring up and they'd go back and fetch them and they said 'Oh Kath, you've done such a wonderful job', because half the time they would have no chairs left you see so, and they'd say 'Well, how are we going to get the patients through', and they would go looking for chairs for them. So now there are plenty of chairs there. And in the end I got chains and chained the chairs up so they'd have to unchain them to take them up, and so

yes. So I said 'No you do not let patients, you can only have a chair if you're escorting a patient', and I always made sure there was plenty of our escorts on. And there was four escorts on at a time and they would take the patients. And I'd say if they had to wait they'd have to wait and they would take the patients, yes.

[JH]: And how many did you have in your volunteer team?

[KP]: I had about sixteen at the time on, you know, and they would be on in shifts, eight till two, two till five, I used to say they could go home.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Some of them went at four, some of them went at five. Close the door at five. Most of the clinics were open, closed then, you know, so yes, yes. And so that was, you know, I used to chain the chairs together so that they couldn't be stolen at night and the doors would, that door would be closed at five, and I kept my chairs that way. But even so in fact they, there was the odd chair what somebody might be late and they would be left there, and blow me down those nurses would have them on ANU but my husband would go and pinch them back in the morning and so we, I got them back, you know. [Coughing]

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: I had to do two disciplinaries while I was manager, I didn't like doing that. One man, one, one volunteer I had to sack, which I did not like doing but he was very rude to the Chief Executive of the hospital, I had no alternative under the instructions of my, my manager but to sack him. It broke my heart to do it but he, he'd gone one step over the mark so I had to sack him. And I had to do another disciplinary for somebody who did something wrong. And I did it very gently, he, he just didn't realise he'd gone one mark over but when I explained to him [Coughing] he wrote a letter of apology to the people and it was accepted so I let it go. But I didn't like doing them but then I found out afterwards it should have been my boss who done the disciplinary not me, but he was too afraid to do it so. But I did it and I, you know, really and truly a lot of the jobs I should [Coughing] I took on more, more jobs I should have done as a volunteer than what I should have done. It's like Alice said I was too good at my job. And my man..., my paid manager let me do more than what I should have done but I probably did it better than what he would have done in any case. [Coughing]

[JH]: So by that time you had a service manager did you?

[KP]: I had a service manager yes but we didn't get on very well. And he was also the service manager for the shop.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And he was more interested in the shop because that made money and I didn't make money. But the, oh, who was it? Mark I think it was, he was the head over the WRVS. He come and done a shift on our floors one day.

[01:00:00]

[JH]: Who Mark, Mark Lever?

[KP]: Mm, he came and done a shift one morning on our escort service. He didn't realise how hard work it was. He came in, he come to one of my, every month I used to order a meeting for all my volunteers, I used to do an afternoon tea up in a room upstairs and I used to pay for that myself all the cakes and everything. And I used to get as many in my volunteers that day as I could except the ones who were on duty and then we would have, we would discuss anything what had gone wrong in them, you know. And Mark came along and Alice, and Mark said 'I'll tell you what, I'll come and do a duty'. So he came along one morning, he did a whole morning taking vol..., patients to the wards, you know, to the Outpatients, he said he didn't realise what hard work it was and he actually bought two chairs for us, you know, from the fund from The WRVS. He said he didn't realise how hard work it was and how much our volunteers do. [Coughing] And he'd see why I was so strict about the chairs, you know, because he'd had several complaints about me being so strict about the chairs. But he could see afterwards why so I got away with that one. [Coughing] So yes, Mark was lovely.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[KP]: Mark was lovely.

[JH]: And did you find that WRVS changed quite a lot when the paid staff started to come in to the organisation?

[KP]: Yes, yes. They tried flinging their weight about a bit too much and the volunteers resented it, they did, they did resent it, they did resent some of them. And they'd always come back to me and say 'We're not taking any notice, we're only doing what you say', and nothing I could do about that. And there were two they didn't like, one of the ladies, I forget her name now, and she moved on. They, they liked Alice and that was it. And they liked Mark.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[KP]: Mark was very good with them. He'd come, if he come to a meeting he'd say 'Tell me what's wrong' and he'd do something about it. Alice would, but the other ones, you know, it was always 'You must do it this way, you've got to do it correctly', and all the rest. They, they knew what they were doing. They, they'd been in The WRVS long enough, they'd done all what they could do, they were doing it, they were doing their job and that was it. As long as they took the patients to A to B and brought them back from B to A that's what they were there for, you know. They kept the chairs clean, they did all that while they were waiting, they would clean the chairs, you know, I mean I couldn't fault them. They kept the room nice, they were shared. When we first started off we were sharing a room with the transport lounge and it was very difficult and, but we managed, you know, and with the drivers who were sat there waiting to pick up the people to take them back. It was very difficult, now it's a bit easier for them but we managed, you know. So yes, yes.

[JH]: And were there any other changes to WRVS that you experienced?

[KP]: They didn't like it when they kept changing the un..., when they changed the colours, they thought that was a waste of time. They thought the colour, they didn't like the new colours.

[JH]: Was that the orange and purple?

[KP]: No, they didn't like that at all. In fact, I noticed a lot of them didn't wear them they kept to their green, they didn't like that at all. And they didn't like the new badge, they, they thought the new badge was awful.

[JH]: And that's the...?

[KP]: The circle.

[JH]: The WRVS with the little orange and purple?

[KP]: Yes. No, they didn't like that. In fact we had one lady she came in with all her badges on, used to come in with all her badges. I did as I'd got them right from, you know, didn't like that at all. I didn't like the new badge, I thought it was awful. No, no, I thought it was terrible - that new badge, yes, mm. No, I didn't like that one at all. In fact I didn't go down for the opening of the new badge, new, new one. Well, I had my husband ill at the time so I didn't go down. Alice was cross with me but I didn't go down.

[01:05:10]

[JH]: And was Alice a Vice-Chairman at that time?

[KP]: Yes, mm, mm, yes. We, we tricked Alice. She was, she was going to retire. So we got her down there so say for a meeting but we got her down there for a farewell gift and we'd done a big basket of flowers for her and we had a farewell party for her, we didn't tell her. Mark came to that too. We had a big cake and everything for her. Our, our, our team loved her really dearly, yes. She thought she'd come for a meeting, she was all prepared. She said 'Why aren't any of you answering questions'? And said 'Because we're not here for this we'd here to say goodbye to you'. She went 'Oh'! [Laughter]

[JH]: I can imagine.

[KP]: Yes.

[JH]: And while you were doing the escort service you'd also got involved with fundraising?

[KP]: I was doing fundraising before.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Yes, yes. That was hard work, that was hard work. I think the bike ride was the hardest, getting all the people in for the bike ride. Because it wasn't only just getting the people in for it but, you know, getting all the papers out and getting everybody signed up for it it was organising a tent down at Lydiard. I got the Wiltshire Radio to broadcast it. I got, I got the fish and chip van there. I got The Army Cadets to do the stewarding and everything and then the Army Cadets come and cleaned up the field afterwards, you wouldn't have known anybody had been on that field afterwards, the Army Cadets were good from church, church at, down at, down by St Mark's Church and they were brilliant and we had a good show then for the, you know. And it was a good bike ride that was. I done two bike rides, I'd done one with, at Coate Water, that one that I didn't, I didn't organise that one, that was organised by somebody from head office but she made a right mess of it. And she'd promised two bikes to the winners and they never turned up and there was a big hoo-ha about that but I don't know what happened in the end about that. And then, but I didn't promise anything for the winners I just, you know, it was just a... But we had over a hundred riders for the second one and it was all round... Oh, and that's right one of the majors from the Army Cadets went out and did the route for me with my son and they, they helped no end. But there again I wrapped, I got the men and got them done it free because they're friends, you know, and it was... So Alice arranged that we would give them a donation for the Army Cadets so we went along to the Army Cadets one night and we went along and they liked that too.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: She was able to tell them about WRVS as well so that was quite a success and that was a nice evening too, yes.

[JH]: And do you know what the funds for like the Mad Hatter's Tea Party and these concerts, do you know what they went towards?

[KP]: Well, the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, that was a general thing from The WRVS. They, we all had to organise a Mad Hatter's Tea Party and send it to head office and we all got little teapots from the Mad Hatter's.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: And I've got those.

[JH]: Is that the Alice In Wonderland teapot?

[KP]: Mm, all the little teapots, yes, I've got three of those. And that was good. We had one at The Landmark, I think I did one at The Landmark, one at church hall and one in Swindon I think I did. That's right, we did one at Great Western, Great Western Hospital, we all dressed up. I did a, yes, I did three. I did one at The Landmark down here, that was when it was a hotel. I did one up at Chiseldon Church Hall and one at Great Western Hotel. I did it in the foyer and we had a big raffle and it all went back to head office - the money.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: I don't know what they, I think they just did it in a general pool but we made quite a bit of money, over a hundred, you know, a hundred pound each. And we had like a bring and buy and raffle at each one.

[01:10:00]

And I got, there again I, and teas and coffees but I, I got like the hotel to give, do the tea and coffee free, and we did the coffee, tea and coffee at the others. We got the hospital to do the tea and coffee free. [Laughing] And it went off very well, you know, so. And we all dressed up in... What did we do? For, for the hospital we dressed up as Alice, in Alice In Wonderland because I dressed up as Alice, a blue dress and Alice standing there. And Alice dressed up as the rabbit, I shall always remember that, yes, we had quite a successful party there. It was good in the front foyer and all the customers came. Yes, that was good, and yes, we got, we had a good raffle there too. So yes, so we had three good Mad Hatter, Mad Hatter Tea Parties. And then I did another coffee morning to raise money for these chairs, but that was in The Moose Hall and we raised ninety pound there, yes, that was good. And we did wicker baskets and, and other things for, for that, and that went off very well too. So coffee mornings have been quite a success. And The Wiltshire Radio came along to that and was broadcasting from there too so did a morning broadcast from there so that went down very well too. And that was just to publicise WRVS as well. I didn't know, Sandy had done that, he was a good friend, Sandy Martin's died since but he was a good friend of mine and bless his heart. And he, he was, he came along to do a little publicity on The WRVS and our work, you know. It was to tell about

the escort service at the hospital, which is well used, well used. Yes, because we wanted more chairs you see so that's what he was asking for people to support this coffee morning to buy more chairs for the hospital, anyway I could get more money. And we had people coming in off the street so that we could get more chairs for the hospital, so with the help of Sandy, mm.

[JH]: And I also read somewhere that you helped with a cook book?

[KP]: Oh yes.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Forgot the cook book. Yes, we, we, it was for the Queen's Jubilee. Yes, we did, we, we got everybody to send in their favourite cook, recipe and we published a cook book for the Queen's Jubilee and we sold that too, and that was quite a success. Not as successful as we would have liked but we got it out a bit late but it was quite a successful and people bought it and I know we sold it here in the village quite well and people had it and gave it for Christmas presents and that. It was quite good, lovely recipes. I'd managed to get hold of Alice's chocolate pot recipe which is a family secret but I got it. [Laughing]

[JH]: You managed to get it out of her?

[KP]: Yes, yes, that was quite good that, yes. And we had to go to the publishers and everything so yes. There were some lovely recipes and we got them from all over the country, you know, from all different members and it's members, members favourite recipes.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: It was a lovely cook book, a lovely cook book, yes. I expect some of it's in the archives now isn't it?

[JH]: I've got a couple of copies of the cook book.

[KP]: Yes, yes. So yes, that's lovely. That was a good, good do that was. It was very hard to want to know what to do for the Jubilee and we thought well, a cook book was a good thing. I forgot the

cook book, yes. Another fundraiser that was, yes. So that was a, it was a success but it's like everything else there was a lot of cook books around at the time. But I took some down to Devon, to a shop in Devon and they sold them as well. Yes, it's just where to get them to put them, you know.

[JH]: Yes, where it would be best to buy them?

[KP]: Yes, yes. So yes, so that was good, yes.

[JH]: And is there anything we haven't talked about that you would like to mention?

[KP]: Well, I don't think so, I think we've covered everything haven't we? Organised that.

[JH]: We talked about your MBE didn't we?

[KP]: Yes, yes, that was a big, big shock, yes. [Pause]

[01:15:00]

[JH]: Because you'd met Lady Elizabeth Toulson before she put you forward did you?

[KP]: Yes, I went to an afternoon tea party at Cheltenham I think or Cirencester and I met Lady Toulson there and I got talking to her and by all accounts she sent an e-mail to Alice saying that she wanted my name put forward to the Queen and for a MBE and that's how it came about. And I didn't know this until afterwards, Alice told me and Alice said she's never known anyone be put forward before by the actual Chairman of The WRVS. And so Alice got to work on it and there was several other people put letters that Alice contacted people and, and several other people put letters in as well, which I thought was very, very nice of them. And I got the letter in the November. I was just going out on this Saturday morning to go to the Contact Centre and the post came and I got this letter from Ten Downing Street and I opened it and I said to my husband 'Good Lord, look at this', I said 'the Prime Minister's wrote to me offering the MBE', I said 'Oh it's Simon, my friend Simon Coombe's having a joke on me'. So he said 'Of course, he's not'. I said 'Yes, it is', and I said 'who's going to offer me the MBE'? So you had a paper you had to fill in to say whether you were going to accept it or not so he said 'Fill the paper in and just send it back and we'll post it'. So, so I just signed it. I said 'Well, it will just...' So he, I signed it and my husband put it in his coat and we

posted it on the way there as we were going up the road. I never, never ever gave it another thought, not another thought. I thought 'Well, that's the last I'll hear of that'.

So, and it was thirty-first of December. I, I'd been to Pat Purser's husband's funeral and I came back through the door and the phone was ringing and it was *The Evening Advertiser* and I answered the phone and it was *The Evening Advertiser* saying was, I said 'Hello', and he said 'Is that Mrs Poynter, Kathleen Poynter'? And I said 'Yes'. And he said 'This is *The Evening Advertiser*'. I said 'Well, what do you want'? And he said 'Congratulations'. I said 'Congratulations for what'? And he said 'Well, didn't you know you've got The MBE'? And I said 'Pardon'? He said 'You've got the MBE', and I said 'Have I'? [Laughing] And he said 'Yes, I can assure you you've got the MBE, you're in the New Year Honours'. Well, I screamed and I went down on my knees and I couldn't believe it, I just couldn't believe it, you know. And I said 'Well, thank you very much for informing me'. And they said 'Well, what we're ringing up for can we come out and take a photograph of you and get your views'? And I said 'Well, I suppose if you must'.

And I was so in shock I didn't really realise what I was saying much. So I put the phone down and, you know, and then they rang back and wanted to know where I lived. [Laughing] So my husband answered the phone and he, you know, he told them. Then a little while afterwards I had Wiltshire Radio on the phone saying the same and would I come in for an interview, you know, and I said 'Yes, yes, leave it for now'. [Laughing] So we left it and I made arrangements to go in at a later date. And I couldn't believe it, and then *The Advertiser* came later on in the day and took photographs and asked me what I thought and I said 'I thought it was a joke', I said 'I really thought it was a joke'. And they said 'No, we can assure you', and they showed me the printout like they get and it showed me that I had been awarded the MBE for The WRVS, I couldn't believe it. All I could say was 'Why me'? That's all I could say.

[01:20:15]

And I went up to The Palace on the sixteenth of March 1999. And then it was a really beautiful day, it really, it was lovely. And I'd been to a, mm, a function, I'd been to somewhere a week, a few weeks before and I met the Queen and then I went up to the Palace and as if she knew me, you know, and she just, she just said, you know, 'You do such wonderful things'. It was, I, I just can't, it was just wonderful, it was just wonderful, yes, it was just wonderful. And then I met her again at St James'

Palace, you know, I went to see her at St James' and I met the Duke of Edinburgh and, and Camilla and Prince Charles. And yes, I've met quite a few of the Royals since then.

[JH]: Yes. And were they all through WRVS?

[KP]: Yes, it's all been work through the WRVS, yes, yes, yes, yes, it's been lovely. I've had quite a, you know... Last time I met the Queen she said 'We're going to have to stop meeting like this', you know, so yes. So and Prince, The Duke of Edinburgh said 'Keep up the good work girl', you know, so he's so funny he is, he is so funny, yes. [Laughing] And I met Alan Titchmarsh, he come and sat on my lap and he told me how to make my lilac tree better grow. And yes, I met Cilla Black, and she, she's lovely, you know, Alan was lovely. Yes, I met quite a few stars at the, you know, so it's been quite interesting.

[JH]: Yes.

[KP]: Yes. So yes, I wouldn't like to go through it all again though. [Laughing] Not that part of it, yes.

[JH]: And do you still keep in touch with W..., well, Royal Voluntary Service?

[KP]: Not really. I keep in touch with some of the volunteers. I'm sad to say I've lost, you know, some of them have passed over now. I've gone to some of the funerals of my, some of the volunteers that have died, you know, which I was sad about, but I don't keep in touch with head office. When Mark went I felt, I felt a friend had gone, you know, and I don't sort of, I keep in touch with Alice every Christmas and that but I don't really keep in touch with it not now. Because now they don't have the book, you know, our magazine anymore.

[JH]: No.

[KP]: So it's not the same, you know. It doesn't seem the same now they've changed the title, it's not my WRVS anymore, you know, so.

[JH]: And in your opinion what was the most significant change that you experienced as a volunteer?

[KP]: [Pause] Too many paid staff, too many Indians - too many chiefs, not enough Indians.

[JH]: And that was really in the 1990's wasn't it?

[KP]: Yes.

[JH]: When they made all those changes?

[KP]: Yes.

[JH]: And what would you say is your most memorable moment as a volunteer?

[KP]: Taking the children on holiday, taking those children on holiday. That was my most memorable, yes, that was. And the second was the concert, yes. All those children on that stage, yes, that was, yes.

[JH]: Well, thank you for talking to me today Kathleen.

[KP]: That's okay my love.

[JH]: And this will make a really good contribution to our Voices of Volunteering Project.

[KP]: Okay, thank you.

[JH]: I'll stop there.

[End of interview - 01:25:01]

