

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

Ref. No.: GREA

Collection Title: Voices of Volunteering

Interviewee's Surname: Greeves

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Ann Elizabeth

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

1977-Present (2015) (Volunteer)

1977-Present Royal Sussex County Hospital Out Patients Department Tea Bar

Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To): 12/03/2015 (Track 1)

Location of Interview: Interviewees Home, Brighton, Sussex

Location Interview is Deposited: Royal Voluntary Service Archive and Heritage Collection, Devizes, Wiltshire

Name of Interviewer: Jennifer Anne Hunt

Type of Recorder: H5 Zoom

Total no. tracks: 1

Mono or Stereo: Stereo

Recording Format: WAV 44.1/16

Total Duration: 00:46:54

Additional Material: Biography Sheet and Recording Agreement

Copyright: Royal Voluntary Service

Clearance: Yes

Interviewer's Notes:

Ann Greeves (AG) talks about her time as a volunteer for the Royal Sussex County Hospital Out Patients Department (O.P.D) Tea Bar since 1977 to the present day. She describes the food and drinks that were sold, particularly the pride she felt at making the sandwiches and scones for the tea bar and her enjoyment at talking to the patients. She describes the changes which have occurred over the last 38 years, both within the tea bar but also overall within the charity. She also talks about receiving her long service meal and becoming a Diamond Champion, concluding by discussing her views on the future of Royal Voluntary Service (RVS).

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
00:00:02	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Would you please introduce yourself? AG describes that she had served within the WRVS for 38 years, doing Mondays and Thursdays. She talks about the process of only having wooden pots, no tills, to keep the money in, having to wash china cups and tea cloths, and that they made their own sandwiches which were egg, cheese and cheese and marmite. She explains that she had to go along to the main kitchen of the hospital every Monday to collect the trays of eggs which she then cooked and mashed, the cheese came grated and they used big jars of marmite and Bovril. AG explains that they made the sandwiches themselves and placed them in plastic bags and sold them. She says that they used to take pride in making the sandwiches and that everybody seemed to like them.</p> <p>Why did you join WRVS? AG explains that she attended a coffee morning in Harrington's Store in Brighton, and heard about the opportunities available at the hospital. As she was told that travel expenses were paid she had she could manage to give her free time. Before volunteering she had been a secretary at the National Buildings Society and had left and worked at Sucurico before having a break down, which left her not having the confidence to even cross the road. AG describes her first visit where a lady named Flo left her with the money, describing that she had not wanted any responsibility like that but that she was left to get on with it which resulted in her building up her confidence, mentioning that she felt that her volunteering made her better and was a real benefit. She describes that initially she did two mornings a week and this progressed to four, describing that she cycled to the hospital. AG talks briefly about Chrissie Morgan who was the Hospital Organiser saying that she treated all the volunteers like a family. She says that she has spent the whole 38 years at the O.P.D but that she also has worked within the A&E and once at the Eye department but that she did not like that as it was quite miserable.</p>
00:06:04	<p>What did you know about WRVS before you joined? AG says that she knew nothing and that she just happened to go down to Harrington's and there was a coffee morning and she just sat and had a coffee and a chat which led to her starting to volunteer.</p> <p>Did you wear a uniform when you first started volunteering?</p>

	<p>AG describes that she wore an apron but now wears a tabard which she then describes saying that she also wears all her medals while she volunteers as it is a talking point for patients, especially those that are very scared and want someone to talk to as it starts a conversation. AG mentions that a lot of people do not realise that she is a volunteer and that they do not know the difference between those being paid and those volunteering.</p>
00:08:36	<p>Has the Out Patients canteen changed? AG says yes, describing what the layout in the small room used to be and that now the Hospital has taken over that room for its own use and the canteen has been moved into a much larger space. AG then describes her routine and that she starts volunteering at 7:15 every morning and leaving at 12 for the last 38 years, stating that she now only does once a week. AG mentions that she feels there has been a change with it going from working for a charity to it now feeling like you are working for a business. She describes it as working in a Supermarket and that its all money, money, money. AG tells a story of being able to give diabetic patients Lucozade if they were in trouble but that that's all changed now and the patients have to buy it. She says that she misses helping the patients and that she is now stuck in a room with a till and a computer and misses being able to get out and help the patients like she used to.</p> <p>Apart from patients is there anyone else that uses the canteen? No it's locked up, with the keys having to be put in a pouch and given to the Manager. In the morning these then need to be collected and the seal removed to open up, with AG explaining that there are now a lot of forms to fill out in the morning and that the number on the seal has to be recorded. AG says the volume of work has just gradually increased.</p>
00:13:17	<p>What happened to the profits that the shop made? AG explains that it all went to the hospital, which was the reason the volunteers enjoyed the experience because all the profits benefited the hospital. She mentions that the volunteers are now not sure who benefits from the profits. AG then tells the story of helping when the hospital had a staffing shortage, being trusted to work for two weeks to sterilise the instruments for the operations.</p> <p>Were there any other things that you did for the hospital with WRVS? AG says she was on the emergency call out service but that they were never called out. Explains that Jean Wilson used to organise that service and that she did not work at the hospital but in the office which was in Edwards Street, which has now been sold. AG explains that Jean used to work with the clothing store, explaining that doctors used to give letters to patients if clothing was needed and that children's holidays were also organised for those children, referred by doctors, who needed a holiday.</p>
00:17:33	<p>You mentioned the tea and sandwiches you served, has that changed? AG explains that yes because they used to make them themselves, explaining that they used to put extra egg in the sandwiches on Mondays which the patients looked forward to. She explains that it used to be a lot of work, but that it was nice, and that one point they made and sold tuna sandwiches and scones, but that they are not sold anymore.</p>

00:21:13	<p>She describes that they used to just sell tea, coffee and sometimes Bovril in hot water, not all the silly things they have now serve like lattes and cappuccinos.</p> <p>AG explains that everything is now all pre packed and that they fill in an order form once a week, as well as forms on the computer. Explains that they used to sell toasted teacakes and had a microwave but that that was taken away when the one in the children's department broke, with there now being no facilities to warm anything up.</p> <p>Do you think the hospital canteen has as much importance now that all that change has come in?</p> <p>AG says that she feels that it is very important still to staff and patients, explaining that the volunteers are treated like friends and that the staff are very kind. AG talks about the atmosphere not being the same because of the need for profits, being regularly told by staff at Cardiff that they are down on profits.</p> <p>Has this change come in recently or has it been more long term?</p> <p>AG says that it has been long term and that it has been like this for years, since they have had the new canteen, with ginsters doing the sandwiches and a coffee machine being hired. She then describes a time when men came to fix the coffee machine in the middle of a busy morning. AG then talks about everything becoming commercialised, describing the loss of volunteers.</p>
00:25:37	<p>Do you know why those volunteers left?</p> <p>AG says that she feels that they get fed up and that it does not help having paid staff and yet the volunteers are working for nothing but do not get thanked for it. Mentions that she thinks the morale of volunteers in the WRVS is very low and that morale was better when it was just volunteers.</p> <p>When did you notice paid staff coming in to WRVS?</p> <p>AG talks about noticing the changes once the new Chief Executive, David McCullough was appointed, before then there was just one supervisor paid, now there are more paid staff working in the canteen.</p>
00:29:10	<p>Have you found the name change, dropping the 'w', has brought in more men?</p> <p>AG says yes and that there are now four men working in the canteen.</p> <p>What did you think about the change in name?</p> <p>AG says that it has not made much difference because there has been no change to the sign in the hospital or to the logos in the canteen. She says that nobody really takes any notice, with patients still referring to them as WRVS.</p>
00:30:42	<p>Have there been any other changes to WRVS that you've noticed?</p> <p>AG talks about not having the get togethers like they used to at Edwards Street. If a volunteer was given a long service medal for example there would be a party, but they do not have gatherings like that anymore. She then explained that the volunteers get invited by the hospital to a buffet once a year at Christmas. AG also talks about Chrissie sending flowers to volunteers if they were ill or ring them quite regularly to see if they were alright, but that that contact is not there anymore.</p>

00:35:01	<p>Do you think the Royal Voluntary Service has lost its social aspect? AG says yes and that it has lost its personal aspect, which she feels a bit bitter about, saying that there are not that many volunteers left. She describes when the canteen is manned in both the O.P.D and A&E and that level eight, rheumatology and possibly the eye clinic tea bars are all being taken over by Costa. AG explains that volunteers used to be able to work alone but that they now have to work in pairs. She also talks about originally being able to volunteer only two hours a day but now having to give four hours, which she thinks is quite a long time for a retired person to do.</p> <p>Have you been involved in any other WRVS services? AG says no and that she has always volunteered at the hospital. She does mention that she did also used to help testing diabetics, which she loved because she was working with the patients and teaching them.</p> <p>Do you remember how you got your long service medal? AG say yes at a tea party where several other volunteers received their medals at the same time from Lady Emmerson [00:36:33]. She goes on to describe that her voluntary role cured her from having a breakdown as it gave her confidence which she now has plenty of. She also mentions that she has been allowed to train people within the canteen, saying that volunteers did use to go on food hygiene courses but that this is no longer done as the volunteers no long cook anything, it is all pre-packed.</p>
00:38:51	<p>How did you feel about being a Diamond Champion in 2012? AG says it was a shock as she was recommended and that it was a pleasant surprise. She mentions that she didn't really get excited because Jackie never really acknowledged that the award was anything to do with WRVS. AG says that she didn't go up to London to receive her award because she wasn't going to travel that far or go to the expense so she received it in the post.</p>
00:40:01	<p>Did you celebrate the 75th Anniversary? AG says no, nobody went anywhere; no one from Brighton went to London. She says that she has not celebrated any of the anniversaries over the years, only seeing the celebrations that were happening elsewhere through the magazine. She mentions that there isn't much conversation between the supervisors and volunteers.</p>
00:41:12	<p>Is there anything we haven't talked about today that you would like to mention? AG just mentions that she would like to continue to volunteer to see if she can get to 40 years.</p> <p>What was the biggest change you've experienced as a WRVS volunteer? AG talks about the change from making the sandwiches which she took pride in doing to now using all pre-packed items. She mentions that she is not even allowed to make mince pies at Christmas and is not allowed to even give them to staff. She thinks the most disappointing thing is that volunteers are not close enough to people anymore, it's all money and profit, which no longer all goes to the Hospital.</p>
00:42:48	<p>Where would you say Royal Voluntary Service place in society is today?</p>

00:44:26	<p>AG says that she thinks it is very important and that she always wears her badge when she goes out because she thinks that if people see it they feel that they can trust you.</p> <p>What do you think is the future for Royal Voluntary Service?</p> <p>AG says that she is not sure, saying she thinks it needs to be re-organised, that she is not sure how to do this, but that she feels there are enough staff for something to be done.</p> <p>What is your most memorable moment with WRVS?</p> <p>AG mentions her years making sandwiches, the initial years where the volunteers were putting their all into it and helping people. She talks about the tables which used to be placed outside the canteen and that if they were not busy she would sit outside and talk to the patients, but now all the tables, except one, has been taken away. AG says it was nice to talk to the patients and that they would talk of their ailments and you could put their minds at rest. AG mentions that it is hard work now and that everything has to be cleaned, forms have to be filled in and the tills to use which the volunteers don't understand if something goes wrong.</p>
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