

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

Ref. No.: SPAB

Collection Title: Voices of Volunteering

Interviewee's Surname: Sparks

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Barbara

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

Volunteer 1978-Present (2015)

Clothing Store

Emergency Services

Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To): 07/07/2015 (Track 1)

Location of Interview: Interviewees Home, Somerset

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

Name of Interviewer: Jennifer Anne Hunt

Type of Recorder: H4n Zoom/H5 Zoom

Total no. tracks: 1

Mono or Stereo: Stereo

Recording Format: WAV 44.1/16

Total Duration: 01:42:15

Additional Material: Biography Sheet and Recording Agreement

Copyright: Royal Voluntary Service

Clearance: Yes

Interviewer's Notes:

Barbara Sparks (BS) talks about her time as a WRVS volunteer from 1979-2015 in Somerset and the South West of England. Mentions being involved in the Clothing Store in Taunton and then moving on to be involved in Emergency Services (ES) as a volunteer. BS also comments on being an Area Manager for Emergency Services as an employee. She concludes with her thoughts on Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) current situation and her other memories of ES Exercises.

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
<p>[00:00:09]</p> <p>[00:05:50]</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Please can you introduce yourself? BS introduces herself, says she joined in 1978 and explains why she joined/how she found out about ES. Comments on working in the clothing store in Taunton to do 40 duties to become a member.</p> <p>Who would come into the clothing store? Sent by social services, had to have a need, three changes of clothing twice a year, talks about recording who had had clothes. BS talks about why it was sad to see some of the people coming into the clothing store. Comments on going three times a week.</p> <p>Where was the clothing store? Taunton, County Office in Cannon Street clothing store in a Porter Cabin which you could access from a back street. Talks about a relative in social services loving what WRVS clothing did.</p> <p>Where did the clothes come from? BS talks about donations of clothing, how donations were sorted and checked. Comments on how the store was managed.</p> <p>After you had done your forty duties did you stay with the clothing store? Stayed with the clothing store till taking the role of the deputy county ES organiser.</p> <p>Before you joined WRVS what did you know about the organisation? BS says she knew nothing, never heard of them, comments on Pat Bridgers talk on ES, having to wear uniform and being given a second hand uniform. Describes the uniform she first wore.</p> <p>What are your earliest memories of volunteering with WRVS? BS talks about an ES exercise called 'The Nuclear Stew' which included making the 'WRVS boiled pudding'.</p>
<p>[00:12:07]</p>	<p>Emergency Services</p> <p>Was that part of training to be in ES? Had done basic training before, happened in people's homes with qualified instructors mentions one of the topics was cooking. More practical training at that time.</p> <p>Did you do any other exercises? Comments on: The Queen Mother's 80th Birthday celebrated with children's holiday activities (hostess families). Five District Carols Services for old people's clubs, one service in each district county staff went to as many as they could. Mentions the: celebration for WRVS's Golden Jubilee in 1988; St Marys Hospice fate; Bath and West Show Crèche facilities and information booths; helped Police lost children facilities at carnivals in Somerset.</p>

[00:19:35]	<p>Did the number of shows/events you did change over the years? Yes</p> <p>Did you get involved in the Pilton Pop Festival (Glastonbury)? BS talks about what WRVS did in the early 1980s after the festival because people could not get people off the site and there was an outbreak of dysentery. Comments on her children helping the WRVS volunteers at the feeding point. One year there was torrential rain and people were in danger of hypothermia at a camp.</p>
[00:26:00]	<p>Comment on being asked by the police to come to a legal rave to see if it would be suitable for WRVS to be called out to feed the police in the case of an illegal rave. Talks about her children benefiting from being in WRVS. Mentions being asked to take part in an exercise on Exmoor where search and rescue were looking for army cadets pretending to be lost and not having any toilets. Mentions her and her daughter going up in a helicopter with search and rescue. Comments on doing training in Six Form Colleges.</p>
[00:33:40]	<p>BS discusses the 1989/90 Westland's Grand Charity Ball for Great Ormond Street Hospital, it had a wartime blitz theme and two 'Allo 'Allo cast members a guest stars.</p> <p>Comments on collecting books and magazines as packing equipment and reading during the Falklands War. At a county meeting mentions one of the county organiser's comments on some of the magazines they were donated.</p>
[00:39:05]	<p>What emergencies have you attended? Comments on Boscastle Floods with Angela Currie, Fire at Pentalo feeding the firemen, Survivor reception for those who had been in the fire and evacuation centre for people who could not get to surrounding hotels. Talks about a train fire in the Bridgewater/Taunton area. Mentions firemen calling her mum. Comments on St Paul's riots and feeding the police.</p> <p>Talks about the ODA and a photograph of her and Angela Currie being given a poncho to sleep in on a camping exercise in Wales.</p>
[00:45:05]	<p>Comments on going to Easingwold College for training and having to borrow uniform because it had to be worn every day. Mentions going to the Library and seeing a WVS film about a rest centre in the Bath area.</p> <p>Mentions an exercise in Devon where a ship had been sunk and Devon's sticker system.</p> <p>Did you have quite a lot of volunteers in ES? BS comments on having 100s of volunteers and talks about a team in Frome having 76 volunteers for the town. Collected children for the Hostess children's holidays gave some children clothing, one boy was sent home because he fished all the coy carp out of the Hostess' pond. Comments on one child going to a guide camp. Mentions one child growing up to join the ES team.</p>

[00:51:20]	<p>What happened when you were called to say there was an emergency? BS talks about the procedure when they were called about an emergency and how changes in society and social attitudes in the 1980s affected work of WRVS. Comments on losing volunteers because of communication and requirement issues.</p> <p>Mentions assisting at an exercise on the motorway and having no light to work in. Comments on the equipment they used for ES.</p>
[00:57:19]	<p>How did you feel when you went out on an emergency? BS mentions trepidation and adrenalin kicking in, some volunteers had to be forced to go home to sleep.</p> <p>How did WRVS change while you were a volunteer? ‘The volunteers were volunteers’ BS talks about changes to pay and ES not being paid in the South West Region. Comments on the £1000 grants which some people got for working for ES for one day a week. BS was paid a grant when she became deputy area manager but worked more than one day a week on the same grant money.</p> <p>Discusses One-in-Five scheme and disliking giving the training but stopped soon after she started. Comments on one volunteer being given a rough ride for the talk she was giving.</p> <p>Did you think it was useful? BS talks about running the talk and information by her father who laughed and said it was not but only if it made people feel better about it and that they could do something about it.</p>
[01:03:22]	<p>Goes back to talking about one of the instructors who gave BS her training at her home. Comments on the difference when some of the local offices were closed in Somerset.</p>
[01:12:00]	<p>Did you find the number of volunteers getting involved got less and less? Talks about not have district organisers or focal point to push for volunteers, a lot moved over to the Red Cross. Comments on keeping in contact with the different areas she managed in the South West, how she went from being a volunteer to an employee. BS comments on the changes to the role of ES Manager and the distances she had to travel. Discusses amalgamation of different manager rolls and being made redundant as an employee but stayed involved with ES as a volunteer in Avon and Somerset. Stepped down from roles in ES in December 2014 and now compiles a magazine for Somerset RVS.</p>
[01:20:40]	<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Is there anything which we have not mentioned which you would like to talk about? Mentions going to the Buckingham Palace Garden party and not having to go in uniform because she was nominated by the Sheriff. Talks about meeting the Queen at Milton Hill and the Queen Mother at an event to commemorate the firefighters who lost their lives during the Second World War. Discusses the ODA with the Welsh Fusiliers and not</p>

<p>[01:28:15]</p>	<p>being happy with map reading and getting extra training from a Marine. Comments on training volunteers to run a crèche facility. Comments on the Council being told to take RVS off their emergency plans and her retirement from ES.</p> <p>What was the biggest change to RVS and ES while you were involved? BS comments on getting rid of the soya boilers and cars, talks about updating equipment and becoming more professional.</p> <p>Where do you think RVS's place in society today? BS comments on why she thinks it is not with old people, gone down the wrong role and the majority of volunteers being older.</p> <p>What do you think is the future for RVS? 'I don't know, I really don't know', comments on moving away from children's services, losing out to Costa Coffee in Hospitals. Discusses the time Taunton Hospital approached WRVS to run a coffee shop which they did not take up. Comments on who paid for WRVS ES when they were called out. Comments on exercises and people playing roles in rest centres, having volunteers who spoke other languages and the different roles BS played on exercises.</p>
<p>[01:38:20]</p>	<p>Talks about Health and Safety inspections on exercises and the report that went back to the Emergency planners. Comments on her husband falling on the first event he helped out at a WRVS event and then joining as a member.</p>

