

SELLAFIELD STORIES

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWER: Geoff Wilkinson

INTERVIEWEE: Norman Blakeney

DATE OF BIRTH: 7th September 1924

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 11th March 2010

EQUIPMENT USED: Marantz PMD 671 recorder, 44.16 kilohertz AKGC
414 microphone

GW: *This an interview with Norman Blakeney for the Sellafield Stories project, my name's Geoff Wilkinson and it's the 11th March 2010, we're using a Marantz PMD 671 recorder at 44.16 kilohertz, an AKGC 414 microphone. Right er Norman can you tell me where and on what date you were born*

NB: I was born on the er 7th September 1924

GW: *and where was that?*

NB: Bransty

GW: *at Bransty?*

NB: yes

GW: *and what were your parents doing at the time, what was your dad?*

NB: my dad was a lithographer at Smith's printing works on North Shore

GW: *right*

NB: at that time

GW: *yea*

NB: erm, then he, he got a job away, we were moved to West Bromwich for a number of years

GW: *right yea*

NB: and er then came back again, to Smith's again and he, he retired there and er while this was going on I er, left school, I finished my schooling at Moor Row and erm got a job, an electrician originally and that didn't last very long, er, work sort of dried up and I finished up serving an apprenticeship at Cumberland Motor Services as a coach painter and sign writer up until 1942 when I was, went into the forces and er came out in 1947, I finished my apprenticeship at the bus company, was an, what they called an interrupted apprenticeship scheme if your apprenticeship wasn't complete when you were called up they had to take you back again until you finished it you see, and then...up until, well I came out of the forces in 1947 and I had about maybe six months er apprenticeship to do and er I finished that and while this was going on I er, I always liked driving and er I passed me PSV test and I went round just at weekends, er, that went on a wee bit and then I finally, I was still in the paint shop at the time while I was doing it and

then, maybe, I carried that on for about three or four months and then decided I liked it that much I went full time, I left the er paint shop and I went bus driving full time for about, up until about 1950 maybe, something like that and then, erm, I got a job with the er, cos the money wasn't, those days I suppose it was quite good but the flat week bus driving was about £9 something and er I got the chance, an offer of a job driving contract er buses erm at Sellafield, driving contractors backwards and forwards in onto the site

GW: can I just stop you there Norman cos we're doing a, a whistle stop tour through your life but can I take you back, right back er to your childhood and talk about what er your childhood was like, I mean you were born in Bransty, how long did you live there before you father moved jobs?

NB: I should say about er...five or six year I should say

GW: right, right, so you, did you actually go to school in, in Whitehaven then, primary school?

NB: er yea, er went to the er national school as it was then, erm, I was there a few years and then that's when we went away

GW: right, so had you already made friends in, in the

NB: yea

GW: national school?

NB: yea, yea, yea

GW: so what did you feel about moving away at such a young age?

NB: well I suppose at that age it was exciting you know it's a change of everything really erm, making new friends and so forth

GW: did you have any brothers or sisters?

NB: no I'm the only one

GW: right

NB: yea and er

GW: so you moved to West Bromwich?

NB: West Bromwich yea and we were there about I should say, not really sure maybe four or five year and then we came back to Whitehaven

GW: *do you know why your dad moved jobs?*

NB: well I don't really, I can only think that er maybe money was better at Whitehaven in them, I'm not really sure, he didn't er, I didn't go into it much you know at that age

GW: *no, of course*

NB: kind of thing, er, but he was, he, they sent him down he was at Smith's, he was there a number of years, I'm not sure how many but he finished his time there and er we er got a house at Hensingham and er went on from there, er, finished me school work and er, we were there, my dad died there and mother was on her own

GW: *when did your dad die Norman?*

NB: now then, 61, yes 61, yea and erm mother was on her own for a while and then in the meantime

GW: *so you would be about 37 then?*

NB: yea

GW: *yea*

NB: and

GW: *so just again thinking about your er, the time when you came back to Whitehaven erm, and you went to school there, which school were you going to at that time?*

NB: that was at the er...I'd be Moor Row school then but yes Moor Row

GW: *right, ok*

NB: yea Moor Row, er

GW: *was that a continuation of your primary education or?*

NB: yes it would be because er I forgot to mention that er when we came back to Whitehaven the second time er we stayed with dad's mother for a while until we got a house at Moor Row, and we moved to Moor Row and that's how I connected to Moor Row school

GW: *I see, yea*

NB: and er finished schooling there and er just then as I finished school we moved back to Hensingham, got a house in Bedford Street in Hensingham and that, finished school and that's when it all started, work at bus station in, for

GW: *but what, where was your sort of secondary education then Norman?*

NB: erm...

GW: *did you move schools?*

NB: no well when we came back to Whitehaven the second time I went to national school, I started there and from there, this was when we moved to Moor Row, I went from there to Moor Row school

GW: *right*

NB: so primary education would be in the national school and I finished my schooling at Moor Row school

GW: *right and what age when you left school?*

NB: fourteen

GW: *fourteen*

NB: yea

GW: *I see yea, and had you had any sort of favourite subjects at school?*

NB: erm, geography, liked to read, er, art, er wasn't too keen on maths but er we managed, we managed, and then

GW: *would you say that you enjoyed school overall?*

NB: yes, yea, yea, erm, and I left, when I left Moor Row school that's when er I started the electrician's apprenticeship at Whitehaven

GW: *right, and who was that with?*

NB: T S Bell in Tangiers Street, and er, it wasn't a job I really liked so in the meantime dad had er found out that there was a vacancy going at the bus station in, in the paint, I wanted to be a fitter actually but er there was no vacancy so there was one in the paint shop so I took that and I got to really like it and erm, I was just picking up sign writing and stuff

like that and then I went in the forces and then it went on from there, in the forces about five year

GW: *now you were telling me the other day that erm you'd had this er wish to be a, to join the air force*

NB: I did yes

GW: *and be a pilot*

NB: I did yes, yea and er...

GW: *and what did your mother think about that?*

NB: well she wasn't very keen, er, I wrote away and got a reply back saying that at that particular time er there was quite a inrush of air crew, you know people wanting air crew and that there was, there was no vacancy at that time so, in the, afterwards I don't know how long it'd be but I began to think that it was funny that they'd never got another reply and erm mother told Joan my wife, oh what year would it be, it was a number of years later anyway that er I'd been in the army and come out of the army so it was quite a while, that er

GW: *you'd been in the army?*

NB: yes, we came out

GW: *right, did, did your daughter-in-law say the other day that you'd, that you'd been, kind of misled them about your age?*

NB: I did, well no not really, erm

GW: *right*

NB: not really I was eighteen, just, just turned eighteen

GW: *oh I see right*

NB: but erm it would be in mid 50s I should think mother told Joan, my wife, that er there'd been a reply saying that I'd been accepted as air crew but she'd burned the letter

GW: *oh I see right*

NB: so it's a good, it's a good thing I didn't know at the time

GW: *that's right aye*

NB: the, but however I think, I don't know, erm, the way I look at things, maybe it was all for the best because knowing me I should think if I'd got in air crew er there's a higher risk obviously but er, things could might have, might have turned out differently whereas, I went in the army and I hated it at first but I got to like it and I made some good friends and er, they'd taught me how to drive and I drove a track vehicle and er

GW: *which regiment were you in Norman?*

NB: pardon

GW: *which regiment were you in?*

NB: oh I started in Border Regiment and then er most of my time once I got abroad was in the Royal Scots Fusiliers and erm until the war ended and then I got transferred to the Worcester Regiment and I finished my, came out demobbed from the Worcester Regiment in Germany, erm, and on the whole it, I hadn't a bad war really, er, I sometimes think that if I had got to be accepted in air crew things might have been totally different

GW: *might have been different yea*

NB: much higher risk and everything involved

GW: *yea*

NB: so I think it turned out for the best really

GW: *yea, so what sort of postings did you get in, in, in the war?*

NB: what was that then?

GW: *what sort of postings did you get?*

NB: postings?

GW: *mm*

NB: erm, I went to er, left the Border Regiment erm to a holding point in Norfolk and we went abroad from there and that's when I automatically went into this Royal Scots Fusiliers and we were erm, joined them in Naples and we went up from Naples in the Anzio landings, you'll have heard about those, and then from there to southern Italy, erm, back up again to erm, into Germany and we went to Germany right up to, oh

right up to erm...erm the Baltic sea, right up to there and then back down again, southern Italy again and then we jumped across to the Middle East to Haifa erm we were there patrolling about in there for a while and then came back to Italy, back into Germany again, back into erm, down back into Belgium and then I was demobbed from there and we made our way back into this country and I was demobbed, came back out of the army in York, that was the headquarters for the Worcester regiment so whichever regiment you were in whichever their base depot was, if I'd stayed in the Royal Scot Fusiliers their depot was in Ayr, I'd have went to Ayr but as it happened this Worcester regiment their depot was in York so demobbed from York and that's

GW: *yea so you said that you learnt to drive in the army did you?*

NB: yes I did, I did yes, erm, went on to trucks first and then erm jumping the gun a wee bit before I went into the army I was in the Home Guard and erm, they had all sort of fantastic weapons you know, make do things and I got on to a mortar, firing a mortar and er when I was called up in the army they asked me what I wanted to be, I wanted to be in a tank regiment I said and they said well seen that you er you've had experience of firing mortar how would it be if you're put in a mortar platoon and you'd be taught to drive a carrier, Bren carrier, a track vehicle, so I said ah that'll be ok, so that's what happened so I learnt to drive first on a fifteen hundred weight truck and then after about er, this was in Carlisle, and er and then I went on to carriers and er was on carriers the whole time and then right through until I left the Fusiliers and went into the Worcester Regiment and then I went onto trucks which was even better still and there

GW: *what sort of tonnage?*

NB: oh just er three tonners

GW: *right*

NB: three tonners up to five tonners you know, that was more or less the proper size of truck that was available then you know, er, anything above that was er, was really heavy for say breakdowners, Scammels pulling er tanks out of ditches and this sort of thing you know, well that was out of my scene altogether, but no really enjoyed it and as I say it started from there, coming back home and

GW: *did you see any action when you were in the war?*

NB: yes, er at Anzio I was er, we were in German positions for a while, erm, they were sort of retreating back to Rome and when we got into Rome, we garrisoned Rome for three or four weeks and then er pulled back and then went into Germany and as I say er, I crossed the Rhine and er, went up to there as I say up to the Baltic coast and then came back again that was more or less it

GW: *yea, yea*

NB: the war ended erm when I was outside Hanover I think and erm it just calmed down after that you know, erm, no it erm, it wasn't a bad war for me really it could have been a lot worse

GW: *so when you came back er, back home so to speak, er you would be what, about twenty one?*

NB: twenty two, yea twenty one, between twenty one and twenty two yes, I had twenty first, I was twenty one in Trieste, when I was in Trieste I was twenty one then so

GW: *big celebration Norman?*

NB: no, none at all, none at all, so er, yea I'd be about twenty two I would say when I came home

GW: *yea and what did you do when you came home, were your parents still both alive?*

NB: yes, yes, they were parents that's er when I went, met Joan then in about 47, so it was the summer of 47

GW: *and where did you meet Joan?*

NB: so we've been together since 47, a long time

GW: *where did you meet her?*

NB: yea

GW: *where did you meet her?*

NB: she worked in Mark Taylor's and I was the, I bought a new bike there when I came home you know and that's how we met there, we just went on from there

GW: *right*

NB: she's had a lot to put up with but we manage

GW: *right, so, your dad would still be working?*

NB: yes he was

GW: *then was he at Smith's?*

NB: yea

GW: *was he, did your mam work?*

NB: mother?

GW: *mm*

NB: no, no, she didn't no

GW: *right, and what did you do when you came back?*

NB: erm well as I say we'd, we'd a generous sort of leave, demobilisation leave when you came home and erm, not a lot really, er rode about on a bike, bought myself an old car and erm, and then as I say I started back at the bus station and erm just finished my time there and carry on driving buses and I've been driving ever since more or less, you know right up until erm

GW: *so you were driving buses er for Cumberland Motor Services?*

NB: yea

GW: *right, and did you, you took a PSV test?*

NB: I did at the bus station yes, yes, and er

GW: *what sort of routes did you, did you drive on?*

NB: oh everywhere at, originally when you first started there they, they was A and B rotas and the, the B rota was the one where you first did all town service runs you know and then when you'd been there so long if there was a vacancy you moved up to the A rota and then you got on to outside ones like Thornhill, Carlisle, Keswick and whatever you know and er, no I really enjoyed it and then as I say I was there five years maybe and then I went onto the er constructing er constructor buses at Sellafield, old London transport buses and then

GW: *what were they then Norman?*

NB: well they

GW: *constructor's buses?*

NB: there was about three, three different firms did the same job, erm, and they were all second hand, all second hand double deckers and er, they used to, there was a south camp then at Sellafield with, staffed full of er Irish workers mostly, you know, they were building Calder at the time and erm we used to carry them from that end, from there right round to the other side of the site in a morning, bring them back at, when they were finished and also take other workers, local workers out to Cleator Moor or wherever, you know, Frizington, Whitehaven, Hensingham and that, and er, that was ok

GW: *who were you working for at the time then, who were?*

NB: a firm were called Baileys, they, he er, clever fellow he had a hanger on er Annan airfield and he used to do up Gardner engines stuff like that, fantastic, and sell, export them abroad you know to these poorer countries you know and so his buses were quite well maintained and then, I were there I think four year and the job finished

GW: *was it better paid than Cumberland Motor Services?*

NB: oh yea, yea, well buses flat rate was about £9 something, this was £12 something and then er it sort of faded out and job was complete at Calder and er I went back onto Cumberland Motor Services for a few months and er in the meantime trying to get a job at Blue Circle Cement and er they were based in Marchon at that time, and er we used to go up regularly to see their boss in there, in the Marchon, in Weighbridge offices and er he, went up one day and he said 'oh when can you start, can you start sort of tomorrow?', 'oh' I says 'I can't do that, I'll have to work a week's notice' says oh well he says 'that's alright' he was an ex policeman, grand fellow, and erm, took me out for a driving test in a wagon and er ok, so I had a week's notice, put a week's notice in at the bus station and er started on there and that, that was a really first class job, I really enjoyed that, I finished up, for a short while I was on flat wagon with bags and then I got onto erm tanker delivery, erm, foden tank and that and erm that was as I say I was there about sixteen years, and

GW: *how did you get your heavy goods then Norman?*

NB: well, erm, heavy goods er licence hadn't come in then because there was people getting started who had never driven a wagon before and just, you just didn't, there was no qualifications needed sort of thing but while I was there it came out that er, and you just, your manager referred you to, recommended you rather, got some forms to fill and er class one, two, three, and er it, it, whatever you more or less wanted really, providing you know you'd been, you'd experience driving heavy wagons and he just filled a form in and it came back and you were a class two or a class one and it's, that was it you know, erm as I say I was there sixteen years and then the

GW: *and what, where, whereabouts did you drive, what routes did you drive on*

NB: oh well now then

GW: *with Blue Circle?*

NB: everywhere really, right up in Scotland as far as Glasgow and down as far as Southport, er, eastwards more, maybe York, that was about, that was about it erm

GW: *did you have to stay overnight?*

NB: yes, we did yes

GW: *in places?*

NB: yea, yea erm

GW: *there would be no motorways then?*

NB: no, no, and the er, the speed limit for the company vehicles, didn't count outside like of course, but company vehicles was still based on twenty miles an hour, you know, and vehicles only capable of er, Foden er, was only capable of forty three flat out well the older Fodens would only do about thirty three so you were talking say going to Barrow your timing was still based on twenty mile an hour so you get eleven hours to go to Barrow and back which was ridiculous you know, ridiculous really, things is we went on a piece work system, a bonus system where er, you were paid by the mileage that you did so that, and the quicker you did it well the better off you were, you know the more loads you could get in a day well obviously the better off you were, erm, management liked it and we liked it because it trebling our pay almost, you know, overnight, so that was, that was good and then

er, that finished, they, the supply dried up at Marchon and erm they started bringing tankers into the main goods yard at er, in Carlisle and we often, we'd travel every day from Whitehaven to Carlisle in a minibus, provided by the firm and erm worked all day and came back, well, it was alright a bit clashy but anyway eventually turned out that anybody that wanted to stay doing that could do so but none of us did, we wanted, it was too tiring you know so they started to employ Carlisle drivers and we gradually got paid off and erm some of us went to the Marchon and some went to Sellafield, I wasn't erm too keen on Sellafield at the time

GW: *why was that Norman?*

NB: but erm, well radiation, radioactivity and one thing and other and er, I thought well there wouldn't be any long runs to do driving, I got used to driving, I was doing about sixty five thousand a year with the wagon and another eleven thousand with the car and I thought well if I go there I'm going to be severely curtailed, I maybe won't like it, anyway I did go and, eventually, and I went on to site clearance at first which was in the active area erm, keeping site clean and tidy you know sort of thing, driving a skip wagon, filling it up with various bits of rubbish that was lying about and then came a vacancy, I er, there was not much sort of activity there in that job it was just in the site so then I got offer of a job driving a canteen van, which was, I'm still on site but it was more pleasurable you know so

GW: *and which company was that with then?*

NB: BNFL

GW: *you're still actually with*

NB: you're still on transport, still in transport yea

GW: *BNFL right*

NB: and er I was on that for a year or so

GW: *canteen van?*

NB: yea, yea

GW: *what was that then?*

NB: supplying all the canteens, taking girls out of different stations, used to go out in the morning with er supplies of erm food, like cakes and stuff

and tea urn and coffee urn and you used to drop them off at different buildings for, for their breaks, the people in the buildings breaks, you know, they'd come down and get this stuff and when their break was finished then they went back to work and girls had finished their job used to go round again and pick them up and bring them back to canteen, so that was ok, I stuck that for a year or two and then er, I got an offer of going on shift work on transport which er I thought would be a nice change and it was, I enjoyed it, er, I think the thing was at time that the shift work nobody wanted it because they were getting so many hours in on day work they were making, probably making more money than what they would have done on shifts you see so nobody wanted it, so, anyway, I took it and I really liked it, er, the variety you know you're doing all sorts of different jobs on site and going off site now and again

GW: *what sort of jobs would they be then?*

NB: well, erm, taking flasks from one building to another, erm

GW: *what sort of flasks, what?*

NB: radioactive flasks that the er, uranium and stuff like that was moved from one site to another and erm,

GW: *and was it kept in*

NB: yea

GW: *containers that, you know?*

NB: yea, yea and erm moving wagon and trailers about that left in the active area for doing this sort of work they more or less just left there then any, if anything wanted moved er a driver was sent in and you went in and you moved it you know that sort of thing, erm, car work, we used to take managers about now and again off site Carlisle airport, Carlisle station and pick them up, erm, that was about as far as we got but it was ok, and then erm, while I was doing that er on shift work, er I saw an advertisement for er in local paper for flight test at Carlisle airport, you know, er I thought oh I wouldn't mind that so anyways I went up, booked an hour flight with the instructor and er oh it was great, cos I'd always been interested in aircraft you know always been a bit frustrated with not being in the RAF so, er, I really enjoyed it, so anyways I er booked a course of lessons and started from there and erm, finally I er, I went solo for the ten hours and then carried on I think

it was er seventy hours or eighty hours total and then you had a flying test, er, for your licence which I passed and erm, just used to, after that lads at work had been following my progress you know and they're all highly delighted and quite a few of them wanted to fly and er, as passengers you know and look round their own area and that, which I did that a few times, I've had Joan up a few times, so I've really enjoyed it and then erm you used to have a medical every so often and er, every six months I think it was, and er it used to, it was fairly expensive, an aviation doctor at Carlisle used to do these things and er I found out I could have it done at BNFL you know, their medical centre there like so I did and er I think the second time I had it done there and er the doctor said 'oh' while I was, I must have been on leave at the time and er when I went back, Transport Manager 'oh' he says, it was a Dr Lawson Chief Medical Officer at Sellafield then, he says 'Dr Lawson will come down for you Norman' he says 'he wants to see you' I said 'did he say what for?' he says 'no' he says he was just leaning against side of office door he says 'he wouldn't say what he wanted to see you for' so anyway I went and saw him and he says 'oh' he says 'you've got a slight heart murmur' he says 'I'm afraid' and he was an ex pilot, war time pilot, he says 'I'm afraid that I can't pass you' 'oh' I says 'I expected that, that's ok' he says 'well I'll have to notify this doctor at Carlisle and er tell him' he says 'he'll probably ground you' I says 'well that's, that's one of them things' like you know, so anyways erm

GW: *you took it very well then Norman?*

NB: yea [laughter] so er I went, I went to see this doctor at Carlisle and he says 'oh' he says 'it's nothing to worry about' he says 'few months it'll have cleared up, it's nothing to worry about' well I never pushed it because I was getting on a wee bit then and I thought well, I've had quite a

GW: *how old would you be about, round about that time then Norman?*

NB: oh, sixties, sixty one, sixty two sommat like that

GW: *right, right*

NB: Joan used to often say how long are you gonna keep going, you know and I thought well, it's erm, I don't know whether a bit fatalist or what but I thought well I maybe could have an accident or anything like that and I've had a good time up to now so I called it a day and that was it, that was the finish of the flying you know

GW: *what did you fly Norman?*

NB: er Cessna 172s, Piper Tomahawks, erm, Grumman Tri [incomp], we were lucky because the flying club itself that I was in was owned by a fellow from Prestwick airport, he had a club there as well, and he was also an aircraft broker and he dealt with buying and selling aircraft so it meant that quite a few aircraft that he was waiting to sell or, or bought in er to sell, we were using them to fly so you got a hell of a variety of aircraft but normally if you went to a flying school you'd just stick to one type and that would be it, we got all sorts of fancy things, you know and it was great experience really, you know, to fly these different types

GW: *and the aircraft were owned by the club were they?*

NB: yea, yea, and erm, after I finished flying I er, I still went up once or twice as a passenger with, with er, various people that I knew you know and they used to let me have control like so, but anyway that finished that and erm, as I say erm, I finished transport, finished transport the last driving job I did was on the instrument van, driving the instrument technicians round site and off site er, and I was on that for almost er, four year maybe and that's when I finished at Sellafield, I retired from that job at sixty five, so that finished the Sellafield work

GW: *yea, but when you were saying that erm you worked as a chauffeur I think you said the other day*

NB: well, that, that, that came not as a regular chauffeur that came in shift work, you know, you would, you'd get all sorts of variety of jobs to do and that was one of them, you had to, your foreman would come and say 'oh I want you to take so and so to Carlisle airport or Manchester airport' but that was as far as we went you know, er the, the, I think there was er four, four regular chauffeurs had their own cars and they did nothing else but that and they used to go to London and all over the spot, you know maybe two, three times a week, well that didn't come under our jurisdiction at all, so that was really all the driving that I did with regards driving cars you know then

GW: *what sort of cars were you, were you driving?*

NB: well Ford Granadas at one time, Vauxhall Velox at another [coughs] and er I think the last one they had er, they would be er...yea they'd be Ford Granadas yea, yea, that'd be the last one that I drove there

GW: *yea, and was there anybody that you drove regularly in your?*

NB: no not really, not really no, no, erm,

GW: *so you didn't develop any particular friendships with any of the management or?*

NB: no not really, the car drivers did because they, they were among them the whole time you know, I mean they driving the managing director about and all this, they met these people and they were in among them the whole time so they made acquaintances you know, friendships I suppose, erm, no it I, I really enjoyed my time there it was plenty of variety you know

GW: *yea*

NB: I like that

GW: *right and, and any particular er tales that you remember, any particular highlights that you can recall during your work there?*

NB: well, well just one I'd maybe say was a highlight when I was working on the er contractors buses before I went onto BNFL when the er pile ran away you know the, the er, we saw this brown smoke coming out of one of the chimneys

GW: *that would be 1957 Norman?*

NB: yea it would be about that

GW: *yea*

NB: yea, and they say the wind was blowing southwards so it was maybe a good thing for us up this end er, and we were all, what we used to do was to, bus would be parked up in the morning after we'd done our runs in a morning and they didn't move again until finishing time for workers you know, so most days we used a bus and came home, well that particular day everybody got messages to go right into work right away you know and staff these buses in case people wanted to be run home which they did and erm

GW: *so what were you told at that time about what was happening?*

NB: we weren't told anything

GW: *right*

NB: we didn't know anything, probably BNFL people did or people on site did but we were off site so we didn't know anything you know we guessed it was sommat serious but that was all we knew, aye

GW: *so you were called in about what time of day?*

NB: er, now I'm not sure, can't remember it

GW: *so during day time hours?*

NB: oh yes aye

GW: *or it was during*

NB: er eleven o'clock sommat like that, ten thirty, eleven o'clock something like that, [coughs]

GW: *so how many trips did you have to make with the workers?*

NB: about three I should think, each of us did about three trips you know, no it er,

GW: *so as you said if the wind had been blowing er from the, the south west*

NB: the prevailing wind

GW: *prevailing wind*

NB: the prevailing wind is always blowing up this way you know

GW: *mm, but it was blowing the other way*

NB: it was blowing towards Millom yea, mm, I always remember that

GW: *and you know was there a lot of crack with the people who were coming off site, I mean what was the atmosphere like, what was the?*

NB: well, erm, most of, most of the people coming off site didn't seem to know much about it, they just sort of thought that it was emergency of some sort but they didn't seem to know any details you know, so they were just happy to get home early I think you know, erm, no that er, that's about the only thing I can think of that was er

GW: *yea, yea*

NB: out of the norm like

GW: *and, and did that sort of, was that one of the things that coloured your view about Sellafield because earlier on you were saying that you didn't really fancy working at Sellafield?*

NB: well that, that, that feeling I think just lasted, erm, once I got started then I saw things were going you know things operate and whatever and it never bothered me after that you know, quite enjoyed it, didn't bother me at all after that, but then I mean as long as you took precautions, I mean you went into the active area you'd to wear er overshoes, and come out put your hands in monitor and get your hands monitored you know and keep them well scrubbed and whatever and I think as long as you did the safety reg, safety rules completely and safely well there was no real er harm

GW: *no, you never felt that you were doing something dangerous that?*

NB: no, no not really, no, no

GW: *and were you working with a team of people when you were on transport Norman?*

NB: er, in, in the site clearance there was a team of us but you went out singularly on your own, you know, you didn't er go out as a team you just er maybe told to shift a few skips or empty them at Drigg you know, sommat like that, but er, that was it really, no, no it was ok on the whole it was ok, I enjoyed it

GW: *and how were you managed, you know who, who was sort of in charge?*

NB: er, well a fellow called er John Sparks was there when I first went, proper gentleman and then er he retired and er the erm, the next fellow that came on after that erm, his name just escapes me but he was there until I finished anyway

GW: *was he a good boss?*

NB: yes, aye, yes he's passed away now I think, he belonged Millom, yea he belonged Millom but er no, yes, all the foreman and bosses are all ok, they're good, they were good, you couldn't say a wrong word about any of them really you know

GW: *so the atmosphere generally was?*

NB: was good, was always I would say grand, yea, yea, they

GW: *so how long in total did you work on transport at?*

NB: well not long, from the time I started and finished er, not quite twelve year, wasn't a long time really but er that's how long it was about twelve year I'd say

GW: *and going back to when you and Joan married, erm, did you live in at first or did you get your own?*

NB: yes we lived in at first and then erm houses were at a premium and I couldn't get a house anywhere so we were on a council waiting list and er we thought well one solution we bought a caravan, twenty two foot caravan, and we based it in a farmer's field in Egremont and er by the time we'd been there a while there was two or three, had seen it from the road you know, mainly people that were working at Sellafield from away you know, and er, there were about three or four of us at first up and er, we were there about er five, six year and then our number came up for a house so we got a new council house at Milton Road and er

GW: *Milton Road?*

NB: yea Smithfield, it's

GW: *oh in Egremont*

NB: Egremont yea, and er we were there...ten year maybe and er Joan has all the dates, I can't remember but be about ten years and in the meantime me dad had died, my mother wasn't too good so she give her house up in Hensingham and came to stay with us at Milton Road and then er we spotted this house was empty, which was handy with downstairs toilet as well you know, so she came to stay with us and she er she finished her days here really so, and then we just carried on from there you know, so we've had a good retirement and

GW: *when did you say you moved into here?*

NB: what year?

GW: *mm*

NB: no you'd have to ask the boss, I'm not really sure, but er, we've been here I would say close on thirty years I should say in this house, we've been in Egremont total of about fifty odd, you know,

GW: *and do you have family?*

NB: I've a son yes, he's, he's married he has a son and daughter and lives at Moor Row in er, that's his wife that you met last time you were here, Susan, she's a nurse so

GW: *and what does he do?*

NB: he drives for Armstrong's transport, yea [whispering]

END

TRACK 2

GW: *right Norman we were talking about your er, your son, I think you said he worked for Armstrong's*

NB: yea

GW: *so he's, he's followed in father's footsteps so to speak*

NB: that's right yea, yea, yes aye, he likes it

GW: *and has he any family?*

NB: boy and a girl, yea

GW: *right*

NB: yea

GW: *and are they working?*

NB: one's at college and the other one works at school, school office at Stainburn, erm, they're good kids aren't they

[female voice answers yea]

GW: *so what age were you when you retired Norman?*

NB: sixty five

GW: *you, I imagine you were*

NB: I was working til I was sixty five yea

GW: *so up til you were sixty five and...what have you done since, you know in retirement?*

NB: well erm, I fly, I build flying model aircraft, remote control model aircraft but that, that's one of my hobbies and er, I do a bit of cycling now and

again, only when I can sit, and we like driving, we go out driving for quite a while and then our time's took up really, you know you say you're gonna retire you'll have tons of spare time but you don't really, it just flies in really, one week runs into another

GW: *are you a bit of a gardener as well did somebody say?*

NB: oh, Joan's, she, she's the gardener, I do the heavy work she does,

GW: *ah, yea*

NB: yea, no, we've had a good life

GW: *yea, so looking back on your, your working life, would you say that you'd had a happy time, an enjoyable time?*

NB: had a, yes, definitely yea, yea, everything I've done has been, it's been pleasant you know, it's been, it's been good, yea, I can't say I've had a bad job really

GW: *that's good, well thank you very much for the time er you've spent relating these interesting experiences Norman, and I've*

NB: well I hope you've found it of interest, I don't think it's very interesting

GW: *I certainly found it of interest because everybody's unique and everybody can bring a personal perspective to er, to things and that's exactly what we want, so thank you very much and er I'm sure it'll become an important part of our archive*

NB: ah good, thank you

GW: *that's it*

[Female: I can remember some dates for you, I remember]

NB: I know, yes

GW: *dates are difficult, as long as we've got a rough idea*

NB: yea

[Female: you were younger than sixty two, what did you say you did at sixty two]

GW: *said he retired from flying*

NB: no sixty five when I retired

[Female: I thought he meant]

GW: *no from flying, when you stopped flying*

NB: oh from flying, flying,

[Female: I thought you were younger than that, I thought you were much younger]

NB: was I?

[Female: my memory plays tricks with me so]

NB: wouldn't be much earlier than that I don't think

GW: *no, as I say it's, it's not so much the dates really, as long as they're approximate, it's what, it's the content you know, it's what you're telling us, I mean erm, as I say you know bits of things like you know when you were telling us about the licences that you didn't, you didn't, there wasn't a HGV licence, you know, that's something I didn't know, I thought they'd always been there, you know from the date*

NB: well from later on people had to have tests

GW: *yea, well that's right but*

NB: my son's the same, he, he failed it first time but he got it second time

GW: *yea*

[Female: there isn't much that you can't drive]

END