

AGE EXCHANGE UK

INTERVIEW WITH JANE BRUDER

Q: Where are you from Jane?

A: I was born up the Wicklow Mountains, we were farmers.

Q: You came to England in 1920?

A: That's right.

Q: Did you come to London?

A: No. I wanted to get away from home because all it was at home was hard work and no money.

Q: What was the hard work at home?

A: Horses and cattle and sheep _ not sheep I was nothing to do with sheep but I had to work on the farm and I was outdoors so I was like a boy and Bob and Bill were away during the war so it meant that Jim who was only a year older than me was head of the house.

Q: And how old were you then?

A: I was born in 1900, so that's easy. I wanted to get away from home because there was so much work for me to do and no relief and no money. I mean the boys, we girls worked in the yard and fed the horses and cleaned out the stables when they were out hunting and we were never, we girls were never allowed to hunt. For one reason was we had no _ if you get on a horse you must be perfectly _ must have a perfect outfit, my mother couldn't afford an outfit for us. That was bird and I.

Q: But did she afford one for the boys?

A: Oh yes. They were dressed to the waist but they were on the best horses.

Q: You said earlier that one of your sisters went into the confectionary business.

A: Oh yes she was the oldest, Babs. She was no horsewoman. There were only three of us, that was Bridget and Sarah and myself.

Q: And you said when she went into the confectionary business your mother had to pay a fee or something, can you tell me a little bit about that?

A: Well very little, only she had to pay thirty pounds fee and she had to keep her for two years in Bowls of Richmond Street in Dublin.

Q: Did you want to go into that business as well?

A: Well I wanted to get away from home, so how did I manage it? Well it was a Whit Monday, all the farmers went to (name) waterfall where we met the relations from Dublin and friends from Dublin and we had met them there and we had plenty to eat, there was a big marquee and plenty to eat and dancing and music, there was brass bands, military brass bands in Lord Prescott's place.

Q: Is that the same place that nowadays people go and visit and look at the waterfalls.

A: Yes that's the same place, same place but no Prescott's there now, they've gone. And I met a distant cousin of ours, Biddy Wilson and she was matron of the Richmond Asylum in Dublin. So she said 'how are you getting on Jane?' I said I'm just peppering to get away from home, I must get away. She said 'what are you thinking of doing?' 'I'll do anything, I'd just do anything'. So I knew a niece of hers May Short, she was in this nursing in the Richmond Asylum and she used to come and stay with us and she was a great sport and very friendly but we knew nothing about the background of Richmond Asylum. Jesus that was a dreadful place.

Q: Did you go and work there?

A: Yeah as a nurse. Well so, I said Biddy could you make room for me in your establishment? Oh she said Jane you wouldn't like it, oh no you would not like it. Yes I guarantee you wouldn't like it. Well I said I'll chance it if you'll take me, and she said I'll send a form to your mother and fill in the form and all the rest so the form came and the parish priest and the other was Major Wensley so I went on horseback.

Q: Sorry you went on horseback to the Richmond Hospital?

A: No. To see Major Wensley first and tell him that I _ ask him if he would be a reference, so he said yes rather. He said I'll give you a good reference for a horsewoman, and so he said I don't think you'll like it, so I said I'm going anyway. If I can get in I'm going.

Q: What you just felt it would be better to take anything and get away?

A: Yeah, and so I went to Father (name) and he said similar, you won't like it. But Biddy Wilson will do out the best she can for you I know that. He said I know you won't like it, so that was that. Well anyway I was accepted. Mother came with me and the entrance there was a gate and a man at the gate and in uniform and all lovely flowers, lovely trees, lovely lawns, oh it looked lovely and Biddy was expecting us and she had tea for us and she and mother talked quite a bit and anyway mother left and I cried day and night for three weeks.

Q: Can you remember what year this was?

A: 1919.

Q: What was it like?

A: Mad as hell. Oh Christ. It was mad, it was a mad house and it was as mad as hell. They were all as mad and there was no drugs of any description. At first I was put in with the ladies and these ladies a lot of them were far saner than I was, a lot of them were Wakely people, a lot of them knew the family and well, I was taken to the work room. In

this number 18 it was the ladies ward. Well Biddy put me there for to try and get me settled in and that was in the evening. The next morning was breakfast and there was on big dining room, huge dining room for all these people, all as mad as hatters, not all of them, and we were the last, 18 were the last to go in we were at the back, but they wouldn't _ they hadn't got cups and saucers, they had bowls and those bowls were flying here there and everywhere. I ran like hell. Got to my bedroom and cried.

Q: What exactly did you have to do, clean up after them?

A: No, just to pacify them, but my ward was all right, they didn't want pacifying, they were all practically sane with no one to claim them from home, they were there and they'd no one to claim them, they were more sane than I was.

Q: What maybe old people or?

A: Some of them were very aged and had been there for ages. So I got back to my room and the nurses came. For three weeks I was absolutely helpless, to being a mental nurse I was absolutely _ particularly going into the dining room. Frightened the life out of me.

Q: What did you get paid for this job can you remember?

A: Yes. Thirty shillings for one month but we were fed and we were clothed, we'd have a uniform and stockings and shoes made on the premises, made by the patients and of course the craftsman would be at the head of it, cos it was all done on the premises.

Q: What colour were the uniforms?

A: I think it was blue and white, very attractive. So time passed and I just dreaded it but now I was called to the office, to Biddy Wilson, she's matron. Morning Nurse McGee, morning matron. She says can you play tennis? I said no matron. I'd never seen a tennis racket let alone play with one and she said would you like to play? I said I would very much like to play. Well she said they are mostly senior nurses bar nurse Williams, they're all senior nurses bar her and nurse Williams was a relation of Miss Wilsons and she's the only young one and she says they'll be two of you. Well now I'll arrange it with Mr Dando who's the sports instructor and I went up to Mr Dando and he taught me how to play. So we came down and we would have to play against these we called them 'the bows', because when they'd got to a certain standard they'd have their certificate and they'd have a bow under their chin and if we could beat the bows we were pretty _ we were playing doubles. She was a good player, Biddy Williams was a good player but I was small _ well I played because it was something to do. Well time passed and I made friends with a girl from Sligo, her name was Finnigan and we were off at the same time so we used to go up the park and in those days they were military and next door to us there was a military barracks, next door, the wall divides it so we had to go down if we were going out, the short cut down to the town, we went through the barracks. The men were always very polite.

Q: Can I just take you back to something you told me earlier, you said in your family and families generally there wasn't much opportunity for women, can you tell me a little bit more about that?

A: Well that of course we were not educated, we were five and a half miles, Irish miles to go to school and if I went to school three days a week I was lucky and I didn't start till after eight, I was over eight because father had gone and I'd have been eight in September and father died in August but I wasn't kept at home from school because I had a pain in my head or toe, I'd got to take a horse or two to the forge.

Q: So you were kept at home to look after the horses?

A: So I would take one or two horses to the forge. We had a mare, she was a thorough bred mare and her name was Calamity Jane. Father had bought her for breeding purposes and he tried to mate her with a half bred horse, Freedom. And anyway she didn't breed. You see all these horses had to work as they exercised they had to work. You didn't go out riding for to give them exercise they had to work, no matter how well bred they were they had to work and I was taking Calamity Jane to the forge and mother wouldn't let me have a saddle because Jim or someone was thrown from a horse and he was pulled along by the stirrup, he'd got his foot in the stirrup. Well motor cars were very few in those days and we got down onto the main road and we were coming down the hill and down to the Winlock grove and then down cross the main Dublin Whitlow road and then a side road which led down to the downs and as I advanced down this road Major Moore was coming along near his entrance to his house, drive in and a cottage there and Calamity wasn't used to motor cars so up she went on her two hind legs. I held on to her, she turned back and I got her back again and eventually he got into his drive and she took out with me, she ran, I couldn't control her. She took out with me full speed along this road and to get to the forge the main road goes around like that and the drive up to the forge but there's a little gate which would be the _ if the gate was open it was a short cut to the forge but the gate was closed, she jumped the gate and up the pathway and stood in the yard as quiet as a lamb. Presently Major Moore came along in his motor-car and the blacksmith went to meet Major Moore, Major Moore said I know that child of John McGee's and will you tell her mother that if she puts her own on an animal like that she'd be served the same as her father. The blacksmith stood up for me and he said she's all right, the mare's all right, he stuck up for me. But you see I was about 10 or 11 when this happened.

Q: The major thought you'd be thrown and killed when he said that?

A: Yes.

Q: But did you like working with the horses?

A: Oh yes rather.

Q: so how long did you stick the Richmond Asylum?

A: Wait now. Part of the asylum was given to the blue boys. The blue boys were the soldiers who were wounded and came over the Ireland to be nursed because Ireland was under England at the time and they had this wing.

Q: The blue boys were the people who'd fought in the war?

A: yes the soldiers, so we used to have (_). Biddy Wilson was very loyal and she was very _ well English, she supported the loyalist forces. So we used to have concerts, teas, social

evenings and Finnigan and I were always together so we got friendly with a couple of the boys and one of them said to me 'how do you like it here?' I said 'I don't like it at all'. He said we've come from a wonderful hospital in Epsom called the Horton War Hospital, he said it's a marvellous hospital and he said you'd like it there. I said I'd like to go to Epsom because

Bill during the war was head man in Wootton's training stables, an overseer, my brother, so I said Bill has told us you never see a horse until you get to Epsom so I wanted to go and see the horses in Epsom.

Q: And really you went because the soldier had said how nice the hospital was but it was a good opportunity for you to go? Can you describe the Richmond Hospital, can you remember what it looked like because you told me about the patients, some of them were very far gone and others were just there because nobody could claim them. Can you remember what it looked like?

A: Like hell. Just like hell. To me it was hell.

Q: Did they make any attempt to have bright colours on the walls or cheer it up?

A: Oh yes. The place was kept well. You see to me they had no treatment at all. They were there mad with no _ except the straight jacket and padded cell, that was their treatment as I knew

Q: Did anybody working there have any qualifications?

A: Oh yes they were all qualified, oh yes, very much so. And the nursing qualifications were high. Well then things were pretty hot outside politically in Ireland. This is 1921 or so.

Q: The civil war was it or the independence?

A: They were fighting amongst themselves and even the staff. Biddy Wilson said to me now Jane I'm going to give you a bit of advice. On no consideration enter into politics or religion.

When that stuff comes up clear, so I did. I took her advice. Well anyway _ so we used to go up to the park Finnigan and I and the batmen would be out exercising their horses and usually had two horses, leading one and riding the other, so I got talking to them and said can you ride? I said yes. Said we'll give you a little ride _ so anyway I got these breeches for ten bob, second-hand, got these breeches and it was breeches with a skirt, riding breeches but a skirt, buttoned down the front and back, skirt breeches so no one was any the wiser that it was breeches. So we go up to the park _ Phoenix Park and Finnigan didn't ride

so she and the other chap with these two horses they were talking walking along and talk when we'd go for a gallop. That kept me. My god if they'd known that _ if the staff had know that I was riding out with a soldier, by Christ I'd been pulled and torn to bits. So that kept me going, really looked forward to going up to the park. And then the winter came in, the autumn came in and Biddy Wilson said _ still going up to the park, still having a ride with the soldiers and I was called to the office and she said you settling in Nurse McGee? I said yes I think so matron.

That's good. Well she said do you play hockey? I said play hockey? I'd never seen a hockey stick and I don't know anything at all about it. She said would you like to play? I said I would

very much like to play if there's movement in it. She said there's lots of movement in it so she said Mr Dando, now you go up in Muftee, not a word to anybody, not even to your friend

Finnigan, but Finnigan knew, not a word to anybody and you go up and I've arranged with Mr Dando you go to the pavilion and you change there and he taught me and it was mixed hockey and you'd play like a man. Played with the men so you were playing against a man and you had to play.

Q: Was it quite rough?

A: Well it was good hockey. You had to play good hockey under Dando.

Q: So can you tell me about going to Epsom, coming over to England?

A: Yes, well anyway why I left Richmond, Finnigan and I we were on night duty and we were out on the town and we were coming up Henry Street and there was a lady and gentleman in front of us just walking and the man was shot dead right in front of us. And the man who shot him dashed across the road into an alleyway. So hell seemed to open up, the ambulance and the Black and Tans were firing up © they weren't firing at people, they were © as they turned into Henry Street they were firing up in the air and the people was terrified and a lot of them were trying to get into the shops, get off the street and the cracking of glass with the weight of the bodies against the glass, the glass would break. Well anyway we kept moving and I knew almost all of the policemen on the route and I had several relations in the Dublin police, big powerful men in those days and mostly all farmers. Jack Power of the hill and one of the Powers of the corner and Jack Clarkson of my clan and Dan Power.

Q: So did you manage to get into a shop when the shooting started?

A: No. So we were getting along as best we could so we met this policeman. He said keep in girls, keep into the side but keep going so we kept in and kept going and we got home, so we decided to say nothing at all, not a word but we didn't go in for dinner. There was a dinner you see before we went on duty, I think it was eight or half past eight I'm not sure, and we didn't go to dinner and both of us were white, so we were on different wards and during the night the patrol nurse came along and she said your friend Finnigan is not very well. I said oh, what's the matter with her? She said I don't know. So on the next round

she came she said Finnegan's been taken to the infirmary and she's in a bad way. She said what did you do when you were out? Oh I said just the usual in a casual way, just the usual. And she said do you know there was shooting down the town, I said oh, and doctor Robertson it was he who was shot.

Q: The man you saw?

A: No. Doctor Roberts was one of the head doctors in the Richmond Asylum, he was the second in command. It was his son that was shot. That's the one I saw being shot and so at the time I said nothing, then we learned who this man was and he was shot because he was working in the castle, in Dublin castle. So I thought to myself here goes.

Q: So did Finnigan get better?

A: Yes but it knocked the stuffing out of her. It knocked me stiff too but I cleared as soon as I could. I wrote straight away to the matron _ I wrote to the Horton war hospital in Epsom. So

the matron wrote back and said it's no longer the Horton war hospital, it had been turned over to its original state as a mental hospital. It's the Horton Mental Hospital. She said I'm enclosing an application form, if you're interested please fill it up and send it. So I did and they contacted by letter I suppose to Biddy Wilson and I was called to the office. Not a word to Finnigan nor anyone, I was called to the office. She said, she didn't know that we saw this, nobody knew and she said after putting up with you whinging and crying and sniffing and you're just manageable now and you're going to leave us. She said you can go to England and go to hell. And I intended to write back to her and tell her I've come to hell but it's not a bad place at all. And then I intended to go and see her while I was home but I never did, but I went to see mother before I went home. I'd saved up every penny that I earnt, never spent a penny and I bought myself a beautiful tailor made blue suit, lovely cloth and a hobble skirt and I got a lovely little hat, tight fitting hat with a feather in it _ I don't know what colour it was _ so I had to go and see mother. Well Bob and Bill were in the, they'd got the riding school in Greystones, so I'll go to them they'll get me home some how or other, so I went to the yard and they were preparing for to, to go out to hunt and the horses

were all booked so Bill said she could take Gordon Cunningham _ Gordon Cunningham was one that was sent to Bill and Bill didn't want anything to do with it because riding lives are at stake, so she could take Gordon Cunningham up to Jim, bloody great big horse, so put a saddle on him and I pulled this hobble skirt up above my knees, I was wearing the good suit to go to mother - I thought I'd be going home in the trap. So Bob saw me through Greystones and through Delgeny and on the outskirts of Delgeny he said I have to go back now Jane keep going and as he turned round up rose Cunningham with his feet in the air, up goes Gordon Cunningham on to his two hind legs. Anyway I controlled him and got him settled down and from the house you could see for miles and they saw this big horse but they thought it might be Cunningham but didn't know quite and couldn't make out who was on

it. So Jim and the whole lot were out to see was on the horse and it was me.

Q: How did your mother and all the family react to that?

A: Well she couldn't do anything, no good her stopping me. She wasn't sorry because she knew, she had a feeling I wasn't happy in Richmond.

Q: I wondered because it was sort of customary to keep all the girls at home.

A: Oh well I wouldn't have stayed at home because there was nothing but hard work. We had great fun though, we had plenty of fun.

Q: Was your mother glad then that you were going?

A: Well she was happy because I don't think she was quite happy with me in Richmond Asylum no and I wasn't either.

Q: Did you get much time off in the Richmond Asylum, to go and see her?

A: Oh it was quite a way you see. From Bray it would be eight and a half, nine miles. From Greystones it would be about eight or nine. No well. I got to © oh Finnigan came and someone else came to see me off.

Q: If you wanted to go in to Dublin from Bray or Greystones in those days how did you travel?

A: By train. They came and saw me to the boat from Dunlearey, it used to be Kingstown and there was someone there that knew the crowd and they said oh I'll ask so and so to look after you, chief somebody, not the captain but someone to look after you and see you'll be all right, so I got across London _ How the hell I got there from I think it was Victoria.

Q: Can you remember anything about the boat journey, what was it like?

A: Pretty rough but I didn't mind, I didn't mind, I was going. I was going so I didn't mind.

Q: Were you able to buy any drinks onboard or?

A: No. Yes you could buy drinks or tea but I'd no extra money. When I got out at Epsom station I had seven pence halfpenny in me pocket and I couldn't have a taxi up to the hospital so my case was light and anyway I got there. And the kindest people I ever met I met in Horton hospital. It was then a mental hospital. The kindest nurses, the kindest senior head nurses, they were all so kind, they were lovely people. Different all together. There you was a nurse, become a nurse but I didn't want to be a nurse.

Q: You said it was a mental hospital and the Richmond Asylum was a mental hospital as well, was there any difference?

A: As different as chalk and cheese. One was a mad house and the other was a hospital.

Q: What did they have for the patients?

A: They had everything. You looked after the patients and I didn't want to be, I didn't want to study. I got the books I got the papers, I got pencils and everything. Soon as I left the lecture room I was finished and now was winter time and I joined the Epsom ladies hockey.

Q: Did they have drugs to treat the patients?

A: Oh yes, they were properly treated. They were treated as patients. This was 1920. It was the year Humorous won the Derby, cos I'd got money from the girls to put on and he won.

Q: Did you go to the Derby that day?

A: Yes I went to the Derby, I went to three Derby's. But you see you've got to be a little mental yourself to look after mental patients, you've got to be and I was. I was an ideal mental nurse and in Horton the girl who came in with me in the same period they went to the lectures and they sat for their exams and I never sat for an exam, always wrote to mother and ask her to invite me home or something and I would clear out and escaped

every exam.

Q: So you managed to virtually escape school and all the exams?

A: Oh yes. Well when those girls were sitting for their final exam and I hadn't sat for my Prelim, I hadn't sat for the first exam, but funny enough I'd got the ability with these people and I was head over these girls who were going for the final exam and I held a position in the ward.

Q: What exactly did you have to do in the ward?

A: Just to pacify the people. Some of them were charming people, charming. I liked them very much.

Q: In the Richmond you were saying they had to eat off bowls.

A: oh not at all, they were treated like human beings. The kindest people.

Q: What wages did you get there?

A: Five pounds a month, that was big money. And you see I'd got this outfit and we were all a jolly lot. I was nicknamed Lady Torrington I suppose because of the outfit. Lady Torrington was Steve Dunhill's fancy lady. He won many Derby's, I saw him three times. This tailored blue costume (end of side A)

Q: You were telling me you were a fan of Steve Donoghue and you were nicknamed lady Torrington.

A: They nicknamed me Lady Torrington.

Q: Tell me about the first Derby that you went to.

A: I was on duty in the morning and was off after lunch, about half past one or two, you were always let out early if you were going to the Derby. Well little nurse from Waterford asked me was I going to the Derby, I said yes, yes, she said can I come with you? I said yes do, by all means. And so we ordered a taxi to be at the gate to take us to the Derby cos there wasn't much time to spare and so the men at the gate said girls you're wasting your time, the taxi men could not be bothered with you girls on the Derby. You see that's their harvest, the Derby and the race season is the taxi men's harvest, taking the people up to the course and I understood it very well so off we went, we'd leg it and going up the hill a big van, big tea van delivering stuff to the race course on the grandstand and so he said like a lift ladies, I said yes please and so I was right up in this van and the little nurse from Waterford she said what would matron say if she saw you going in that van? I said matron would be jolly glad to get a lift and she would, she'd take it too. So you're not coming? So I said right oh, off I went without her. And this took you right into the grandstand so I had a great position, so I'd got to get this money on for different girls, so I was bustling through to get to a bookmaker and I remember the bookmaker said to a man, he said, pass me up that young lady, he said, before she kills herself or somebody else! I just got this money on. So I had a grandstand view from the top of the car. You see these bookmakers have cars that you stand on and so I thanked him very much and I got down. And I think one of these men was a policeman, that's right, and was there when I got down and then he took me to the race and there

were a lot of them all in Mufty. He was an Irishman this one. Glen I think his name was and there was a whole click of them all in Mufty so I was with them and there was the parade going down and there was Queen Mary in those days and, and the young Edward who is dead _ no, _ yes

that's right and Princess Royal and they paraded down to the paddock and then back.

And then as they came back to the grandstand now these policemen said to me that's one of the

finest pin pincher there is on the grandstand today.

Q: pin pincher who was that?

A: He'd pinch these pins the men wear. Men's pins were never fastened. He's the finest pin pincher on the grandstand and then someone else he's a banker, he raids the banks and one thing and another and they knew the whole bally lot of them.

Q: And did your horse win?

A: Oh Steve Donoghue the jokey won. Well of course they have the three meetings a year, there's the spring meeting, the Epsom and I think there's one later.

Q: How long did you stay in Epsom?

A: In Epsom, three years.

Q: And when did you come to London?

A: Well now I was being pressed, you see you're not studying. They all knew I was not studying and at one lecture doctor Stroud said if only nurse McGee would take the interest in my lecture as she does in her hockey stick she'd no trouble in passing her exams. I had been up on the downs, I lived on the downs, not with the jockeys or men at all but to watch the horses, just to see the horses, go up there and see them exercise and I'd up been on the downs and was going home and going from Epsom town to the hospital was quite a way, it was pathway and I met _ she was junior to me but she had passed, she was sitting for her final exam and she was junior to me. Her name was Finnigan, an Irish girl, a very nice girl. How are you Finnigan? She said I'm well, but terribly worried McGee. I said what's the trouble? Well she said you know I nursed before I came here at St Andrews in Northampton and there I got my intermediate but I thought if I got my final in a county hospital it would be so much better and that's why I've come, but I am very worried because a patient that I've nursed has recovered for the time being and she's home and she wants me to go and be her companion and I don't want to go. I said tell me something about her. Well for one thing she's suicidal and she's got an artificial leg she's broken it jumping from a window or her arms are slashed, her throat has been cut many times and she'd do anything to get rid of herself. And she said she believes and the people believe that it's through me that she has recovered, but it's only temporary McGee and you see I knew that too. I said where does she live? Near Stratford on Avon, she said they're big people, they're lovely people, you'll love them, they're great people and have been so good to me, they're great people. I said do you think I would suit the job? She said there's no one in the hospital as I know to or better than you. Well I said I'll take it but you know there's this exam coming on and I've got to sit whether I like it or not and I know what would happen. I said I must get away, of course I got away before the other exams so I might as well finish it, might as well get away before this. I'll leave it to you to fix me up and say I want to get away before the exam, and tell her all about me. So she did and she

came to my room, she says McGee, Miss Katie, Miss Smith would love you to go to her and she said you take so and so train from Epsom and a taxi from Victoria to where ever the station was and the chauffer will meet you at Stratford on Avon. Well, got to Stratford on Avon, there was great big car and the man in livery and I was in the back seat and he said we're having a party for the village people on the lawn today, they're having a tea party. Her sister was there was too, Mrs Lees and they were both in together in

Northampton and she said they're having a tea party on the lawn. So when we pulled up by the Dell, it was called the Dell and Mrs Lees rushed out down to meet me, she knew I was coming _ and her hair was all blowing and I thought she was Miss Katie. First she saw to the case so I was introduced to all the family having tea so I joined in the tea and then Mrs Lees who I thought was Katie, Miss Smith, she took me to my room and then Miss Katie came, so

she says oh Miss McGee she says I think perhaps you're under the impression that my sister is me. She says that's Mrs Lees you've talking to who's been looking after me, my sister. She said she's not very well Miss McGee as you can see. She said I'll give her a draught tonight, that meant some medicine, I'll give her a draught she's so ill. Well what did I think, one mad woman administering it to another. So I had the joy of Mrs Lees and at four o'clock in the morning she brought me up some tea. Miss Katie she had a flat of her own, Katie Smith.

Q: What did she look like?

A: She was a wonderful woman, great horse woman and she loved horses too. She had a suite, her own bathroom and little sitting-room if she wanted to be quiet and it was lovely old house, kind of a bungalow but a low, the ceilings were low, beautiful and so she would come and that very week I went with her to St Andrews in Northampton, took her back to the hospital. This is Mrs Lees. So that was that. She wasn't the only one. There was a friend of Miss Katie's, she went back to the hospital all right, she was alright.

Q: Did you stay with Miss Katie then?

A: Oh yes. But I didn't know anything about Mrs Lees was there. When I was looking after Mrs Lees well of course she could get through the window from upstairs and she said I think Miss McGee she'd better come down to my bedroom in the day and stay in my bedroom so there was a cook came in daily and had the breakfast ready so I took in the try to Mrs Lees and we sat chatting and talking and I took the tray back when she'd finished her breakfast back to the kitchen and went back to the bedroom and she'd gone. She'd gone through the window. This was before she went to the hospital. And I was frightened of the river because

the river Stowe is close by. Well there were farmers that I'd made friend with and I knew that Miss Katie and Mr Harvey Smith were good friends cos they used to hunt together and she had great admiration for him, cos it was she that I worried about you see because she was my patient so I hopped over to the farm and told them what's happened, I said watch the river cos I thought she might be suicidal, Mrs Lees, I didn't know anything about her case and I thought she might be suicidal so I asked them to look out for the river and nobody saw her, all the village were out looking for her. So Mrs Tom Smith had been down to see Miss Smith

and Mrs Lees and her husband had just shot himself in the stable and he'd been buried. I didn't exactly where Mr Tom Smith lived but to find out I'd take the side path and going up the path and long gardens on each side were these cottages and nice big gardens and

there were vegetables as well as flowers but looking on the right hand side I saw a movement in the distance of flowers, I waited and looked and it was Mrs Lees with an armful of flowers . Oh I said Mrs how lovely they are, I said and won't Miss Katie be pleased too and decorate the house, we can go home and decorate the home and it'll be lovely. So we came back as good as gold. Then of course in a few days she was away, had to take her away. Well time passed

Q: So you got on very well with the other one?

A: Oh yes. I had the ability with the mental people. Miss Smith had a friend who'd gone round the bend and this was a very rich woman, I forget her name, Miss Katie's friend and she came to be nursed by Katie and me, by Katie and me. Katie was the nurse and me, she came to be nursed, she was Katie's friend. Well things were all right till she got her knife into Katie and Katie was in the dog house so it was to keep them apart. I travelled miles, walked out for miles and miles at night time and I got Harvey to see to Miss Katie while I went walking with her friend, I forget her name, to wear her down so that might sleep. Miles and miles we walked, got her back and took her in through the back door and up the back stairs right away from Katie and got her something to eat and got her to bed and the next morning all the contents of the room were out on the lawn, chairs, tables, the whole lot on the lawn, blankets and all. Miss Katie's friend. You could do nothing, doctors got her away so I didn't go with her. She had a nurse and a policeman. I stayed with Miss Katie.

Q: how did you eventually get to London?

A: It was a long while before I got to London. I travelled a lot before I went to London. I only know London of late. I had to leave Bournemouth because the second job with the big car they were business people, they were () of the triangle. They were wholesale provision merchants, a father and son and the son was Colonel Robson but he doesn't like to be called colonel but his staff all knew him as colonel and a lot of his salesmen were colonel Robson's men in the army that he knew in the army and the man in the garage, Jack he was a sergeant major in the army and in the garage because all the vans used to come in and the travellers, they all had to be washed and served in the garage and my car went down there on Saturday and it was washed and served.

Q: Where was this?

A: This was in Bournemouth, this is my second job in Bournemouth.

Q: Was that the job where you had to drive the car?

A: I was driving, I was companion yes and that was my second job but my first job was a great job with this lady Miss Houghton who was a very wealthy lady in Bournemouth and she wanted to get away and gave her a fortnight and _ (garbled piece) she wouldn't have the telephone so she said I'm not feeling at all well, I said you're not looking well at all Miss Houghton and said you should see the doctor. She said yes I think I ought to so I go and see

the doctor and he said where have you been, so I told him where we'd been, he said where do you think you 'd like to go now, I said I don't quite know but her friends have been to Somerset and to Bath and Shepton Mallet and Cheddar Gorge and this and the other and they came back feeling wonderful, it's nice and bracing there. But I said you'll come and see Miss Houghton won't you? He doesn't it doesn't suit you here in Bournemouth you want some bracing air, she said that's what they tell me. So that's a good idea, you go and don't hurry back Miss Houghton because bracing air is what you need. Well we were very fortunate, put up at Blagdon Hotel overlooking right on top of a mountain like that and Blagdon Lake was right underneath and you had all the fishermen and fisher women stay in the hotel and you'd hear what they caught (etc). So she heard all this conversation and after the evening meal I was free and I'd go out and find out all about the neighbourhood so we were there for a fortnight

Q: Were you companion chauffeur to her?

A: Yes. And so I'd got to dress, but she had all this money © you had to dress well.

Q: Did you have to change for dinner?

A: Oh yes.

Q; What sort of things did you wear?

A: Just a nice dress.

Q: When was this?

A: 1924/5 or 6 something like that. She was a wonderful person, a wonderful person and I was terribly sorry that I ever left her and she came when I opened up a guest house.

Q: You opened up a guest house, where?

A: Pett, near Hastings. This big car the wife was an invalid and she had a chair but she would not move, we had to cart her up and down the stairs in a chair, myself and the parlour maid. I'd lead and the parlour maid was on the easy part. She would not have a bungalow, he simply implored her to let him buy a bungalow for her so it was suitable for her, no, she wouldn't. Well anyway in this job, the Robsons, Gladys broke down through this lifting and Mrs Robson had been having treatment with an osteopath, a charming handsome man, American. So Mr Robson put Gladys under him and she was away and so he got on the chair, so he wouldn't allow me to take the heavy part, he was a big tall man, about six foot four and very light and his back bust so he had to go under the doctor so he said no more chair for you. So the gardener came in in the morning and at night to take her up to bed. I'd got

the knack you see, I was short and I was strong.

Q: You said something about you couldn't go to school because you were delicate.

A: I was supposed to have had TB, supposed to have consumption. Fresh air in Ireland and hardship is the best medicine of all. The doctor said you have the liberty of the fields, the man who makes the whisky, Doctor Jameson said give her the liberty of the fields.

Q: So you've done many different companion jobs and been a chauffeur as well is that right?

A: Always, well the latter years were companion chauffeur. When I left Bournemouth I came up to Eltham and very wealth people in Eltham Hill, a big garden and in the garden they had a daily gardener, he was there all the time, fruit and flowers and the daughter was interested in chickens and she looked after the chickens and the bottom of the garden was backed on by the palace grounds, the boundary with the palace grounds and the soldiers used to come up on horseback exercising and whenever I was missing I was down there. Well there was mother and daughter and the husband and the husband and the wife didn't get on very well so he had his meals on his own and they fed together, three of us eat together, so I'd take their meal as usual © oh they were big property owners over in Pett's Wood, and we used to go round collecting rents, mother and daughter we'd go round, I drove them but I didn't collect the money, but you see the difference of the dress when they went collecting the money as to when they'd go and see their friends and relations.

Q: What would they wear collecting the rents?

A: Quite ordinary collecting the rents and the book and when the afternoon I don't know what they did but I was free. This was once a week in the morning. I'd take the old gentleman, the old man, he spent all his time down in the yard amongst the stables, because he'd big stables, he was a hustler and he knew all the farmers for miles around and we'd go and it was in the autumn time when the fruit was picking and we always had bags and baskets into the car, these baskets would be filled with __ we'd pick anything from the garden. Would be filled with fruit and vegetables, take them all back to the yard and his friends would come in and he'd treat them, but nothing came into the house which was funny. That was a bit dull in a way so it was getting into winter time and I saw an advert in the paper and I answered it and I had a reply back, it said my companion chauffeur has gone on holiday and will you meet me at my club so and so in London. I was in Eltham now and so he said I've got a daughter and we've got two cars and she's got two horses and he said I can't engage you without you meeting my daughter and she testing you on the

car. She'd two cars one was a Sunbeam Talbot and the other was a (name) so she came, I got off at the station, she met me at the station in Eastbourne and we went for a drive round, that was it, I was taken on and I thought it would just be for a couple of weeks but I was there for nine weeks. Oh how I wished it would have lasted, it was a great job. I'd take him on Monday morning to the station if it was fine in the Sunbeam and if it was wet in the (name) and then the Sunbeam lock it up as soon as I come back never see it till I'd use it again, take it to meet him again and I forget the girls name. So I knew more about horses than I did about cars and I was quite a help to her, this was getting in the winter, they were getting ready for the opening of the hunting season and she had these two hacks, so I'd have one and she'd have the other and we'd go up on the downs, the downs in Eastbourne and that went on _ I loved it and I dreaded this woman coming back and the old man was great, oh he was a grand chap. He'd take me to the theatre and take me out for an evening everywhere and he was very keen on golf so I'd take him to the golf links and meet him to bring him back, but I'd be with her. Well she'd got a young man and the hunting started, he knew nothing at all about horses and he had some riding lessons, well he'd go to hunt riding her horse and when he come back Saturday, Friday evening till Monday morning I was at Mr (name) call, so I didn't see much of them on Saturday, Saturday there was a hunt. When he came back from the hunt, they both come back, he'd come and she'd go and do up the horse, feed them and groom them and he'd come into the sitting room in the armchair and cross his legs and she did the work. So I said you know you're bringing up your young man the wrong way. She said what do you mean by that? I said you take him out hunting and when he comes back instead of helping you he comes into the armchair in the sitting room while you do the work. So I said would you like to leave him to me? She said if you think you can make a job of him, you think you make him do something she said I'd be truly glad, so I got a brush and turned out champion, he turned out to be a jolly good worker and groomed those horses well. Well I knew I'd have to leave when the lady would come back, she was on holiday in France so I advertised, it was a bad time of the year November and I got two answers, one was somewhere near Hastings and another one a daughter writing on behalf of her mother who was blind.

Q: It seems to me all your life you've had a great interest in horses. If you'd had the opportunity would you have liked to have had a job in a riding school or something like that?

A: No, no because I'm the wrong build. My brother Bob wanted me to ride as well as my brother Jim so he used to put me up on a horse that would by rights go to Jim, give Jim the ride but he'd give the ride of me to make me as good as Jim, anyway he couldn't, too short. He said Jane, I'll never make a jockey of you, he said you've got pony legs. You've got courage and good

hands and no fear, he said, but you've got pony legs and too much lead in your arse.(ends)