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Date of Birth: January 1969
Place of Birth: Bletchley
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Thank you Dave. You were telling us your parents came to Milton Keynes in 1959. That might be a nice place to start your story.

My mum and dad moved to Bletchley in August 1958 and I was born the following January. Mum and dad had met while dad was doing his national service in the RAF, at RAF Upwood in the Fens, and they decided the family was expanding and they needed a bigger place to live, so... Bletchley was on offer, dad got a job at Fletton's brickyard, down in Bletchley, by Skew Bridge, down in Bletchley, which is now known as Newton Leys, so everything that was there is now gone. I remember quite a bit from those early years. Some traumatic events in my childhood. Those early years, I lost both my nans, you know, at a very early age, and then my mum and dad split up, so... to make things worse, my mum was pregnant with my little sister, so there was the four of us, and I was no longer the youngest. It was quite traumatic. Mum had to go back out to work, so we were, fairly you know, impoverished at times, but we were loved, we were fed, we were always clean, that was the main thing, and, a little cold at times, but never hungry, you know.

You were talking to me earlier about how the first time you heard about Milton Keynes you went to an exhibition at Wilton Hall. Would that be a nice place to go next?

I first got interested in local history doing a project at school. We did a project on Bletchley, and to give you an example, Bletchley had a population of 25, 26,000 at the time. I can remember walking home from Holne Chase School to Wilton Hall for an exhibition on Milton Keynes. This was the first time we'd heard about it. There's gonna be this wonderful new city, and they showed us all these maps and all these drawings of leisure centres and swimming pools and boating lakes, all these things that would make Milton Keynes a wonderful place to live, and people would want to come here... and what you don't appreciate as a ten year-old is the vastness of that programme, that is probably not going to be in your lifetime. But, so a lot of the things I was looking forward as a child did not happen as a kid; so it was somewhat disappointing.

So, in your lifetime, when do you feel the Milton Keynes you envisaged came, when did it come of age?

I can remember the early part about Milton Keynes. It's going to play in a football match on the Lakes Estate. And you started to see things happening; we played at a new school. It was full of mud, I remember. People say this about Milton Keynes, it was full of mud, and the kids were complaining, you know. They'd come up from London and they were saying: "Oh, there's nothing here in Milton Keynes, we don't like it, you know." And I was thinking: "Don't like it, that's where we live and we think it's all right, you know." And there was a lot of that attitude, you know, that I found in the early part of Milton Keynes, people coming to Milton Keynes. There was not a lot here; there was a lot promised to Bletchley, which has never been delivered, and Bletchley has become somewhat an impoverished part of Milton Keynes at the moment and it's fairly sad that, you know, it's been ignored largely over the years.

So the excitement you felt over the years as a child has evaporated quite soon, didn't it by the sound of it.

Yes, there was an evaporation on that, but the expectation that was set in those early parts was not being delivered, and I think people were getting frustrated with the time scales, changes of government, we had changes of government, in 1970, 74, 75, 78, you know, there was loads of changes of government then that did not help, I didn't think, with the funding at the time. I started work in 1975, as a post office apprentice. It was not just an apprenticeship on the post office, on the telephones, it was at the time, there was no telecoms to speak of. It was not just an apprenticeship on telephones; it was an apprenticeship on life, because you saw what was happening behind the scenes, you saw how Milton Keynes was growing. I was up at the city centre when it was just a building site (00:05:00). I pulled the first cable into Milton Keynes, when Lloyds Court first opened. It was an 800 [unclear] cable. I was working as an apprentice, pulling in this thing, doing all the manual work and all the tasks you did in those days. We was... I remember the chap... The gang leader at the time just said: "You are part of history here". And you know, you did not really sort of think at the time, you didn't really think at the time, I mean at sixteen, seventeen, you really just did not appreciate what was happening. Later on, you got to appreciate things and I would carry a camera in my van; certainly I've lost a lot of these photos, some of them, cos you know, the camera was left in the van, it was an old Instamatic, and you were trying to take snaps as the city was being built. Later on, you know, the city centre opened and I got to see in there [unclear] pbx in the shopping centre, for the shopping management team. And I can remember going round the corridors and all the things... and you don't really appreciate, how does the stuff get into the city centre you know, this type of things was all thought about. All the service roads are at the top. So you never really see a van parked outside delivering goods, or blocking up the roads, when people are trying to park in the centre. There was a lot of good thought went into Central Milton Keynes.

So what would you... you've just mentioned Central MK, so what would you say is the major success in Milton Keynes?

I think the shopping centre was a great success. Free parking was a great thing, but don't get me wrong, I'm not against charging for parking now, because so many people come into Milton Keynes. I think they should charge to park and it is a burden on us ratepayers in Milton Keynes, you know, so Milton Keynes council makes a lot of money out of that. The other things I can remember, you know, I put a pbx in the library, council offices, John Lewis, all these places, I got involved in the data centres, I mean, TSB were a big company that moved here. They had a data centre up at Linford Wood and I was overseeing the installation of that at the time and that was a big job for BT as we were by then. Shortly after, I did a lot of work there, Abbey National moved to Milton Keynes and I saw a job and I applied for it, so I got a job with the Abbey National Building Society, which offered me a cheap mortgage, which meant I could start a family and I moved into a new house. It was a time in my life when you're growing up. You go from a boy to a man, you know, you've had your fun, and my family grew up in a house in Heelands and you know, we were very, very happy there. So we, I'm gonna go back a little further. I bought my first house when I was just twenty. Paid a pittance for it by today's standards, paid 15,000, I think it was then, and we were there for four years, and that was in Bletchley. But then we moved ... when I moved to the Abbey National, we could afford more, so the cheap mortgage allowed us to move. We moved up to Heelands. But there was something lacking in Heelands, you know. We were happy there as a family, we got our family around us, but there just was not like, you know like that social bonding that you had in the towns, the existing towns, which, you know, it is difficult to describe you know. Gradually you got to know the neighbours, but this was in three or four years' time, you know, and by that time our family had expanded again, so I'd got my son and my daughter by that time, so we were looking to move, cos the house was getting too small, so we moved to Loughton then, in 1990, then shortly afterwards Abbey National became Abbey, and all privatisation, we moved over to Shenley Wood, and I worked at Abbey, the bank then as it was until 2003, then back to BT again. But, I've had, my experience of the city, I mentioned that things took a long while to develop, but as my children grew up, all those things that I wanted for myself as a nine or ten year-old were there when they grew up. We were starting to get other things, I mean, there was the Point, there was the wonderful cinemas there, there was Rollers, they could go roller-skating, they could go ice skating, they could go bowling, all of these things that had been promised to us, you know, that did not materialise (00:10:00) in my youth, were there for them, and it was a wonderful place to bring up kids. And it still is, and I get really irritated when people slag off Milton Keynes now, and probably some of them have never even been here or never really looked behind the scenes,

because you can go out for walks, you're never far away from the parks. The Parks Trust do a wonderful job in maintaining the parks, and I enjoy walking, I enjoy cycling and going around Milton Keynes. And looking at things, looking at things and not just looking forwards, but looking backwards as well at the way things used to be, what used to be there and when you say, oh that used to be so and so, people say: "Really? How do you know that? Well, I've been here a long time.

So what do you think... we've discussed what you think is a success. What would you call a failure of Milton Keynes?

A failure is looking at, looking back the way I've looked at the history of Milton Keynes, the way it was built, People like Fred Pooley and Bill Berrett were so forward thinking with their ideas and there was gonna be a central heating where hot water would be piped around the city and heat the houses, and there was gonna be a monorail to bring in people from the areas of leisure to their homes, to their workplace, to the city centres. And all of this was thought about and envisaged by these people, and they were so forward thinking, but very little of got adopted by you know, probably by the political ping-pong, that we went through in the 70s, you know, and by that time it was almost too late. And many of the houses were deemed to be temporary houses; they were gonna be demolished and rebuilt later on, but you know, with the right to buy your council houses, it made it very difficult to do this and there finding this today, you know, in Fullers Slade. The local history part is... there are reasons behind this, and having lived here so long, you know, people come in and say oh why don't we do this... We've tried that before. Maybe I am just getting too long in the tooth.

So, talking about being too long in the tooth, we've got two questions from the team here. On is, you come across as a very calm and confident person. Are there things within you, self-doubts that you have?

Calm, confident... I've grown to be that way. I've had to teach myself to do that. When I was very young, I was very withdrawn. After my early years, and my two nans dying, and my dad leaving home, I was very, very withdrawn and I don't look back on the years between seven to eleven with a great deal of affection any more. But through my youth, I learnt to do that, and starting work the way I did, I had to be, you know, you were on your own. You went into a build... I've come to install your new switchboard, and it taught you that confidence, and you learn that confidence through life, and as I say, it was not just an apprenticeship on telephones, it was an apprenticeship on life and how to deal with it. I learnt a great deal in those first ten years at work.

That's a great answer. And what can you tell us about anything that you know or anything about phone hacking with you background?

Phone hacking. It's very, very difficult to tap into hardwiring. most phone hacking is to do with mobile phones and usually people not changing their pin number, you know when you dial a number, you can dial into your voicemail and if your pin number is 4321 or 1234, that's what the News of the World, and Murdoch and co played on for all these years, you know... that's where they got a lot of their stories in the early years, because people were naive. It's the same with computers. If you're naive, you will get hacked.

Is there anything else you'd like to talk about before we do the sort of what Milton Keynes means to you today kind of ending?

The only other part you know is growing up here. My dad originally came from Barton, but his family came from like Harlington, Toddington, Woburn, there were even branches over to Edlesborough, which we found to the 1600s, so I do consider myself to be local, part of the indigenous population for that reason. But, you know, my father's ancestors largely worked on the Duke of Bedford's estate, as agricultural labourers (00:10:00), as were many of the population in those days.

So your life in Milton Keynes today, what does Milton Keynes mean to you today?

Milton Keynes is home. It always has been home. It's great, my family live here. My mother still lives in Bletchley, my mother-in-law lives in Bletchley, my two children live in Wolverton, and I live in Loughton, so there is a great family bond, and we still get together regularly. We don't have to travel miles to do it, and that's the great thing. We had our family here, and I pity those families that don't

because we've got that social support, and we're a close-knit family. Our little granddaughter was born recently and there's a story there. I mean she was born the year MK was 50; she was born in Milton Keynes Hospital. My daughter was born in Milton Keynes Hospital. My wife was born in Newport Pagnell, my mother-in-law was born in Woburn Sands, her mum was born in Wavendon, and her mum was born in Wavendon. So you've got six generations there, and they've all been built, born... in... Built and born if you like, in the Milton Keynes area. But not only that, on her father's, on her father's side, my son-in-law Tony, he was born in Milton Keynes, his dad was born in Wolverton Stony, and his dad and his grand-dad and his grand-dad as well, so you've got six generations on both sides, so she is a real child of MK50.

OK, any other questions?

Well just that question about the future that we ask people?

Oh yes!

That's a good one.

So, if you had a magic wand and you could create a marvellous future for Milton Keynes, what would you put into the mix? Can you do us a whole sentence please?

If I could have changed anything or done anything different or I look to the future, I think the transport has got to change. I think we've got to have, probably a tram system. If you go to places like Sheffield and Manchester, they've got these tram systems, and they work well. Why, why it hasn't happened in Milton Keynes, I don't know, but gradually, the roundabouts are getting clogged, and when the roundabouts get clogged, we'll end up with traffic lights, and the traffic will slow down. But largely the traffic flows well in Milton Keynes, but I think we've got to look at the transport and do something about public transport to make it easier for people to use public transport