

Name: Terry Knight
Date of Birth: 1943
Date of Interview: 13th April 2021
Interviewed by: Mel Jeavons and Roger Kitchen
Duration: 00:15:03

(00:00:05) *So today's date is 13th of April 2021 and I am Mel Jeavons interviewing for the Homeworld Project.*

Mel Jeavons: Can you give me your full name and the year you were born please?

Terry Knight: My name is Terry Knight and I was born in 1943.

So how long have you lived in this house?

I have lived in this house since last June.

And why did you decide to buy a house in Homeworld?

Because previously we had bought a house on Energy World which was an energy efficient house and we could see that we could do the same with this house though it needed a lot doing to it.

And so what do you already know about Homeworld before you moved here?

Quite a bit because we are friendly with the lady that lives over there and we had looked at this site previously and we wanted to live close into the city centre.

And so tell me what you have been doing to your house because I can see you have a bit of building work?

Okay, well we have been working on this house since last June, we are still at it as you can see. We have insulated all the ceilings with either solid insulation or fibre glass to improve the insulation. We have changed the existing 8ml double glazed windows for triple glazed 48 ml windows. We have changed the heating system, we have replaced the boiler, we have put a

solar tank in the loft for solar thermal later on this year. I can't think of any more at the moment.

And when you moved in here was it still the original sort of boiler and it wasn't an energy efficient house when you first moved in here?

Okay, well when we first came on site because we didn't move here initially because we could see there was a lot of work to be done. Like removing the log burning stove in the lounge which was going to be quite an exercise because it was four meters square and we knew that we had to insulate the house - we have lived in similar house in America and we have lived there twice actually in North Carolina and California so we knew what we had to do to this house to bring it up to modern standards.

Mel Jeavons: Its unusual then isn't it as I think some of the other houses on this development were deemed to be quite energy efficient, so did you think this one fell short at the time?

Absolutely [laughs]. No it was pretty obvious from the very beginning that this house needed a lot of insulation, and work on the heating systems and the windows, whatever to bring it up to a reasonable standard.

Mel Jeavons: And to what extent have you been [unclear], sort of your continued interest in Homeworld?

Well...I am interested in Homeworld and there is supposed to be a celebration in May, isn't it? It's the fortieth anniversary of Homeworld so whether something is going to happen with that but I obviously participate in what is going on, really.

Mel Jeavons: Yes there are going to be some plaques and visual boards put around and that type of thing.

Then we'll, we'll take part in it.

There is going to be a trail so people can walk around. Are you aware of people taking an interest now, do you see people walking around?

Not really.

And why do you think the fortieth anniversary should be celebrated?

I can't answer that question.

Roger Kitchen: I mean you are living, you know, in one of the houses that was in an exhibition forty years ago that was pretty ground breaking?

Yes.

(00:04:48)

Roger Kitchen: Are you conscious of that, of living in a special place or not? Is it a house does it just happens to be a house?

Oh no I am conscious of it being in Homeworld and I think that connection goes back to me buying the house on Energy World but and I wanted to be part of it basically.

Mel Jeavons: And do you think - you have not lived here very long, but do you feel that there is a community spirit have you got to know people?

Only a few people, to be honest with you. New people next door and people that way came once and one person over there came to see us, so I wouldn't say they were particularly gushing [laughs].

Roger Kitchen: What surprises us I think in hearing what you are saying is the fact that these houses when they were built forty years ago they were marketed, well you know, the whole point of that exhibition was one it was about innovation in housing...

Yes.

...And number two there was a particular emphasis, not in every house, but about energy efficiency?

Yes.

Were you aware of that?

Yes.

And to what extent do you think the house this house which has appeared in the Sunday Times several times now, how much of that, you know, matched up to it?

Well it had double-glazing.

Mel Jeavons: I mean, before you bought the house did the people that lived here before sort of say to you it was cold in the house?

No, I think they struggled to sell it to be honest with you because it is a wooden frame house. Where, for my wife and I living in America, we are used to wooden houses and you know we have

extensively altered the houses in America. We still have a house in California now and we are going back in June and we insulated that house on the inside because it was quite an old house and we weren't allowed to alter the outside so we insulated it on the inside.

Mel Jeavons: So the energy efficiency is something you are very aware of?

Absolutely, my whole life I have been into energy efficiency and for the last twenty five years here in the UK I worked for Living Well Health and Leisure and then Virgin Active where again, you know, running those types of businesses you are trying to conserve energy everywhere you can, basically. And I had that sort of background when I went to work for those people. But I have been, I have done my whole life actually, trying to conserve energy whether it is producing power or secondary glazing, you know, even sort of fifty years ago I was putting secondary glazing in the properties that I had, so I have been interested in it all my life. I know a great deal about it.

Roger Kitchen: Energy World was obviously one where there was emphasis on, you know, on the energy efficiency of houses. One of the things when we have been talking to people who were involved in the Development Corporation side on this forty years ago what we think is very depressing is that modern house building has not really kept up with what was like in industry...when was that?

Yes.

Mel Jeavons: '86

Roger Kitchen: '86, you know, '86....

Yes.

Roger Kitchen: Forty years...nearly forty years on what do you think about modern house building?

I don't think the standards are high enough, the insulation that they should have on the houses should be a minimum of 100 ml perhaps 125 ml and I think what I have seen of the new builds around here they are nowhere like that and that's the first thing to do with any house is to insulate it and ensure that the windows are a good standard as well. I think we are falling behind the rest of the world in that, you know, in Europe triple glazing is standard where here it's a luxury and very difficult to get.

(00:09:50)

Mel Jeavons:

So do you think, we were talking to Diane about this, about people like Estate Agents, when they market these houses that they don't really focus on the energy efficiency. Do you think there needs to be a step change in way people are educated about energy and that the estate agent market place is energy efficient?

Well the certificate that they do have at the present time is just a waste of time, it really is, it doesn't count for nothing in my knowledge. It is just another form that people have to fill in and tick boxes. But, people don't take full account of what are actually in properties, because, where we have actually moved from now recently which was Eaton Mews which was a Penthouse at Eaton Mews which was triple glazed and was built about twenty eight years ago...I have lost my train of thought now of what I was going to say to you [laughs]...

Roger Kitchen:

You were saying about the awareness of energy...

Mel Jeavons:

About other people whether they...

Roger Kitchen:

Of whether they are aware...

Yes, no, well I was saying about the Government Scheme where they have this rating for houses, but you know, to sell a house you have to get one of those and for that flat it was triple glazed on the outside originally and we double glazed, secondary glazed it on the inside and the person that came round took absolutely no notice of that and quite a few other items that we had there they were not able to tick a box and you know we have gone a step further in triple glazing on the outside which was twenty eight years old it wasn't very big but we installed 28 ml double glazing as secondary glazing.

And that property is quite interesting...

Roger Kitchen:

Isn't the problem that the buyer, the house buyer, is not really interested in anything to do with energy?

Well perhaps they are not educated to that standard so they don't really know what they are looking at. I remember when I sold the house on Energy World one of the people actually came there and asked for the power and the gas bills to look at them and they actually didn't buy the house they said it wasn't good enough.

Mel Jeavons:

I mean when you bought this then, presumably you knew you were going to have to do a lot of work to it?

Oh yes we knew exactly what we had to do to it.

Mel Jeavons: It didn't put you off then?

No, because I think this is a very pleasant house, we wanted to be close to the city centre. We have had this penthouse for twelve years in the city centre, although we have lived in California a lot of the time. It's in the sunshine, when the sun does shine here, all day. It ticks so many boxes for us, so though we knew we had quite a lot of work to do, quite an expense; really, it almost ticked every box that we had. So it was ticking boxes, basically, a) it had to be a bungalow and b) close to the city centre, and then in the sunshine not being shaded. There are not many houses in Milton Keynes that are not shaded. Yeah so this house, you know, it's a beautiful house.

Roger Kitchen: Okay I think that is alright, anything else you want to say, anything else?

No, I have, you know, I have a long list of things we have actually done inside the house. But, it is insulating it, changing the windows, changing the boiler, we actually got a - we have a heat pump here as well as a boiler, so we have a ten kilowatt heat pump here, but it is an air to air not air to water, so we are able to cool as well in the summer here. So, we are actually able to heat and cool the whole house with the heat pump but in the winter we can run on gas 'cause we have radiators in there, we don't have under floor heating unfortunately but we can run on either. You know, we have run for a couple of weeks on the heat pump, heating the place even when it is down to minus one it still works.

(00:15:03) [Interview Ends]