Interviewee: **Eve Osborn**

Interviews conducted by Nicky Leap and Billie Hunter during research for the publication '*The Midwife's Tale: an Oral History from Handywoman to Professional Midwife'* (1993; 2nd edition 2013)

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Description:

Transcript of an interview with Eve Osborn covering her family life and education in London, nursing training at Bishops Stortford and maternity training at Hertford (from 1935) and Perivale, conditions at Perivale, training for Part 2 midwifery at Bexleyheath, qualities necessary for midwifery, experiences on the maternity wards at Wimbledon, as a children's fever nurse in the East End, social discrimination, buying uniform, stories of abortions, hygiene on the wards and in the theatre, conditions working on the district in Bexleyheath during the Second World War before joining the Army, attitude to disabled babies, extending her midwifery experience at Farnborough in 1946, potty training, limited notes on her experiences in Uganda, and the East End Hospital from 1950.

Topics include: Midwifery; Maternity services; Childbirth; Maternal Mortality; Abortion; Analgesia; Contraception; Stillbirth; Uganda

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Interviewer Eve Osborn in Ilfracombe, Devon, on 31st January 1986.

Eve Yeah. But, um, anyway the LCC education was this business of staying in school, lots of these children whose parents couldn't afford going until they were 15 ... 14. From the time they were 9 they had been in what was Primary 7, and they couldn't go anywhere else. And, um, the boys were ... in the prime- ... in those schools, the big boys were taught algebra. Well, I wasn't taught algebra until I went to the, um, the central, the, the central school, Village Park Central it was, Village Park – we had to go to Village Park – and we had to sign to say we'd stay there 'til we were 16, you see. And, um, so that was that. And, er, well then, you see, I stayed until I was 16 ... 17, nearly 17, and my mother kept me there by making coats at one and three pence a time.

Interviewer I was going to ask you what she did.

Eve Yeah. She just, she, she made coats, you see. And my father who was a brick really, I didn't get on very well with my father like lots of teenagers don't. But, er, looking back on it I'm ashamed because my father did all the housework, he kept the house clean, he scrubbed, he cleaned, he lighted ... lit the copper to boil the clothes up once a week. We did the washing on Monday mornings and it boiled up in a copper, and he'd change the bed linen and he kept the house clean, and he did everything like that. And in-between time looked for a job, you see, because he was out work, in the 20s it was, you see, and he couldn't-

Interviewer There was lots of unemployment then, wasn't there.

Eve A lot of unemployment. It was worse then to my mind than it is now because you didn't get any help. But you see, he was clever, he was a craftsman, and when he was in work he earned very good money. Well relatively good money, you see, and he saved. He saved. He, he didn't drink. He smoked about an ounce of tobacco a week, but he didn't smoke all that much, and he didn't-

Interviewer What craft did he do?

Eve Well he, he was, um, a piano maker, but that involved, um, involved woodwork of all sorts, you see. And when he was younger, when he was first ... he left school at 11½, but when he died at 84 his handwriting would put most people to shame, and his spelling and everything, you see. He was ... you know, he really ... at, at 11½ he'd learnt a lot more than these learn at 16, it, it really did. I mean I, I wish I'd kept some of his handwriting 'cos it was beautiful, and he was ever so clever at everything he ... he could do anything. And he lined up I think for a year or, long, long while anyway, at Bellingham Estate when they were building the houses out there, that ... you know Bellingham?

Interviewer Yes.

Eve On the Bromley Road, you see.

Interviewer Yes.

Eve And they lined up out there to get a job, and every day he was out there at daybreak more or less to get a job. And, um, he, he knew about carpentry but he didn't know about the jargon, you see, and he learnt the jargon just by hanging around, you see, and they gave him a job. So he learned to be a builder and he learnt, um, he could, er, do, er, well he could do anything actually, house repairs and things, flat roofs and, um, um, you know, pipes and everything, he was really quite clever. And he, he, he had ... he was an artist too, because I don't know whether ... yeah, you can see ... see that needlework box over there?

Interviewer Oh yes.

Eve Well he, he did all that and it's all, um, veneered and what not, and he worked out that he sort of ... you know, the mechanism of that, you see, it swings out with two little boxes and one big box at the bottom, and he did all that, you see, so he was ever so clever. And he made that tray thing behind, you know, for afternoon tea, only 'cos we don't have afternoon tea ((Laughs)) But I intend to live graciously when I, when I ... the children are off hand. I mean now I've got old furniture, I've got ... but I'm going to keep old furniture but I'm going to have it re-done, you see. And this is the first time for ten years, I've been here ten years now and I've never ever had this room decorated until just before

Christmas. You see now I've got it decorated and I have learnt now not to take, er, not to take the paper off but to paper over the top of it, you see. But the room next door stupidly I took the paper off, but the paper acts as a ... if it's well stuck on like it was, you see. So anyway that's no accord.

But then, you see, I went on and there was education, and all my life wanted to be a teacher, and all my life I'd been ... I could live on the future – if you know what I mean – I didn't need ... I was contented. I was always been contented, and I think this is one of the things about good nurses, they must be content in the position they find themselves in. You know, I mean whatever you find yourself in you learn to be content and then you go on from there. And, um, I wanted to be a teacher and of course, er, my father said, "Not so, so likely", ((laughingly)) you, you go to college to be a teacher and then what would happened to you in very little time. And teachers weren't allowed to be married, you see.

Interviewer Oh that's right, yes.

Eve Teachers weren't allowed to be married, and so, er ... and I had always got lots of boyfriends and so, um, teachers weren't allowed to be married. And in Uganda Pupil Midwives weren't allowed to be married either. For a long time Pupil Midwives couldn't be married in Uganda. But, um, they ... so ... and I've often thought compare-, compared with it, you see, because, um, a Midwife was allowed to be married so it was a different ... little bit different, but teachers weren't allowed to be married, and, um, so you had to give it up once you were, you were, you had taught, you see, if you'd been teaching. And so he said, "We'll keep you at college and then you'll get married in a short time and all, all my money ... all the money will be wasted that we spend on you".

And, um, as I say I wasn't allowed to be a teacher. But I did shorthand typing and I was good at bookkeeping, and then I saw an advertisement, one advertisement only, for the only job I ever applied for before I started nursing, was into, um, in an office, and I went to Aldrich House in London, to learn ... they sent me in the mornings, to learn to work a comptometer. That's-

Interviewer What's that?

Eve A comptometer is the forerunner of the, um, you know, er – words elude me sometimes when I haven't used them for a long time – you know, these machines. Machines-

Interviewer Computer?

Eve Computer, that's it, yeah. I mean the forerunners. And you see they were fascinating these comptometers because, um, they ... you could ... we used to do at school – I don't know whether you ... you probably don't do them now – but we used to do long tots. We used to have four figures, er, thing, and you had to add them up that way and add them up that way, and add the totals up that way, and you got the same answer that way and that way, and that was called a long tot. And, um, I mean to do a long tot it used to take about half an hour, and on a compu- ... on, um, a comptometer you could do it in about two minutes, see, so it was all so exciting.

And then, um, we were, um, er ... so I went to the office work, and I got ever so well at the office, again I was very content, I had a big life. I never ... ((laughs)) when I was at school I never did my homework 'cos I never really needed to so I'd always got Guides and clubs and, um, played netball Saturdays and afternoons and went to church on Sundays and did all the things, you know, absolutely every minute of my life was full to the brim, so I was real prepared. And I'd lived for the time I was ... I danced, I ... when I started nursing I taught people how to dance 'cos they ... these were all protected children, you see, only the rich nursed, and they had never practiced. They might have had a few dancing classes but never the, you know, like I had been to. I hadn't been to ballet or any of those things but my mum ... ((laughingly)) but I used to go to church dances and things and I knew how to waltz and tango and all these dances, you see, the old-fashioned dancing. And then, um ... and I was good at it and enjoyed it.

And then when I was about 18 I had a hernia repaired and, er, I had to wait for that to get heeled, and then, um, I asked two Nurses ... you, you can't believe this. Now this is the bit you can't believe about nursing in the olden days, I asked two Nurses how to get to, to nursing, because I didn't know how, and, um, they said, um, they'd look ... after a long trouble they looked me out, and they told me I was really socially good enough for them. I wasn't socially good enough.

Interviewer A class thing.

Eve You won't put all this in your book because I'm going to put it in mine, but you can put in about the midwifery later on, and I could tell you about the midwifery because I, I mean I will mention it but I won't ... it's, you know. Because it isn't, er ... you know, you have to say that you haven't printed ... these things haven't been printed before. And then I, I, er ... they looked me out two work houses and one ... um, two work houses and one, um ... this school where I did in two years what I should have done in one, I did my Prelim.

Interviewer Where was that?

Eve Bishop's Stortford. But, er, then right from the beginning, er, they had a little maternity ward seven beds at there, and they had just seven beds in a cottage hospital type, but they did just your Prelim, and so the first, I think the first two years. And then I, I, I was put on the midwifery department, you see, because they only had a Sister for both the general ward and the midwifery ward, and, um, they were all little single rooms and very nice and beautiful. And, um, well it was, you know, you'd have fallen love when I went for the interview, I fell in love with the babies they had got, because the cots were all, um, muslin lined with little bits of, um, dotted muslin, and they had little counterpanes that matched, and the counterpane sat on top of their blankets, they were, they were tucked in and the little counterpanes set, and it had blue boy on ... the blue bows on the end for a boy – you pinned the blue bow – and pinned the blue ... the pink bow for the girls. And, um, they had it on maternity and they had it ... we had two of these treasure cots they're called, don't they, beside the fireplace on the children's ward on the left of 12 beds, and I did most of my time on the children's ward or on maternity, and so I'd see babies done.

That's how my introduction ... was during my general training, so you could mention that if you like. But during my midwifery was ... I was introduced to it through my general training. And of course when I went to Hertford that I finished with, I was put on the maternity ward for the first four months, and after a bit they used to call me, they used to leave me in charge where I had a Midwife on call, you know. And I, I, I delivered my first baby at Hertford because we had this, um, um, um, pregnancy tox- ... well, er, she was a ... she had actually had it and- We had ... she was in this side ward and, um, this

bloomin' Staff Nurse kept staffing me but kept saying, "I'm going to dinner, I'm going to dinner", and she bloomin' well didn't go. So in the end of course she went and, um, the minute she'd gone the woman gave one grunt and out popped the baby. ((Laughs)) And a little tiny toxic baby of three pound or so, three, three or four pound, and um, I didn't know, I'd got to contractions, I'd seen her do it, and she rubbed up the contractions, and no wonder I didn't give her a post-partum haemorrhage. ((Laughingly)) I mean I definitely didn't know how to deliver a placenta.

I was afraid she was going to bleed and I, I rang the bell like hell, mind you, and, er, and then, er, she sent me for one of these, er, metal mucus catheters, and I never forget, I never used to use them, you see, but I, I didn't know what it was, and she said, "Bring me any catheter", and I took her a rubber catheter, that was no good, she didn't want ((laughingly)) all that mucus in her mouth, you see. Not that I, I would have done if it had been me, I would have sucked up the mucus and spit it out, that's what I should have done, but she didn't. And, um, and she ... when she did eventually get there she revived the baby and took it out to a labour ward in the end and I did the placenta. So that was my ... although I think I had ... probably had a delivery too before at Bishop's Stortford, I've forgotten now, but I've had the odd. But I certainly wasn't afraid of it, you see.

Interviewer When did you do your nursing training, what year was it?

Eve Um, um, I started in 19 ... the 1st of January 35, and I stayed on until ... and then I ... You couldn't ... you could have stayed on but you ... I could have got a ... gone to Queen Charlotte's from my ... Bishop's Stortford Hertford, I could have gone to Queen Charlotte's as a ... um, but I would have had to have signed to say I'd give them a year's midwifery, and I didn't want to do that, you see. And during my general training, if I had done, er, um, the normal three year training, in other words if I had been socially acceptable, ((laughs)) I'd have gone to ... I could have done my training ... midwifery training in six months. But I never regretted it, I never regretted that six month ... you know, having to do the year.

Interviewer So you did a year in Hertford, did you?

Eve No, no, I didn't. I did all ... I did a year ... of the four years I was in general training, I did at least a year if not more on the maternity wards. That was nothing to do with training, you see, but it, it was, it was inclusive because both Hertford and, um, what's the name, didn't have a midwifery school, they had, um, a general school, but they put the midwifery ... they put the general pupils, probationers we were called, we were not called pupils, probationers, put us on the midwifery, midwifery, you see. And I had a, I had a sort of well they-

And the other half of my time ((laughingly)) I seemed to do on the bloomin' private ward. I was always on the private wards in Hertford, you know, because the private patients took to me like a, a duck to water, and, um, they really did. ((Laughs)) There was just something about me, you know. And I used to joke with them, you know, because I, I used to take the Mickey out of some of them, I'd say ... er, there was a Misses Smith, and I'd say, "This is Misses Smith, the Smiths", you know, and this sort of thing, you know. ((Laughs)) And then we had another girl who I won't ... I nearly mentioned her name then, I won't tell you, but she had had ... the Doctors had procured abortions on her twice. A very, very rich family, and I knew that a Doctor ... the Doctors had procured them.

And then they, they refused to do it anymore and she became pregnant, and because they refused to do it she drove herself in her car over the, over the wall, and, um, over a, over a bank, you know, and she was brought in sort of semi-conscious. And they put her on the general ward and her parents refused to pay the money at the beginning. But eventually they moved her to the private ward, the little beast, she wouldn't wash herself, she wouldn't do anything, and I said, "I'm not a ladies' maid I'm not going to wash you". I mean I, I, I washed her while she was ill, I have to do that, and I used to take a bowl of water and I'd say, "Here you are, wash your hands. You, you wash most of you and I'll come and finish off and wash your back". I'd go in, the water would be clean, um, I'd wash her back and I'd throw the water away. She didn't have a wash as far as I was concerned. But then, you see, you've got other pros who'd come and do that for her, you see, and I wouldn't do it.

And, um, when she went home I had to laugh, she bought all these lovely presents for everybody, and for me she bought two handkerchiefs, ((laughs)) and I took them out and put them in the sterliser. But she came back again the next time and she had a ... had this baby, and again they must have smothered it at birth, of that I'm sure, they must have smothered it because, um, we thought that it had been abortions, and in those days abortions used to be thrown into the bin, you see.

Well, if it had been me I'd been ... if I was ever to do that, not that I would ever dream of that sort of thing, but if ... normally I would have taken that baby if it was called an abortion, and I would have seen it went straight into the furnace. But there was a Welsh girl, and Irish girl and me a cockney, and, um, this Irish girl said, um ... no the Welsh girl, said, "You know, that baby, that baby's lovely, you know where it is, it's up in the, in the bin at the top sluice". I said, "Come off it", they said, "Yes". So the, the, the Irish girl said, "Let's go and have a look at it", so, um, she went up, er, one kept guard at the door and one kept guard at the window, and one undid the parcel in there, and sure there was a lovely little Frenchmen there and we'd heard that her parents had taken her to Paris for a holiday, and she'd had this affair with this Frenchmen, and he'd got dark, dark hair, lovely ... this baby had got lovely dark hair, he was a beautiful little baby, and it was perfect, of that I'm sure, I'm absolutely sure that that little baby was not-

Interviewer So how many weeks pregnant was she then?

Eve I think third or fourth, I think. Third or fourth. I'm not sure. And, um, anyway, er, I ... you know, there was nothing you could do about it. And the thing was, the Sister on that ward was off that particular day, she had the day off, and they got the Sister up from the general, from the general ward, the, the private ward, they got her up. And it's a funny thing, I met that same Sister when I was in the Army and I often longed to ask her about that, but then she didn't really know, she only knew because she was off ... had a day off, you see. But, um, anyway she ... there she was.

And then, so, er, that's what I did, had, had a good contact, I'd get a good groundwork, and I'm all for that now, this midwifery business, of having a good groundwork when they're doing their general, because if you're a born Midwife you ... it comes out then,

you see, and it came ... and I know I said it shouldn't ... I am a born Midwife, I'm patient, er, I'm, um ... yet I'm, I ... you know, I'm, um, a ... The Spanish people and the Italians and people that I've met say I'm simpatico, you know, simpatico, and it, it's not a quality that you can, it's not a quality that you can, er, breed in you can teach people, it's not a quality, you've either got it. And I've met nurses in Uganda, of Midwives that I've trained in Uganda, they've had it too, they've had it, and this is a quality of midwifery that you definitely need.

And, um, I mean I had a job once as a Midwife when I was qualified – I'll tell you about the training that I did – um, I had a job once and I had this, um, um, ward and, er, I was ... had two labour wards, one up and one down, and I had, er ... we only had the, er, cases like the eclampsia's and things downstairs, but we had the normal deliveries all went upstairs and then we could transfer them down. And we didn't have a lift, there was no lift, it was just wooden stairs. But it was a lovely hospital, it was in Wimbledon actually, and, um, there I'd often got ... well I delivered four babies in an hour and a half and only one pupil or two pupils on duty, and, um, I'd, er, had this ... um, these babies ... er, these women in labour, and I could go into them and say, "Look dear, I can't stay with you because I've got so-and-so, and so-and-so and so-and so, but if you're feeling miserable or unhappy there's a bell there and I'll be there in two seconds. I or somebody will be there in two seconds".

Now, I'd tell her what I was doing, keeping the person informed, and they'd hardly ever ring their bells, you know. They knew that they could and they knew that I was at the other end and I could be relied on. And I've had a woman ... er, people have said to me sometimes, you know ... er, this again you can't, you can't teach it. Um, I've had a woman, er, in labour a week in the olden days, used to be terrible, you see, and, er, I used ... bloomin' specialist again, I haven't any room for them lots of times because he'd come and say, "Oh leave her another 24 hours". Roman Catholic I'm ashamed. I don't know whether you're Roman Catholic, are you?

Interviewer No.

Eve No. Well, not that it makes any difference but your creed does make a difference to the way you, you have to behave probably or the way you want to behave, and he'd say, "Leave them the ... leave them another day, it's all right, it's all right", and you'd leave this other ... this woman another day in labour in labour in labour and she wouldn't ... And I remember getting a ... ((laughingly)) I get a patient actually onto the labour ward bed and, um, they said, "Oh, er, leave her another day", or something like that – I've forgotten – leave this extra, and I, I said, "Please God, please God, please God, don't let this woman suffer so much and then have a dead baby at the end of it. Please God." The number of prayers I used to shove up, ((laughs)) you know, up that to get this. And, um, they would almost change their minds, you know, in the labour ward when we have them in labour, and er, oh it was dreadful. But you know, I have never seen a woman die in England.

Interviewer I was going to ask you that.

Eve Never, never, never seen a woman die. Never.

Interviewer Because the maternal mortality was quite high in the 30s, wasn't it.

Eve Oh yes. I, I have never. I should think probably I've witnessed ... must have witnessed 5,000 deliveries in England, because I didn't go to Uganda until I was 46, and, um, I had done ... well I had 500 deliveries when I supervised, er, on ... when I was Night Superintendent at one hospital. So I've never seen a woman die. But mind you, I had one awful case when a little youngster, 17, had an illegitimate baby and she died, er, three or four hours afterwards. But she died of, um, amniotic embolism, you see, where there was nothing to do with, with ... it couldn't have been prevented, one minute she was alive and the next minute she had gone. And I was terribly shocked, you see, because the babies, I don't know what the mortality rate for babies is, but ... was in my own cases, 'cos in the end you cease to keep records, you haven't really got time.

But then I went from Hertford, I could have had that year, and I went to do fever training, not because I wanted to do ... well I didn't mind 'cos it was mostly kids' fevers, that's what I went for, but I went to do my fever training because, um, it was a better, a better training really in some ways because, er, they paid you £70 a year. I mean just imagine getting

£1.08 a month ... a week I mean. No, £1- ... yes, £1.08 a week, wasn't it. I've forgotten now. Yes, just over £1 a week '34. And I went to do it and I went to the East End. Lovely. Lovely dear old East End with all these East End kids, dirty little ... I mean filthy dirty and snotty nosed, and clothes were all, you know, rags practically, and, you know, it was really ... it was lovely about these kids. And of course they were in for months on end, and they used to scream and shout when they had to go back to their mothers, they didn't want to go back to their mothers, ((laughingly)) you know, they'd been warm and well fed and looked after for a year or so. Not a year, but up to a year. Then I, I went from there and I saved all my money and I went to, er, during the war, I went and did my midwifery at Perivale. Do you know Perivale? Have you heard of it?

Interviewer Yeah.

Eve It's in, er, Brentford, Ealing and Chiswick boroughs and it was a Conservative ... they're all Conservative boroughs in, boroughs in those, those days, and although I don't believe in plugging politics ... well I, I was brought up a Conservative. I, I don't believe in plugging politics. But that hospital was really, really beautifully planned, and it didn't cost very much more than the one I went to at Bexleyheath eventually to do my Part 2, where a Labour borough had planned it. There they had all terrazzo flooring and this, that and the other, and it was the same in Fevers, the Fever was a Labour borough, Plaistow Fe-, Fever Hospital, and they had all these beautiful Dalton china chimney pieces and everything and gave the kids rice pudding every day for their dinner. I mean the things weren't, you know, they weren't, er ... this is going back to politics when you can't mention there's too much, but it was true – and I'll have to mention all these things in my book again.

But, um, so I went to Perivale and there they had eight pupils at a time in three months, and they were nearly all from university hospitals, you know, from the bigger hospitals in London, and there were only two of us that weren't of the 16 pupils, only two of us that weren't, and I'm in still in contact with the other one. But she was a good ... she trained at the same sort of hospital as me and, um, she'd found her study very difficult because she, because she'd passed… It's like old Mary Knight, my ... I don't know if I've mentioned Mary. Mary Knight my friend was a, um ... she had been in PTS three times in other

hospitals, and her parents were rich and, er, she had been at these other hospitals. And then she came to us at Bishop's Stortford and then she passed her Prelim first time, and then she went on to Hertford with me and we were buddies.

And then she, er, she got married the year she was qualified and ... But when she got her boyfriend she used to go out with him when we ... before she sat exams. I was on the little isolation ward and I could see her as she'd go down, and she wouldn't dare go down that drive ((laughingly)) unless ... she took a book with her and ((laughingly)) she used to wave it me to say she'd got the book, and her boyfriend used to ask her questions out, you see. ((Laughs)) And, and she passed her, her finals first time. Yeah, she passed her finals first time. So, um, you see, er, again I was prepared for the teaching 'cos I taught her, I taught her how to learn and at the same time learnt myself.

But there a good deal of it was preparing for too ... for my general training particularly, prepared for it by my, um, central school, because there we did five years science and we touched on everything. We didn't do like you do here, we weren't worried about the science exams in those days, but we did, um, say home nursing, er, we did first aid, we did anatomy physiology, er, we did health science, we did domestic science, we did that for a year. Er, we did, er, natural science too, and we did ... really did it. Er, what else did we do in the science? Biology. Any, any other science things. We, we ... chemistry. We touched on all these things in general training. And I think myself that the general education I think we're over educated, and I feel this very, very strongly, that we are over educated and we are not ... our schools now are not educated in the right way, you see. Whereas the old method of this central school was this was very, very, very good.

And in fact it wasn't until I started nursing that I realised just how much of my life was based on that central school education. I wrote and told the Head Mistress too, I wrote afterwards to my Head Mistress and my Form Mistress, they lived together when they retired and lived in a house together – and, um, I wrote and told them, I said, you know, that I couldn't say how much I owed the nursing profession, as a nurse I couldn't say how much I owed to that school, because it was five years. And I think this is what ought to happen now. We did photography, you see, which is a science, see, this sort of thing.

Interviewer It's amazing, isn't it.

Eve You see? We touched on the stars, we gave ... we had a little bit of, you know, about the stars. All ... every branch of the sciences we were taught, you see. But not ... there was no exam at the end of it, you see.

Interviewer Yes, it makes a difference, doesn't it.

Eve Yeah, that makes all the difference.

Interviewer Because you learn to enjoy it.

Eve You see this little girl is coming in in a minute, my little ((inaudible)) cup of tea in a minute you can come and help me. Um, little Doreen is, um, doing biology and she gets something like 28%. Well, I mean it's because it's too, it's too concentrated. And it's the same with motor mechanics. My other daughter did motor mechanics but she was the only girl amongst all these boys, mind you, and she did motor, um, motor, um, motor mechanics I think it was called, and, er ... but I mean it was ridiculous because they didn't do any of the fundamentals. And she did ... I think she did biology too, but, um, they didn't ... to start off with they didn't start telling them the chemical, um ... they didn't have anything to do with ... like they didn't know that CO2 was carbon dioxide, and they didn't know if ... did know it was carbon dioxide, they didn't know that it was carbon one point and oxygen two. I mean they didn't even start off with a, a list of, of, of things explaining that.

And it's the same with teaching English in my opinion, I don't know whether you find it so, but I think with teaching English if you teach a child to break down a word, you see. For instance I'll give you an example of what happened in my mid ... my teachers' finals, my teachers' exam. Had to write a paper on, er ... a part of a question said, um, write all you know or write something about inanition fever. Now I'd never heard inanition fever. Have you ever heard of it? Inanition-

Interviewer No.

Eve Now, I thought well I've never ... I left it 'til last and I put 'in' 'in-anition', to my mind that means something negative somehow or the other, 'anition' means sort of nutrition,

'trition', you see, nutrition. And it means ... to my mind it means inanition fever, the only thing I knew connecting it to the baby was a fever due to lack of fluids, you see, which is what they call dehydration. And I wrote quite a lot about it, I don't know how many marks I got for it but it must have boosted me up, but I passed. But I met a Doctor afterwards and she had been years in India and she had trained at, um, the cure ... the hospital in London for women Doctors, the first one to train – and I've forgotten what it's called now – the Royal Free. She trained at the Royal Free in the olden days, and she'd gone out to India and she came to us when she retired in Uganda and worked for nothing for a Roman Catholic thing, and she was excellent, er, an excellent teacher, excellent. And she had done all her midwifery, all her things, with, um, suction, you know, she did it all ... no forceps but-

Interviewer All with the ventouse.

Eve Yeah, the ventouse, that's it. I couldn't remember the minute, the ventouse yeah. And, um, she had done that for years in India, you see, and then she came onto us and of course she was an absolute fundi at it, she was absolutely ... a fundi means, you know, absolute specialist at it, you see, and she was marvellous. And she told me once when I was chatting to her, she said that during her finals she had this word inanition. I did tell her my story but she told me her story and it was exactly the same as mine, and she said, "I didn't know what it meant but I broke it down and thought I think that must mean ... connected it with fever in newborns, you know, tiny babies", and she, she had again passed her exams with no bother. But I think myself there's so many words, I mean they don't know what semi means, demi, um, ante, a-n-t-e, a-n-t-i. I give my ... I have always given mine, but the things is I find that, that, er, teenagers particularly resist teaching from me anyway, they somehow don't want to know.

And so I've given up with Doreen and now we've, er, got to find her a teacher, because she ... it's no good me saying what's going to be good for her or what's not going to be. I just had to sometimes, I mean she's just failed her typing exams. I knew she would 'cos she wouldn't practice, so she wants to sit, wants to sit again in February, so I've had a fuss all this week, hell of a fuss all this week, because of the sit in, er, in February because I've

got to pay for it this time, you see. I wasn't really willing for her to sit it last time, but I had to sign a form that if she sat it again she'd have ... I'd have to pay for it. And so I said, "I'm not going to pay, I'm not going to pay for you to sit an exam in February because you haven't done enough practice".

And sure enough she sulked all week but the day before yesterday, Wednesday, she did, she did an hour's typing, and yesterday she did an hour's typing, that's two hours typing, and she only filled a foolscap sheet and a little bit beside it in two hours. She's not going to pass an exam on that, and there are about 20 mistakes, you see, so ... But she resists all the time, and I told her, "Well you can type if you like but you don't have to tell me whether I'm going to pay for you to re-sit", you see, 'cos things are all ... er, she's a foster child and, er, I don't mind. I wrote and told her mother that I was ... I wrote a told her mother because I was afraid her mother might send her the money, and her mother's not as hard up. I thought perhaps mum might ... she's abandoned, she's adopted too.

And that's again what I feel very strongly about, is this business of adopting children, they should know who they're giving ... she didn't ... she was 9 nearly 9½ when she came her and she didn't know that she was adopted, and she didn't know that she was half Asian and half English. And again I think the ethnic blueprint's terribly important. I think it's terribly important, you see, because, um, if you don't know where you ... your origins, you're, you're sunk, you see. I don't know whether you feel this but I do, I think ... I mean I don't think you have any right to keep from kids if they're adopted, I'm, I'm sure it's not right, I'm sure it's not right. And if ... I mean if you bring it up I would never, never say anything against any of my children's parents, whether they're adopted or fostered I always say they have to do what they have to do very often, you see. Um, of course the triplets were no bother because their mother died the day they were born and, er-

Interviewer And they're from Uganda?

Eve Yeah. That's Mark, he's a triplet, and Matthew's skiing on a holiday this week, and, er, Rosamund's upstairs and I don't get on very well with her, she's 20, we fight like old boots ((?)). ((Laughingly)) I don't really fight with her, I keep forgiving her really. I saw once a, a mother, a black mother castigating a, a black child and I thought, 'I never could cast her

off like that, never could cast her off, never'. I can easily cast my Rosie off. ((Laughingly)) I can really. Because she really is ... I mean if she was to do some shopping, she did a lot of shopping the day before, um, the day before, and she ... I said, "Well that is the list but but it's not finished", and um, er, you know, there are a lot of other things that I could do with but that's as much as you can carry", and, um, I gave the, er, list, so I said, "I want you to do some shopping", and there were some things, I wanted some hair, um, wash, because I wanted to try ... because she was saying one day how nice somebody's hair was one day, I said, "Well I could have a, a silver wash ..." because I've always had grey hair since I was about 30-odd – no wonder, and, er, ((laughs)), and er, I thought, 'Here goes' I'll, I'll have a ... try and get a silver wash. I used to sometimes have a blue wash ((and I thought about it there but, um, and I want-, wanted it done yesterday morning because shops shut Thursdays, you see.

Interviewer ((inaudible))

Eve Yes, well, they shut Thursdays here. Lots of them don't but the chemists all shut. They open for an hour in the evening. And, um, anyway there it is. So do you do anything now at all?

Interviewer Well my baby's only a year old so I'm with him most of the time and doing this book in turn.

Eve I see. I see. Well I'm dying to cast my children off and ... What's he called, the baby?

Interviewer Ben.

Eve Have you got Ben with you now?

Interviewer Yeah, he's staying with friends in Hartmond.

Eve Oh he's all right then, good. How old's he? I suppose you couldn't bring him along.

Interviewer He's a monkey and then he would be just clambering around.

Eve Yeah, yeah, that's all right, yeah.

Interviewer He wants to join in.

Eve Yeah. Um, it's a pity. I love kids and, er, I've got ... my ... one of my daughters she's got two children, she recently phoned me up on a Friday and said they were getting married the next day on the, on the Saturday. ((Laughingly)) But, er, anyway, she's got Carmen. That's Carmen.

Interviewer Oh yeah, I wondered ...

Eve Yes, that's Carmen. And I haven't got a, a picture of Emily, and, um, they're lovely. And that's us when we first came to ... I don't know whether you're interested, but that's, that's when ... or you can get it yourself. They're probably dusty. That one over the back there, pick it up, the black and white one. That's us when we first came to, er, Ilfracombe. That's Marswicks. They're all adopted now. But the triplets are the two boys and the youngest of the girls. She's ((inaudible)). ((Laughingly)) And the two ... the other two, Margaret had, er, 19th century surgery while she came here, she had, um, multiple osteomyelitis, and, er, she's got a built up boot. She's a nice child though. Um, it's the other one, Joanne. Mar-, Margaret's sitting down at the front. Yeah, that's it, I think. And, er, there's the one with the three knobs on the end, that's Rosamund, and the other one's Joanne. It's Joanne's who got the two little girls, and, um ... she's cute, isn't she.

Interviewer She's lovely.

Eve And Emily's just as cute. She's a different type of child but that one is really quite cheeky and nice. Well they're both lovely but, er, you know, it's just there. But, um, of course they're mixed, you see, and that's another thing I think with, um, Midwives, they can do a lot ... they could do a lot with the colour business if they really wanted to. But then I think that a lot of coloured people unluckily have got a chip on their shoulder, and it's a terrible thing to say but they have.

Interviewer It's not surprising, is it, really.

Eve Well I don't know. I think I've tried to bring mine up not to have a chip on their shoulder. I mean all right, I wasn't allowed to nurse because I wasn't socially good enough, I mean so what are they bellyaching about, they're not allowed to do things because they're black. Well all right then, overcome it. I've never ... I haven't got a complex about it. And

the thing that amazed me is that I wasn't allowed to nurse because I wasn't socially fit, not that they said it, only because my father was a carpenter like Jesus Christ. I mean how can they say that I wasn't socially good enough, but I accepted it, I thought that I'm not socially good enough.

And when I first started nursing I used to hate going into the dining room, I could be on the wards, I could work as a slave I didn't mind dirty bedpans, sputum mugs, wipe the old boys' behinds, do any of those thing, ((laughingly)) I didn't mind any of those jobs. But get me to go to the dining room, it was murder, because, you see, I felt, you know, I felt inadequate, you see. I mean my mother had dished up our food on a plate and put it in front of us, and, um, we had good food and we had knife and fork, we never ate with our fingers. I mean, I mean we were definitely ... we had a nice white cloth, we had ... we, you know. I tell you, my mother's people came from good families. I mean my mother's uncle was a Judge, and my, my ... I, I reckon, I don't know, but I should think my mother's mother must have gone away with a Cooper, er, you know a fella that made barrels in Deptford, in Deptford Dockyard.

And again the, the history of Deptford is terribly interesting and I know most of it. I mean if they had only taught us history based on our local ... I mean the village in Deptford is absolutely swarming in history. I mean I was born in Edward Street which was called after the King, I was born ... er, just round the corner was Edward ((?)) Place. I was born on Sir John Evelyn's Estate which is, um, he wrote the great diaries – I don't know whether you know him. Um, in Deptford Dockyard Peter the Great of Russia came to learn to, um, build ships in our thing, you see. So, er, build, build ships ... our Rus- ... the Russian Navy was built on, on Deptford, you see, they learned, they learned to build ships, you see. Peter the Great of Russia lived in Deptford in ... you see, on the Evelyn Estate, Estate. Oh, I could go on and on and on telling you. I had my teeth removed in Nelson's house where he kept baby Nelson. I was nursing in Myrtle where he kept Lady Hamilton. ((Laughs)) You know, I mean I know so much. Well I learnt a lot of it in living there, you see, it's lovely and I loved it, I absolutely loved it, you see. And, um, I don't know whether you ever listen to BBC2 early in the morning, perhaps you don't.

Interviewer Not very often.

Eve No. Well, BBC2 there's a fellow on there, er, Moore his surname is. Ray Moore. Ray Moore. He's on from, um, six 'til eight on BBC2, and he's, he's always mentioning Deptford, the creek and all bits about Deptford, you know, and having a go. So I wrote to him one day and said what a lovely place, you know, what I owe to Deptford believe it or not there. But, er, not only that they said it, but that I accepted that I wasn't socially good enough to nurse, you see. And ... but I never had a, a chip on my shoulder about it. But I used to hate the dining room and, er, you know, with all these people there and everything, although I've as I said nice white cloth, we always had at home a clean cloth on the table and, you know, we had manners and say please and thank you, and we used to have people to tea.

I remember having a Sunday School teacher for tea once and, um, she had a long walk home, she used come to Sunday School in the afternoon and she used to then go back home and then come back, and my mother said, "We'll invite her to tea then if it's all right we'll ..." She didn't get invited a second time because my mother had a little slop base, you know, to put the, the cold tea and tea leaves in there, and she emptied it and it had got full, you know, it was ((inaudible)) and, um, so she said to this woman, "Have you finished your tea?", she said, "Oh yes Cally, yes Cally – my mum's name was Callyver– oh yes Cally, yes". So my mother put the slops from somebody else's cup into her cup, you see, and it gradually got half filled, you see. So, er, my mother didn't say anything more, and then just as we ... we said, "Oh we'll get up now", so she said, "Oh haven't finished my tea", and she drank the slops. ((Laughs))

Interviewer Oh God.

Eve And, and we nearly had a fit, we really did, we had a fit. My brother and I didn't we laugh. And, er, and then of course we had prayers. We had the radio on and, um, prayers, and during the prayers she wouldn't eat, so, you know ...

[END OF FIRST AUDIO FILE]

[START OF SECOND AUDIO FILE]

Eve ... ((inaudible)) when I, I went to Country Holiday Fund. Do you know Country Holiday Fund? Well it's a thing, a society and they still have it actually, poor kids they'll give a holiday, they go for two weeks, and you pay a little bit if you can afford it, and I remember my mother had to pay 16 shillings, but my cousins only had to pay five or something like that for a fortnight's holiday, and that included the fare and the money, the Country Holiday Fund paid for the rest of it, you see. And we sent, we were sent to a home of a minor in Bath area down this way, it was a long way to go, and my two cousins and I were there and they gave us boiled fish and I couldn't swallow it, I just couldn't swallow it. And in the end they, they were furious with me, this mining family. They, you know, they'd, they'd got them feeding as well, and I went and I actually vomited, vomited it up, and I think that was the only other time I'd ever had boiled fish, and I looked at this one, this boiled fish and I, I can't eat it, I just can't eat it. And so I sat there for a long time and I tried to eat it, kind of it's all in my mouth, and near the end I spluttered, er, "Excuse me", and burst into tears and rushed out of the room ((laughs)) with Sister's at one table, Staff Nurse is at another table and Probation's at another. It was only a small hospital.

So, um, and then I'd been there and I hadn't been out of uniform for, for three or four days and I went up to this room at the top of the hospital and I sat and looked out over across the fields. I didn't even know the grass stayed green in the winter, I imagined that it died like trees, you see. I didn't really ... I was absolutely green. I don't know why I didn't connect it because I used to Village Park and you'd got green grass, but it was a great surprise to me that the grass was green and, you know, there was so much greenery about. And, um, I sat there and then in the end I thought, 'Well you, you must, your father said if you can't ... if you start nursing you can't ever come home again, so you better get cracking, you've got, you've got to stay". So...

Interviewer That's what he said, was it?

Eve Yes. Yeah. He told me to never cross his doorstep again.

Interviewer Why was that?

Eve Well I'd had a very good office job, you see, reliable and everything, and he thought that I was a fool to take a job for five bob a week, you see. And, um, I went down ... I changed out of the uniform and I went down to, um, sit on the gate ... Oh, on top of that I had to £12 for a uniform, sixteen eightpence, um, three dresses, er, eight collars, eight pairs of trousers, four belts, six pairs of black knee stockings and two pairs of Oxford pump shoes. And they provided the four caps ((Laughs)) And, er, er, then so I, I went and sat on this five-by gate down on the field and I cried the whole afternoon and pulled myself together, and at four-thirty I wiped my eyes and went back on duty and I never looked back again, I got over it, you see. But I was lonely, you know, there, er, I was lonely, the other girls weren't friendly, and it was not ... no PTS in those days, you see. And, um, they ... about, about a fortnight later this other girl came that had done PTS three times so she was very blasé, you see, because she'd done ... she knew everything too. And, er, but I by that time was well settled in.

Interviewer Can I ask you about your midwifery training?

Eve Pardon?

Interviewer Can I ask about what your midwifery training was like?

Eve Oh yeah, sorry about that, I've gone on.

Interviewer No.

Eve Well it all went on from that, you see, 'cos I did my fevers, didn't I, and then, er, to fit ... to get the money to do my ... because I didn't want to give them a year, I thought well I'd rather do a year fevers and collect enough money to do my middle three for nothing, which is what I did. So you did ... no pay at all, and you provided your uniform, but I'd got all the uniform because I'd paid for it in training, you see, um, for general training, so I'd got enough uniform, I didn't have to buy that. And, er, I went to Perivale and it was a lovely hospital.

They had a maternity department, they had a nice maternity hospital and they had a nice isolation unit, and they had a lovely super duper nurses' home, it was absolutely super duper, and, er, really it was lovely. And er, I mean every room had a desk and every ... all

pupils had a, a room to themselves, and they had a washing room and an ironing room and an airing room and a, you know, ((laughingly)) they had a big expanses of grass outside, and they had a nice, um, roof that you could go and sunbathe on, and all these things. Really lovely. And it was a happy atmosphere because there were eight of you all fresh together, you see, and, er, it was during the war, and, er, I went from the East End of London to that lovely atmosphere, you see, and then I went ... that was for my fevers I went from there. And then ... didn't pay though.

Interviewer What year was that?

Eve Um, it would have been 1940 ... I went 39, and I stayed 18 months to fevers, 39 I started fevers. September. About March, I think March or February, something like that, er, 18 ... er, 39, 40, 41.

Interviewer Yes, it must have been 41.

Eve And then I, er ... we went for a ... ((laughingly)) we went to a place, um, and we went to there for six months, and we used to have to go up over a hill somewhere for lectures twice a week, and we went by taxi, um, over the, um, er, Harrow way we used to go for this bloke to lecture us round there, you see. He never came to us, we had to go there. But we had a lecture every day from the tutor, every day from the tutor, and we had every Saturday we had a test, and the only time you could get a day off was on a Saturday every now and again. You had to have a day off in the week, but if you could get a Saturday you would be allowed ... you'd be on your honour to do the test on Friday evening. I mean it wasn't supervised, you were on your honour to do it. You fled the classroom and you, you could get ... do the test at five in the evening on your own, and then you'd hand it in, you see. And, um, and then we had a half ... we had one day off a month. A month! And we had a half day I think it was every other Sunday, every other Sunday. And, er, and then that was all, you see.

So, um, my father, er, by this time had been reconciled, and my mother ... Oh that was the other thing about general training of course was that you had a month a year holiday but you had to provide your keep, you see. But I couldn't go home but I used to go to

Guide camp and they, they would keep me for a month ... for a fortnight or so, you see. And then that's how I, I earned my money.

And then when in midwifery, as I say it was fever training and were paid for it, they gave you pocket money, and my brother who was really a young married man about 22/23, he was married in 39, he was 22 then and his wife was 20 ... just 21. And, um, she sent me a book of stamps every month and he sent me a £1. That was a lot of money for him to fork out, you know, he was a, he was a ... he had been ... he was a glass moulder. And they had ... he was this ... he, he was, um, dyslexic and he was a bad dyslexic because he couldn't talk properly until he was about 7 or 8, and of course they couldn't ... didn't diagnose it in those days. But they apprenticed him at 14 and he was seven years apprenticeship, and, er, he stayed with that firm 51 years. He's retired now.

He's got a lovely family of three sons and daughter, and, um, she was interesting, again she had a, I know this is all delivery really, she had a ruptured ectopic, um, that they ... the Doctor, the General Practitioner, didn't know about, um, ruptured ectopic, and he treated her for either anaemia with excessive menstruation, or, which they used to say it was, or attempted abortion, and, um, they treated her like that for about six weeks with her bleeding from there, and then of course she collapsed and that's what ruptured. She had a ... and she'd had, had a tube abortion and haemorrhaging, and, um, all this time, and he said that my mother was spoiling her and there was nothing wrong with her. Er, er, and then to my horror. And I went to see him and he was very rude to me, he said, you know, about this thing, and he ... I said, "Well, one way or the other it seems to me you ought to be doing something for her". Anyway, he took her home, removed her from her own place. But I think they thought that my mother had procured an abortion, you know, but I mean there would have been nothing further from my mother's thoughts because again when I was about 9 my mother's best friend went to prison for a year for telling somebody where they could procure an abortion.

Interviewer Really?

Eve A year. And she did eight months in Holloway. And that was all she did, she didn't procure an abortion, her sister-in-law had had two children under 2 ... three children under 2, but,

you know, one wasn't 2 when the sec- ... one wasn't 1 when the second one was born, and the, the one wasn't 1 when the third one would have been born, or something like that. I know, you know, you know, she'd have had three, three children with just no time in-between them at all. And so she told her, she said, "Well if this woman ..." And then of course she got found out and she ... the woman who did the abortions got four years and a girl who procured the abortion had turned King's evidence, and her sister-in-law got two years and she got one year in Holloway for nothing else. She was an ever such a good woman, lovely, lovely woman.

Interviewer What happened to the woman who actually had the abortion, did she get-?

Eve No, no she didn't get prosecuted, she went and turned King's evidence, you see. She went to court but she didn't get prosecuted. And anyway, I think they thought she'd suffered enough because she was terribly ill, you see, terribly. Back street abortion. But these ... they were all right, you know, her, her sister-in-law was fine. And that's what happened, she foolishly wrote and said, um, you'll be pleased my sister-in-law must have, have told me, told me that, you know, that you, um ... will have told you that I ... that all was all right, or all was acceptable or something like this, you see. But she did nothing else, she didn't have an abortion herself.

And I remember she ... my mother used to go shopping with her and she wouldn't answer the door or, you know, used to call each other across the wall, but they wouldn't- They couldn't. And we had to have this lovely little girl at the time and I've often ... I know, still know that lovely girl, she's gorgeous, her own little girl, and, er, my auntie adored her, and my mum of course, and she adores my mother. I mean the ... her little daughter is about 18 months and ... who we had, and, er, I've often wondered whether she actually knows that, we didn't mention it because it wouldn't be right. I, I don't think she knows probably that her mother went to prison 'cos she wouldn't let anybody talk about it afterwards, you see, and that was poor old these people.

And I still know her and I've often been tempted to tell her then I thought no, you know, but then I think I'm a great one for telling everybody everything, it comes out in the end, doesn't it. It comes out in the end. You should always be honest with children and with

anybody. That's what I tell my children, no matter what happens do be honest. But they're not honest, they're most ... I find there's so much dishonesty in the world. I mean look at all this fuss there is in Parliament these days that they can hide behind. I mean not that I'm ... I'm all for a certain amount of secrecy but I mean you, you ... secrecy can be taken too far, I say I think it's, it's much better to be open. Anyway, I'm such a chatterbox, I know I couldn't keep a secret if I was told it, but ((laughingly)) I'm, I'm such a chatterbox and life's, life's much easier to be open anyway because it comes out anyway. And, um, anyway I, I went to do this midwifery at Perivale and-

Interviewer Was that six months?

Eve Six months, no. And while we were there we knew that the Part 2 ... war was on, and I had asked for the Army to do ... I'd, I'd ... When I was doing my fevers I hated it but I'd, I'd joined up on the Reserve, you see, and ... but I hadn't been called up, and so I wrote to them and said could I have the ... I now had finished my fever training and I hadn't been needed in the Army, so please could they, please could I have some time to do my midwifery training, you know, I didn't want to waste it anymore. And they wrote back and said you can have six months or a year, tell us what you want. So I hadn't got any time to spare, 'cos I knew that the war would go on and I'd got to do ... have the year, and, um, I wrote back to them and officially said I'll have a year.

And, um, so during my ... the very beginning of my training, er, my Part 1, you see, I wrote to a Part 2 school and got a, and got a, a vacancy for there, and I took this mate of mine with me, the one ... the only other one that wasn't university trained, seems to me, I took ... we went together to this- And ((laughingly)) and as I say it was lovely at Bexleyheath really, I mean it was a really, er, looking back on it, it was a wonderful training, you did three months in hospital and three months outside. But the thing was, it was a Labour borough and the hospital was terribly badly planned, because the nurses' home was over the top of the, of the, of the wards, you see, and, and the isolation ward, er, they never heated it, er, they had an isolation ward a little bit further away but never heated it, you see. And, er, it was ... we used to ... mostly didn't use the isolation ward, just used a, a

side ward for isolating patients, and, er, you know, sepsis and things, and ... But on the other hand...

And the other thing was of course there was this ... it was a T-shaped building but they didn't have one sink in any room. I mean can you imagine building a maternity department in, in those days even, they had all this terrazzo flooring but you had to scrub up on a bowl of ... in a bowl of water on a trolley, you see. And, um, these people were ... they hadn't a clue. They had not got a clue, the management really hadn't. And this again is a thing I disagree with, very often things are planned by people who know nothing whatsoever about it, er, about maternity work. Er, it was a funny thing because it was a small hospital a Matron was all ... was friendly with the Senior Sister ... no, not the Senior. There's a Senior Sister, it was called Deputy Matron because you were like a Deputy Matron, and she was all ... Matron was friendly with the next Sister down who was my Senior, you see.

Well, they used to occasionally have a, a date, say, when the other one wanted to go somewhere, so they used to let them go. Although I was a Sister, Junior Sister, they used to let me ... leave me in charge, they'd leave me in charge. I was quite capable of being in charge. And, um, so it always decided then bloomin' committee turned up unexpectedly, and one day the committee came up and they found nappies drying on the radiators and they said, um, "What are these nappies doing here, disgraceful", and I said, er, "Well the thing is that they, you know, they, they ... there's nowhere else to dry them", and he said, "You've got a drying room". I said, "They're not drying, they are airing these ones on the radiator", I said, "But you can't dry- ... finish off drying in a place where you've already got steam from wet nappies", you see, and I said, "There's nowhere else to put the wet nappies but in the, in the what you call the drying room, that's what it's for". But I said, "You can't put airing nappies in there as well". So he said, "I don't see why not. But you're to take them off the radiator", I thought, 'Well, I'll take them off and the minute you're, you're gone'.

((Interruption as dog enters the room and there's a quick discussion with Mark about tea/coffee)) ((Interview continues at 18:34))

And so anyway the thing was that it was a lovely little hospital and, er, the ... we got ... whereas we'd only got one day off a month in Part 1, in Part 2 we got, er, ((pauses)) a day off, yeah we had a day off every week. Yeah, we had a day off every week, that was it. The other thing was that they paid us. We, we ... they paid us a salary. It was a Labour borough, you see, and they paid, you know, ((laughingly)) they paid us. And I've forgotten how much it was, it wasn't an awful lot, but it was more than enough to compensate, you see, so, um, it was more than enough to compensate. And, er, er, you know, ((laughingly)) it was amazing really because, um, he ... er, it was really good conditions. And on top of this day a week we used to have half a day every other Sunday. Or did we have a morning half and then an afternoon half, I've forgotten now, on Sundays? We had half a day on Sundays anyway very definitely because I went to my nephew's christening on one of the half days.

Anyway, the thing was that it was a free and easy atmosphere. That was the business about nappies. The other thing is they said, "Where are the mats Sister?", I said, "Oh", I said, "They're trays, they're dinner trays outside, they have ... they don't need ... they don't have mats on them, they have them, you know, the mat has got to be kept clean", and he said, "I don't mean that, I mean mats for the side of the bed". I thought, 'You idiot'. I mean just imagine mothers going sliding underneath, and just imagine the infection and the mother going with a, a newborn baby tripping up over a mat at the side of the bed. I mean he hadn't a clue. And he said ... I said, "Oh they don't ... they mustn't have mats", and he said, "Well of course we must, they have to get out on the cold floor", I said, "No, they've got slippers and dressing gowns", I said, "They don't have to, you know, and we've got some if they haven't got them", I said, "But they all come in their shoes anyway", I said, so, "No", I said, "They, they don't need mats at the side of the bed", and you know, it was absolutely fantastic.

And then we went upstairs to inspect the rooms and he said, "Aren't they lucky to have such lovely rooms", I said, "Well the thing is, they aren't all that lucky because the wardrobes-", the back of one wardrobe was the wall of the room in one room. And there's a wardrobe in this bit here, you see, and then the other bit was the, the wall, you see, and

they were only just big enough for, for a bed and a, um, a table or something like that, they weren't really big, they were not a quarter as big as the ... well, perhaps not a quarter but half as big as the rooms that we'd come from, and on top of that Night Nurses had to sleep there. Well you can imagine, you couldn't open the door next ... you couldn't open your wardrobe without the Night Nurse waking up.

We didn't have any Night Nurses' quarters, you see. I mean they never thought of that when they were building it. Whereas we had Night Nurses' quarters in the, in the Part 1, you see, at Perivale. And, um, you know, there was ever so many things, ((laughingly)) you know, little things I remember. But the Matron was marvellous, she really was marvellous. Um, she was a bit of a – I mustn't say that – but she ... ((laughingly)) I mean she had her faults but she, she really was marvellous to work for. I mean she brought the best out in us because, and of course we worked like slaves and we didn't ...

There we did the abnormal midwifery for about hundred and ... it was only a 26 bedded hospital and we did the abnormal midwifery for 120 beds, because there were two other maternity nursing homes where they only did the normal deliveries and they'd transfer them to us. And even then we didn't have a theatre, we did all the ... we had to ... we washed all the theatre ... if we knew we'd got a caesar coming in or got to have caesar, we, we washed all the walls and washed everything in disinfectant and got the labour ward ready for the theatre, you see. We had two labour wards and we didn't ... we had no, there was no theatre, but we did marvellous works there, there, and I could tell you I've seen all those deliveries and I saw lots and lots of deliveries there, never, never saw a theatre. I went for that six months and I stayed on a bit and, um ... well I didn't, only, only like three months really, and then three months on the district.

Interviewer What was it like on the district?

Eve Yes. Well on the district I went to this old Midwife and she was an absolute darling and, um, she had a husband who'd had a, had a brain tumour actually, I think he must have had secondary cancer from the gastric, um, you know, from the gastric cancer, and, um, when I went on the district she was terrified that they were going to put him away and that she wouldn't be able to nurse him. And he was really very inoffensive. We all had ...

we had our own rooms and she lived in a nice three bedded house which she had saved up for, and she only had one son and ... but she was really terrified.

And with me it was a German Doctor who'd come and she'd got, er ... Doctors weren't recognised, and she had, well she had a log on her shoulder, she was 37 or something like that. I mean it was terrible for her as a, a Doctor to have to come to England and do it. I mean I sympathised with her but she was absolute bitch. She used to let them tear and send for the Doctor, and in those days you used to have to pay for the Doctor, and you never let anybody tear if you could help it. And, I mean if it was a little tiny tear you used to tie their knees together for it to-

Interviewer Did you, you did that?

Eve Yes. You had to, you see. And, um, well they couldn't afford the Doctor. And the, the district midwifery I mean I loved it the time I was there, but, um, the district, well it doesn't bear thinking about really some of it, you know. And it was during the war, it was cold, rationing, and delivered babies. Never bathed them. Never bathed them, you couldn't, you know, just wiped it clean and put it in some clothes 'cos that was ... I mean it would have been dead, the baby, you see.

And, um, I remember I hadn't got any pay, or not very much pay, going out and finding the coal man and saying, "Let me have half a hundredweight of coal", he said, "It's rationed", I said, "Come off it", I said, "Come on, give me half hundredweight of coal, I'll pay for it", and he said, "But it, it's rationed". ((Interruption as tea/coffee is brought in)) ((interview continues at 25:20)) And, er, yeah he, yeah, "Give me a half hundredweight of coal", and he said, he said, "All right". He said ... in the end he said, "Well you won't tell anybody", I said, "Who am I going to tell?", I said, "I'm just as much to blame as you are. Come on, half a hundredweight of coal, I'm sure you can squeeze it off of somebody", I said. ((Laughingly)) ((Interruption as biscuits are offered)) They, er, they let me have the coal but that, that's all she's ... little room on her own, you know, really was terrible. But, you know, we used to have to do 20 cases. Did you know? Do you remember that, or do you know about this?

Interviewer Yeah. Some people have told me about how many.

Eve You had to do 10 in the district, 10 on the district and 10 in the, um, in the hospital. And, um, it was a much better idea in my opinion because there was all these details, details, and in the end you had about half a page of a very big book like this, and you used to have to send it up – that was the point – by a certain date before it, um, and half the page which was, you know, quite a big bit there, pupil Midwife's own report of the case. Pupil Midwife's own report of what you thought of the whole thing.

Um, I did my 20 cases and loved it, and, er, I was writing it all and of course I'd put all the details about why I'd liked it and why I hadn't liked it, and I think some of my sort of, um, ((inaudible)) because the sarky old Doctor there who I did my Part 2 training ... er, exam. And my colleague – this girl that I told you about – had failed her Part 2, 'cos she didn't sit the same time, that was another thing, she had given our places to two Germans, but one was in one set and one was in another, so I had a German with me, but she didn't have a German 'cos the other one didn't ... decided not to do her Part 2, see, but she ... so she ... but she had to go a different ... a month before me, so she sat a different exam to me, different time, three months earlier. And, um, she, um, er ... and she'd failed her exam, and she had ... she liked it on district. You had to provide your own bicycle besides your own uniform. Provide your own bicycle, you know! I wasn't ((inaudible)).

Interviewer So where abouts were on the district, what area was that in?

Eve Um, Bexleyheath.

Interviewer Bexleyheath, that's right. And you only did that for three months.

Eve Only did if for three months, and three months at Barnehurst, the hospital was at Barnehurst. But in the borough of Bexley, you see, and Bexley is a very big borough and it was half country half, um, town in those days, and, um, even our practice was half ((inaudible)) you know, all these wooden huts from, um, the First World War that had been condemned, and people were still living in them because they hadn't been able to rebuild them by the time the Second World War came, you see. They were, um, ammunition workers and things like that from the, the Woolwich arsenal, making

ammunition during the war. And, and we, er, really had a, you know, really had a very varied district from the slums to, er, posh people down Shooter's Hill way, see, and old Bexley is very big houses and things, and we often had ... well Shooter's Hill was definitely that, I think. And then if went the other way you went down to Woolwich, you see, so it was a very big area and, er, the blackout during the war and, er, er, um, you know, you had to get up in the middle of the night in blackout. But I used to put my wellingtons on and put these ... keep over the top of my pyjamas and put my uniform on over the top of that, ((laughingly)) and the uniforms were long anyway, you see, and, er, put your ... then your winter coat, you see. So you had your pyjamas and ((laughs)) get into it and get out of it. And, er, and, er, but then you see you had to find a house in the dark. If they didn't ... and they weren't allowed to show much light, they used to sometimes do a little bit of red lighting or do something to help there, or somebody would meet at the gate. But I did six weeks in the snow, and I couldn't even use the bicycle half the time because you could ride it, you see, in the middle of the night. But I still loved it. I still loved every minute of it. And I used to go along on, on the nice, nice lanes, along the country lanes, and I used to sing, um, "Glad that I live am I; That the sky is blue; Glad for the country lanes,", and then I used to sing, um, two hymns – I've forgotten now what they are now – but, um, "New every morning is the love; our wakening and uprising prove; through sleep and darkness safely brought, restored to life, and power, and thought," you know. ((Laughingly)) And, and there was another one – I've forgotten the second hymn – but there were two hymns and that, um, thing that I, you know, I had, er, riding a bicycle. And, you see, you get dogs barking at your coat, ((laughingly)) and there were all sorts of things that happened to you on the district, but I loved every minute of it. I never, yet I never, you know, I never, um, I, I never had one minute's what's the name.

And then we had old pa, old pa so-and-so – I won't tell you his name – um, he was ... had this brain tumour and ma, the Midwife, and she'd got years and years of experience, and she had never had a ((inaudible)) Never. And, er, she's a marvellous old Midwife, and, um, they loved ... everybody loved her, you know, she was a proper District Midwife, and, um, she was terrified that they were going to have her husband put away in a mental hospital because he was mental. But he was not, he was harmless, you see, but he used

to mess his pants and he'd be dirty and things like that. And he'd say, "What's today Nurse?", and I'd say, "Er, it's Tuesday dad", "Ah. Did you say today was Thursday Nurse?", "Yes dad". ((Laughingly)) In the end you got to stage where you just said yes and no, you know, you'd talk to him but he wasn't really with it. He wasn't ... there was no, no reason why they had to put him away, but they put anybody away in the olden days, you see. I mean my aunt who had a, a bit of depression when she lost her husband in the First World War, and then she had flu and you know how down you feel.

No doubt when Doreen comes in I'll send her off to see my daughter over there, she lives in a flat over there, Maggie, and, um, send ... I ought to send Mark to see that she's all right, 'cos she phoned me yesterday and she sounded very down. She's had flu too. And, er ... but anyway, they sent ... in a mental hospital and they kept her in Peckham House. Do you know Peckham House?

Interviewer Yes.

Eve Is it still there?

Interviewer Yes, think so.

Eve Is it there? Well they kept ... they paid for her to be in Peckham House for about a year, but then they couldn't afford it any longer and they sent her to Barnstead Mental Hospital and it was there she died there. But I mean it was terrible thanks to ... again I could tell you all about the conditions there. We used to be taken to see her and they ... she was visited every Sunday by somebody in our family, but it was terrible conditions in Barnstead. She used to have to scrub these long stone corridors. Even on Sundays she used to come soaking wet. And if they went to church on Sundays they were locked in the church and they couldn't get out. And that's what happened to her, she fell ill in church and she wasn't allowed out, and she'd got, um, pneumonia, ((inaudible))

And my parent- ... my mother and her sisters nursed, went at night-time and they were locked in this mental place, and the, the Nurses were terribly short even in those days, and they sat with my aunt and more or less nursed her. And she died I think two days before Christmas and ... but my mother told these stories about the, the babies ... the

women there who had these babies who were mentally and physically handicapped. She said they weren't even things, they weren't even animals, they were things. And, and this nurse let us see them because ... let them see them because as a sort of reward for looking after my auntie.

And then I later saw those people at the same place at Stratford Broadway. I don't believe that it's, er, I don't believe really in, um, in killing babies at birth or anything like that, although I've seen that done too – I told you about Broadway – I've seen, you know, abnormal babies, but I don't really believe in, in struggling to keep them alive. I don't. I think it's criminal. If you've got a premmy baby that's, that you think is, you know, is ill, I mean to keep a, a thing alive like that, because they were terrible, they couldn't talk. And, and I remember Jessie Goldsmith had no eyes and, er, she had the most beautiful voice, she was about, well, she was about 17 this girl that I had with ... she had measles or something and she came to me. Um, she was ... she couldn't see, she couldn't do anything, you see, and she was mentally subnormal, and she had, she had some beads which she used to ... big beads and she used to push through the, the string, you know, and she used to continually do these things, you know, and we used to take them off the string and put them in again. Um, this was all she did. And she had this lovely voice, it was silver, I used to stand in the kitchen weeping, and she used to sing, "I'm sending a letter to Santa Claus", and ((laughingly)) Tears streaming down my face because her voice was liquid silver, it was really wonderful. It really was absolutely wonderful.

And I've often thought I wouldn't keep a baby and I, I really wouldn't, you know. I mean I wouldn't kill it but I wouldn't, I wouldn't, er, make the effort to keep it alive. And, um, I mean I, I know I definitely wouldn't kill it. But I saw once a baby with an anechephalic in my Part 2 school when I was a Sister. Another Sister gave it a double dose of chloro ... of, er, er, chloro, chloral two or three times. But one day when she gave it the double dose and it looked as though it was going to die, she brought it back again because she, she couldn't bear the thought that she'd killed it, you see. ((Laughingly)) It died a couple of days later and it was anencephalic and it had no ... there was no way it could have lived, you see. But, um, and another case that I saw alive and I went to see it after, and that's,

er, was when I was at the East End, and this baby had, um, you know, what is when the tummy er oh, er, no, no, no, no abdominal muscles.

Interviewer Oh gosh.

Eve Have you never seen one?

Interviewer Exom-

Eve Exomphalos, yeah. Exomphalos, yeah.

Interviewer It's all out in stuffed like a bag.

Eve All the intestines, well yeah, all intestines were outside in this case. And it, it lived. It lived and she took it home like that. And I mean the mother there, and it was ... when I saw it it was about two or three lying there, you see. ((inaudible)) and, um, to keep them alive, you know. I don't tend to do anything to ... just let them quietly die.

Interviewer What was the relationship between the mothers and the Midwives like?

Eve Marvellous. Marvellous. You couldn't ... you know, they absolutely adored you. Absolutely adored you. And at the East End maternity, um, if ... not only between the mothers but the fathers and everybody, um, you know, there was a lot of robbery went on there and if you were ... if they knew that anybody had stolen anything within ... and you let it be known that you'd lost it, you know, like I say a watch or anything like that, they'd know, within 24 hours you'd have it back.

Interviewer When were you at the East End maternity?

Eve Oh, um, that was later. That was history that I'm telling you now, but I wasn't there when that actually happened. Um, I didn't go to the East End maternity until 19 – let me think – I came out of the Army.

Interviewer So it's after your midwifery training and you went straight in the Army then?

Eve Yeah. I went into the Army. I was in the Army for four years and I went ... when I came out I went to get some midwifery experience 'cos I was trained but not experience very much, and I went to ... for a week to Farnborough and ((laughingly)) conditions were so terrible there.

Interviewer Is that the Farnborough in Hampshire?

Eve No, no, the Farnborough in, in Kent, yeah, and the conditions were so terrible there. Um, they had this ... well she had a German name and she had a German manner, I mean she really was, but don't think that made any difference to me because I never saw her. The only time I saw her was when I had to return the, er, permission registration I practiced, you know. Um, I returned it to her, and, um, I was engaged by the Matron ... the thing about Matron, I was put in a terrible room, right opposite there was a temporary wall built on piles, you know, on those wooden, wooden piles, like it was a wooden building and it was hollow underneath.

And there was an Irish Nurse on ((laughingly)) on night duty there on this ward, and the kids cried all night and the Irish woman plonked up and down those things all day. Er, the dining room was chaos, the tablecloths were filthy, um, you didn't have a certain place to sit. And I'd been nursing for 12 years then and I'd been in the Army where everything was, you know, absolutely pucker-pucker-pucker, and um, I, I went from there to this place, um, I went on a Monday and the Maids, there were two Maids on every ward, and the Maids were both given Saturday off, so on Saturday you didn't have any Maids on, you see, and when I went onto the ward they're terribly short of staff, and when I went onto the ward I found that, that I was the only Midwife on, and that all the Nurses were taken off to lecture for two hours. The whole lot had gone. And so there were no Maids, no-, nobody else there, you see.

And, um, there they had ... the mother was cut up in bits. I mean one mother looked ... one Nurse looked after their breasts, and one mother ... one nurse looked after their tail ends, er, one Nurse delivered them, one Nurse looked in the nursery, and you never saw, you never saw, you never ... the mother was all divided into all these bits and pieces, and one Staff Nurse did the washing up. I mean the Maids went off at, at four or five and you did all the washing up for the supper things, always had to be done by us. It was all right if you'd got pupils on, but you, you hadn't got pupils, they went off to lectures, you see. And it was appalling, absolutely appalling, and I put up with this.

But the thing that really got me, you had to line up at a hatch for your tea, and you had half an hour for tea and you'd line up at the hatch for 25 minutes and, and you'd be back on duty, you see, you only had five, just five minutes to drink your tea, you see. And, I, I really could bear ... And then on top of that you sat anywhere. Well now I've nothing against black people, you know I've got black people in my own home and I love them, but these girls had come straight out of the bush, and I, had been from Kenya and they really didn't know how to eat. They didn't know how. They ate their fingers ... with their fingers half the time, they, they left the bath filthy dirty, they slopped on the tablecloth, and you, you couldn't find a clean spot to sit at, you know. Um, the other thing was they were 18 and 19 year olds and I was late 20s, and I had nothing in common. To sit at a table and have a meal with somebody who's an 18 year old, even now, now when you're 28 it was ... you know, there was nothing. And so I really was fed up, not sleeping, all with it.

And funnily enough, 'cos it was 1946 and it was the only week of the summer that was sunny, and I worked, ((laughingly)) and on the Saturday morning I went and gave a month's notice in, and I had to leave the ward with literally with nobody, with no Nurse, no Ward, no, nobody else, you see. And I went down and I said to the Matron's Secretary, I said, "Would you mind giving this to Matron", I said, "I can't, I can't stay because I've left the ward, you see", I said, "I've left the ward and there isn't literally anybody", I said, "It's ...", so she said, "What is it?", I said, "It's a month's notice", I said, "I'm not going to, I'm not going to stay here". And the other thing is that she's ... I found out after I ... here's Doreen. You wouldn't go and open the door for me, would you?

Interviewer Yeah, sure. ((Interruption as the door is answered))

[END OF SECOND AUDIO FILE]

[START OF THIRD AUDIO FILE]

Eve ... you know, it, it was natural I couldn't get any history because I mean she didn't want to talk about it, I thought. Anyway, in the end, er, my simpatico prevailed, she said, "I want to go to the toilet", "Oh", I said, "That's all right dear", I said, "Come on", I said,

"Never mind. I'll go and get somebody". So I went over and I said to ... "Excuse me, a patient needs the bathroom", she said ... the Doctor said, "What did you say?", I said, er, "She ...", "What are you, what are you talking about Nurse?", I said, "Patient needs to pass urine ma'am", and she said ... er, the little Matron was about this high and the Doctor was about this high, and she said ... ((Interruption, interview continues at 0:01:20))

So the thing was that that was the case I had to do, see, and so the little Matron came and she put her hand, hand on my shoulder and she said, "Never mind Nurse, don't let it put you off" let's come and do so something over here". And so we tested urine, and she just said, "Are you sure?", I said, "Yeah, absolutely sure", to test ... well I'd tested urine standing on my head in general training. Um, but again there were lots of people who did their Part 1 from these university hospitals who had never tested urine in their lives because they had done their general training and the medical students had done all the work. Whereas we had our own path lab at, at Bishop's Stortford, you see, so I'd done a lot of pathology, you know, that was the thing about a little hospital.

And, um, and as I say I'd never worked, I've never studied, because, um, er, I used to get up in the mornings six o'clock and, er, play tennis for half an hour before I went on duty at seven. Um, with, er ... when ... then when I went to do Part 1, um, I used to go and sit ... put a dressing gown on and go and sit on my friend's bed – this is my friend here – and we'd study together for half an hour before we went to breakfast every morning, we had three quarters of an hour and we did some study. And she passed her Part 1 easily, you see. She failed her Part 3 or 4, I told you. But I ... we did that every morning.

And, you know, we studied sitting on our bed ... er, in her bed, one end of her bed under her eiderdown – we had eiderdown – which I sat under the eiderdown in my dressing gown and she sat up in bed. And, um, she, she to pay, to repay me for all the help I'd given her, she used to do all my ironing. I hate ironing, and she used to get ... I used to do the washing and leave it in the airing room, then the drying room to get it dry, and come back and find it all piled up all nice and be ironed and everything, you see. And I think we had to wash and iron our own uniform, everything you had to do. And so anyway that was that, and, um, we did ... we really had it hard but we never thought of it as hard, you

know, that was in Part 1, wash ... provide wash ... ((Laughs)) And, um, but old Laurie, she used to help me in that way, you see, but I helped her with her study. And then, er, in the Part 2, um – what was I telling you about Part 2? ((Pauses)) I've forgotten now, I was a bit carried away with my thoughts.

Interviewer You were talking about the district earlier, weren't you.

Eve Yeah, that's it. But, um, we had this old Ma Kemp and we had this German woman, that was the thing, and she was terrible, she used to just let them tear and ... but Ma Kemp had a great big, er, mattress cover hanging on a, a, a corner of her wardrobe in her bedroom, and she used to collect baby clothes from the rich and keep them in there for the poor. And I went to deliver twins once and, er ... no I didn't, I went to deliver a single baby, she'd had twins before, Ma Kemp had delivered the twins, and she told me when they were born she didn't have one clothes for them, not a thing. They put them under cushions until she could get ... go and get the clothes for them. And she said there was nobody to do the work, there was nobody to do ... they didn't have home helps like they do now, you see, they didn't have any of that, they just struggled, you see. The husbands used to struggle. My sister, sister-in-law had her baby at home, mind you, and she had a home help, but that was in London, you see, but down in Kent they didn't have any home helps.

Interviewer Did you ever come across any Handywomen, you know the untrained Midwives?

Eve Oh well, I was ... er, my Doctor delivered me and I was looked after by the untrained Midwife, yeah. Er, she ... the Doctor did the delivery but that was when I was born, and, er, again I don't want you to put this in your book so much, you can say that, you know, a little bit about it, but I mean I'd like to say about my own background because I'd like to say about Deptford and what ... There were, um, they didn't ... they delivered, you can say that, not me that delivered them, but they delivered peo- ... the Doctors delivered people in my area anyway in Deptford, they, they delivered people. You can say this in your book if you want to. People were delivered by Doctors, and then you had this monthly Nurse, and she came to live in, she came to live in.

Well my parent- ... mother had only got two rooms – and don't you put my mother – you can say if they only had two rooms the Midwife, the ((inaudible)) what you call her, slept in the other half of the bed that their husband would normally sleep in, and the babies if you were lucky slept in a drawer. I didn't sleep in a drawer 'cos my father's a carpenter and made a cot, but the baby slept in a drawer, the Midwife ... not the Midwife, the whatever she was, um, slept in the bed. She was kept in bed for ten days, the mother, and, um, the baby was bathed, um, every day, but it had what they called a bed. Um, I've got some photographs of myself, um, with these beautiful hand done, er, clothes, you see. And they had, what they had was they had a piece of ... well I had was a piece of a mackintosh and a long floral petticoat that reached past your toes, and then on top of that you had a fancy petticoat, white cotton, and on top of that you had your gown, you see, and then on top of that you had a, a ... well I think my, my mother hadn't done much knitting in those days, she crocheted little coats, you know. But these were in not the very poor homes, and in the very poor homes they had whatever they could, but ... and somebody else, perhaps a neighbour came in and did the midwifery side of it, you see.

But, um, the Doctor actually did the delivery usually. But in the olden days of course the medical students in London did the delivery, they didn't charge them, you see. But my mother had to pay the Doctor, you see. And, um, when my brother was born it was the same idea and, er, my father had to sleep in a, a chair all night, there was no bed for him, you see. He slept in the one living/cooking/sleeping/cooking/living room, there was a stove in there and you did the cooking and there was room in there. And the settee my mother ... my father had a three piece suite because he'd moved from a nice area, he moved from Ilford and, um, they had, er, they had two rooms there but they were bigger rooms and they were nice, but, um, that's what, that's what happened. But that's what used to happen, you can put that in, that's what used to happen.

The Mid-, the Midwife as such was untrained, she slept with the mother, and in my mother's case ((laughingly)) she had a terrible cough, this Midwife, and she coughed all over me all night and I've had a cough ever since, you see. I'm sure that ... And I had pneumonia when I was ten months and, and again my mother nursed me, plonked a old

poultice on and my mot- ... my father plonked a hot poultice on and my mother cried her eyes out 'cos I was ... yeah. But I was an ever such a good baby and I think that babies were good in those days, you didn't get all this hyperactivity and all this old nonsense you get now. And I mean I brought my baby ... these here, I had five babies under a year in Uganda and ... the year that the triplets were under a year, and I never had a disturbed night, never. Never had a disturbed night. And I think it ... and I've had babies like Ma Kemp's grandchild that – that the Midwife there – he was a terror, but the few nights that he stayed with me they never had any more trouble with him the rest of the night.

Interviewer I'll bring you mine!

Eve Well I mean there's not this business of running around, not at a year, but of a course a year was all right for me. But then again I believe in, in pottying children, I think it's a lot of nonsense that they don't want to be pottied, because Rosie, er, never had a wet or dirty napkin after she was, er ... before ... after she was a year anyway, and I never strain ... I don't let them ages and ages and ages. Mind you, it was lot easier in Uganda 'cos you could just put a pair of nappy pants on, you know, towelling pants, and the warm ... it was warm and you just pulled them down and sat them on the pot for a minute or two, you see, so it was much easier then. But I think now, I mean my grandchild she still wears nappies at 2/2½ and I think that it's a mistake, because if you train them right from the beginning, even from little babies.

And I mean goodness only knows I did a full-time teaching job and I tell you my job always came first, always, and I had one African untrained girl to help me, and I had five babies under a year, you see. And I mean they were never neglected and they were three pounders born, you see, they were little tiny things, and their mother died of malnutrition, you see, so I mean they weren't ... it's not as though I had ... you know, that they were ever neglected. And when I had them they were only about ... I think Matt ... Mark was five pound at three months. I couldn't have them until they were a little bit older, but I think Matthew ... Mark was five pounds, Matthew, um, six pound, and Rosie seven, or something like that, you know, they were ... I've forgotten now exactly, they might have

been ten, ten, seven and six or something like that. I don't know. They were ... I think the, the fattest one. But I think might have ...

The other thing is that I don't believe in wrapping ladies up tight, which when you think about a newborn baby it's been ... whatever way it touches – and this is what I'm against again – I may be old fashioned but a lot of these psychological problems in my opinion they talk about bonding, but you take a baby from a, a uterus and you put it in one of those fish boxes, those fish tanks, and it's rolling around there like this there, whereas in the uterus whichever way it goes it feels its mother, you see. And in my opinion the thing ... the way to overcome that, you can't ... mother can't have it all the time, but she could have it near her, near her. And even a tiny baby to my mind, you can't sleep with it there. But when they're not there they want their hands wrapped in like this, 'cos this the position, this is the foetal position, and it doesn't hurt to have a cloth, to have a cloth round them, a wrapper, a wrapper. Not too tight but just a wrapper.

And to my mind that is half the ... the psychological problems they have these are these babies are kept in fish tanks. I mean it's not natural to have all those monitors on them. And I mean we never had ... our incubators ... we'd have any trouble. We had small incubators at, at the, at where I did my Part 1 – and I went back after ... just after Part 1, and I went back afterwards as a Staff ... Part 2, I mean, I went back afterwards as Staff Midwife.

I left Farnborough, the one you ... on the sixth day, and the Matron told me that trouble was I'd been spoilt in the Army. I said, "You don't know what you're talking about", I said, "I tell you I was the qualified person on a ward of 120 beds and I had 60 lepers in a tent outside too to be responsible for", and I said, "I was responsible for £4,000 worth or more of equipment", I said, "You, you know, you don't know what you're talking about that I didn't, didn't know ... that, that I wasn't used to hard work". And she said, "There are Sisters on my ... in my hospital who are proud to sweep the floor", and I said, "I will be proud to sweep the floor the day that you give one Maid a day off on a Saturday and one on a Sunday. You should ... they should have one weekend, Saturday and Sunday, every other weekend if they're only going to have one day off a week", but I said, "You can't

give a Maid ...” I said, “Already they earn as much as I, I earn, in fact probably more”, and I said, “And you give them both a Saturday ... it’s you that’s not organised”, I told her. ((Laughingly))

And so I said, “I’m leaving”, she said, “You’ll have to leave today because you’ll unsettle the rest of the staff”, I said, “All right, I’ll go today”, and then on second thought she realised there was nobody else on the ward. I said, “Well there’s nobody on the ward so I’ll go right now”, you see, and she said, “You won’t get paid”, I said, “Oh all right, look, you know, pack my bag. And in the end I didn’t get paid anyway, and she said, er, “Well stay to Monday”. So I stayed like a fool ‘til Monday, um, but I never got paid for that week. I’d been there a full week, you see, and I never got paid.

But I didn’t regret it because I, I hadn’t finished my leave. I was so keen to back to work I hadn’t finished my Army, you know, disembarkation leave, and so I went to, um ... went back to my training school and I said, “I’d like to come and work in a Part 2 school, I want ... I’m looking for a job”, and she said, “Looking for a job”, she said, “Ooh Osi we’ll have you back here”, and so Osi went back. I was always called Osi, Osi. “Ooh”, she said, “We’ll have you back there ... here”. So I went back there as a Staff Nurse. But then, you see, um, the reason I left there, and I probably ... I think life is like that, but, um, although it was a Labour borough and was so good in many ways, they wouldn’t pay me for my four years’ Army service, you see. They, they wouldn’t count it. And, and yet the Government said we were to be paid.

I was qualified when I ... as a Midwife when I went there so I was four years in pay behind, and I’ve been four years for a long time, you know. And, um, I, I fought it for about two years ‘cos the pay wasn’t all that important to me, money’s never been important to me. And I think that’s a lesson everybody ought to learn, the more you grab it the less ... more elusive it is, and the less you, you grab it the more you, you go, you know. So, um, anyway she, um ... the, er, um ... I went back there for ... to do my ... and then I left and then I went to the East End, so that was in about 19 ... I think about 1950 by that time really. Probably 1950. And, er, I was there in 1950 anyway. But I loved the East End too, you see, but it was a terrible hospital. It’s been shut now, hasn’t it?

Interviewer Hmmm.

Eve Yeah, it's all down. Is it pulled down yet?

Interviewer I don't know.

Eve It wasn't pulled down last time I went some, some years back.

Interviewer No, I don't think so.

Eve But it's, um, old houses all converted into a hospital, it wasn't a proper hospital.

Interviewer Who was the Matron there when you were there?

Eve Do you know I've forgotten her name. But she married eventually the head of the brewery. But, um, she ... I reckon they were glad that she went because she was terribly extravagant, used ... I mean we, we had all ... you know, in those days there was all these, um, what do they call them, utility clothes, you buy a utility uniform. But not her. We had all proper tailor made uniforms, you see, none of the utility staff, no utility materials or anything. And we had wonderful food, you know, and we had, um ... we were well looked after there really, you know, really.

And they were a great crowd. There were a lot of Sisters ... young Sisters had been there a long time at the East End and they had a Senior table and a Junior table. Well, they had two tables for the Staff Midwives, you see, and the thing was that the Staff ... the Senior table was according to how long you'd been at the East End not how, how senior you were in experience, you see, and the Sisters, Sisters were all sorts of Sisters, they didn't have ... they had a few Staff Midwives but they usually had them straight from training, the Staff Midwives, but we were all BIT-trained. But, but we would know ... we had a little crowd that none of us would go over to the Senior staff table as we called it. ((Laughingly)) None of us would go, and Matron used to have to bully us, um, to make us go over to this other table because we wouldn't go. We, we liked our little crowd of Juniors, but we were none of us Junior really, we were all, you know, fairly experienced.

But, um ... and then I was there for I suppose about four or five years. I loved it there. But, um, the real thing was there was a, a very rough and ready cockney, she lived out,

and, er, she had trained and she had been to one of these clubs, you know, um, er, run by rich people for the poor, you know, in the poor areas, and she lived in the Poplar area and she was ever such a good Midwife, ever such a good Nurse, everything about her, but she was rough and ready, she had no class about her. And although I says it shouldn't, I gradually, gradually could overcome this. I've never pretended I'm not ... I am anything, but I suppose it was partly because I was at school until I was 17, and partly because I had been well brought up, you know, although I came from Deptford where it was slummy. And I don't know what it was but I did ... you know, people don't ... well I've, I've never pretended and yet I must have pretended somehow the other subconsciously. I mean I could walk with Kings and, and you know what I mean, I could ... I couldn't, um ... there's just something about, about acquiring, it was an acquired, um, you know, thing, and this Sister there, she was, um, er, she, she, she hadn't acquired that. But she's a dear and I loved her and she was ever such a good Nurse, I mean she got ever so well with the patients, of course they were East Enders and everything, and, and, er, well she was the first one to go and she was got rid of rather than what's the name.

And then the Matron told the Assistant Tutor, accused the Assistant Tutor of being a lesbian or something like this, and, um, she'd slept with one of the pupils, you see. And we had a pupil there who was frightfully, frightfully from out ... deep out of the top drawer, you know, and ((laughs)) she used to say ... I mean I showed, showed her a stool one day and, and it was green, you know, green, yellow all mixed up there, and I said, "What do you know about this Nurse? What does it remind you of?", and she said, "Picasso". ((Laughs)) This was typical of her, you know! And she accused this tutor of having an affair with this, with this girl, you know, being a lesbian. I hardly knew what the word meant those days and you it hear it flaunted nowadays, but you never did. And that was her. And she, um ... anyway that was, er, the Matron, she accused her.

And then we had this ... what finally did me was, we had this girl and she had been in and out of mental hospitals and, er, she had been a Nazi, er, you know, in Holocaust and she was a Jew, Jewish, and, um, she had really suffered, and, um, well she was definitely queer in many ways. But the thing was that, um, I was on leave and the Matron said ... or

somebody phoned me or something and said, "Osi, you should see the new Sister, she's terrible", you know, they all told stories about her. Well when I got back, um, sure enough, you know, the, the Sisters ... a couple of Sisters said they were going to give their notice if she was put on their ... that ward, you see. So I ... and she was engaged as a Sister, and, um, I said, er ... So one day Matron sent for me, you see, and I had been back from holiday and she said, um, er, some ... couple of months later, she said, "I'd like to send Nurse so-and-so ... Sister so-and-so to, to outpatients, you see", she said, "Because there it seems to me she can't do any harm", and she said, um, "Now don't give your notice in if you find her too troublesome, just come here".

Well when I got, got her there, I do all the responsibility for me ... for her, I did everything there, but I kept her busy, we never had a moment. I mean she'd get out the notes, she'd ... we were piling up the notes to pack, pack them for storage, and she packed them up, she'd do this and do that, you know, she'd, she'd do all, all the mechanical things and without responsibility. And she gradually was getting better.

Now I took over the antenatal clinics when I first went there, we had a staff meeting and nobody wanted to do them, and I didn't particularly want to do them, and she said, um, er, said to me, er, you know, and she said, "Grey's been ...", this is Sister Grey had been on maternity ... on antenatal clinics for months on end for years, for years. And she was a Doctor's daughter, she was definitely out of the top drawer, so got on with everybody. She finally got a scholarship to go do her tutors, not like me struggling through to get, you know, on my own back. But, um, she, she went and, er ... Grey, and, um, she was a nice enough girl. But then she liked things in a muddle, she told me that when I took over matern- ... the antenatal clinic, and it was in a muddle, couldn't find the notes, everywhere was filthy, you know, it was a really ... absolute chaos, and how anybody had put up with Grey I don't really know, the Doctors and things, you see. But she got on all right with everybody because she, ((laughingly)) you know, she was out of the top drawer.

And, um, so anyway this was a year or so before this episode with this German girl, Jewish German, and, um, so she said, um ... And on top of that she used to get free tickets to go, and she'd never go to the Matron, she had an antipathy towards the Matron and she'd

never go to the Matron and she ... to ask for free tickets, so I used to go and get them, I'd say, "I'd like two tickets ... free tickets for ((inaudible))" you see. And one day went ... had these free tickets to go, and on the way back she, um ... Matron used to get the free tickets, you see, and ... for different things knowing we were underpaid in those days, we got a lot of perks, you see. And, er, so one day I, I went with this girl up to London to see a show, and, er, when we came out Matron came out too, you see. Well she ignored Matron and Matron was furious with me 'cos I wouldn't leave this girl to go and sit by the side of her on the top of a bus, a busy bus, you see. So Matron held that against me. And, um, mind you, she was rude to Matron, I mean if you look ... not by words but just by action, you know, and there were lots of episodes like this, you see.

And, um, so anyway, um, I was on ... I think I was away on holiday again. No, I wasn't away on holiday, no. Er, one day Schubert, this, this girl, I don't know her name ... whether her name was that mind you, it was ... I've forgotten, two German ... three German girls, it could ... she could have been that. But this girl, this German girl, said to me, um, that she'd been to the office and Matron had given her a month's notice. So I was furious because by this time she'd gone to evening classes, art classes, and she was doing drawings at the ... Whitechapel was known for the art side of it. And she used to do these drawings and paintings and they used to paint things in the nude and she was getting rid of all of her, you know, her, herself, you know, all these bad things in herself. She was living in a ... off duty, and on duty was of great help, she was of great help to me.

So, um, er, I, I was furious, so I went along to Matron and I said, "Matron, you can't give her the notice", she said, "Yes I can", she said, um, "I want the job for somebody else". I said, "Look Matron", I said, "You didn't want the job for somebody else, you ... nobody wanted that job", I said, "I don't want the job in the antenatal clinic, I'd much rather be on the wards, it's definitely not my cup of tea", I said, "You shouldn't really give her notice", I said, "Give her a little bit longer". "No, no, she's got to go". I said, "Matron, please don't do this", she said, "Yes, she's got to go". So I said, "Right", and she said ... I said ... and she found out that I was letting her have off duty to go and look for another job, and she said, she sent for me and told me off, she said, "You're not to give her time

off to go and look for a job", I said, "Matron, how cruel can you get?", you see. Now she was a converted Catholic, she was Catholic, but she'd been converted from non-conformist or Church of England type of thing. So I said, "Surely you, you know, you ought to be helping her, not this", you see, because this didn't endear me to the Matron.

And, um, so anyway the thing was that she gave the sack and, and I used to let her go off anyway, I thought well I'll do her work, you know, and I let her go off for interviews and everything. Well it came two days or three days before she was due to leave and she still hadn't got a job, she was a quiet girl, and I found out ... I can't put my arm up actually but I found her lying ... she was on the ... sort of leaning against the examination couch that I used to put my head there and she was obviously fed up, and we weren't busy and, er, she was obviously fed up and worried, and, er, one of the Junior Doctors came in and saw her, and he went and told Matron she was behaving strangely. So I was furious with that Doctor, I really was furious. Yeah, you must go soon. And I was absolutely furious and he said ... she said, "Oh well", she said, "You've, um, you've, er, er ...", she, she said, "Is she behaving strangely?", I said, "Well how would you behave if you'd got nowhere to go in two or three days?".

Well the long and short of it was that they persuaded her to see a Doctor and he persuaded her to see a voluntary Psychiatrist, and then persuaded the voluntary ... the Psychiatrist had persuaded to go as a voluntary patient. The night ... one night, it would be the night before she was due to go, she'd all packed up and she'd, um, she, er, wrote a letter to Scotland Yard complaining about her treatment, the Matron had treated her, and complaining about, um, you know, things, and she left a note for the ... No, she didn't leave a note for the Matron, just sent the letter to Scotland Yard, that was it. And, um, the next morning the Home Sister who was a bit of a damp cloth, er, they said something about they hadn't ... she wasn't about, so she went and looked, she said, "She's fast asleep". So the Assistant Matron and the Matron didn't get on went to have a look ... good look and she was unconscious, she had taken an overdose, and they ... she was blue and they, they got ((inaudible))

But while she was in this state they eventually got her to the hospital, er, with oxygen and everything on, and they'd moved her to the hospital in the East End, I've forgotten what it was called now, and ... But Matron sent for me and she said, "They've gone through her things, did I know if she was a Catholic?", because they'd found some Catholic heralds in the bottom of her trunk, and I said, "No, I don't think she's a Catholic, she's Agnostic", and she said ... I said, "Not even a Jew", I said, "She's ...", so you said, "Are you sure?". She sent them for the ... can you believe it, she sent for the Canon, the Roman Catholic Canon, and he came and sprinkled holy water on and gave conditional absolution for committing suicide and all those things they go there. And I was furious, I thought, 'I'm not staying here another minute', so I gave my notice in. I said, er, I said, um ... No, I didn't give my notice in at once, it didn't suit to do that, but I, I waited and I bided my time, and, um, but that was the point, you see.

The other thing that's interesting about what's the name, is the way that the unions behaved towards the Maids. Now I'm not anti-union but I do think that it ought not to be compulsory to join a union. I feel very strongly about this. I think it ought not to be compulsory, it ought to be voluntary. I don't know how else the working man's going to get Members of Parliament in unless he gives a contribution, but again I think that it ought to be that you can make a compulsory contribution but it ought to be that it's... ((Interview cuts off and ends mid-sentence)).

[END OF THIRD AUDIO RECORDING, INTERVIEW AND TRANSCRIPT]