

Ann Lemmon – transcription of audio clips

1. Sunday School and Aunty Margaret

Dad took over the Sunday school at the age of 29 and was Sunday School Superintendent for I don't know, 30 years, best part of. Sundays was very much a morning service at half past 10, and come home, lunch, Dad goes off to make sure the Sunday school is all ready (because there was Sunday school of over 100). I didn't go in the evenings as a younger person but when I eventually got roped into the choir, when I was about 14, there were a bunch of us including my friend Julie, I suppose then we went to the evening service as well.

So can you describe to me the kind of things that happened at Sunday school?

We met in the local school hall which was the Methodist school where Dad started school and I started school. And we met in the big hall and we were in classes, then there was a bible class which was the sort of 14 year olds upwards, led by Aunty Margaret (that's Margaret Howell). And they wanted teachers for the classes which I never was because I got landed with playing the piano and Aunty Margaret didn't really like her girls going off to be teachers; she'd rather keep them in her class! But she was a wonderful person. She was an unmarried lady. We used to go round there on a Sunday evening. There would be a crowd of us and in quite small rooms and we'd be sitting on the table and under the table and everywhere just to get us in the room. And singing and so on. And that went on for some years.

So was she quite an important person in your life at that time then?

Yes, I suppose she was. Yes. Yes.

2. Radiography and Faith

The main hospitals in Bristol at that time were the infirmary and the general. We were based at the general which was right down what was called the Bathurst Basin so you looked out onto a docks and to get to the hospital, you either had to walk round a long distance or you cut down between a couple of breweries and over a wall which everybody did, doctors and all!

It was a quite a happy department actually. We had the first Cobalt Unit and it was built actually under the courtyard. It treated a lot of people. I was a bit horrified when one of my teachers from school turned up there, but she survived and lived to over 90.

So, it strikes me that um this could be quite difficult work. How did you deal with the emotional side of that?

I don't know. I've got a pretty even sort of temperament and I take things as they come. I don't get sort of het up about things like that and I suppose your training kicks in.

Tell me a little bit about the dynamic of talking about your faith?

I don't suppose I ever talked about it much. It was just assumed that you went to church and all the rest of it. I sometimes wonder whether I've got any faith; it's so inbuilt that you just carry on. And then you look at people that you know or have known who have really been very faithful to everything like my Aunty Margaret as I called her, and my friend Julie's sister Marion who was the local preacher for many a

year. Well, she gave up when she was 80 and you think, you know... they've got something. There is a faith there and there must be a reason for it.

3. Wesley Mem and JWS

Well, the first morning (this was on a Saturday), on the first morning, I thought, 'Let's go and find a Methodist church'. Anyway, I came down into town and found Wesley Mem. The first person to greet me was Mrs Parker, wife of the organist. I must have looked a bit lost and she started talking to me and, 'Come to tea next Sunday' – she was a very nice lady. And then my first morning at the Churchill, one of the first people I met was Mary Marshall (as she was then). We got talking, we got on very well and she turned out to be Methodist, 'Come and join the John Wesley Society'. Which we got [an invitation], I think it must have been a week or two later because it was mid-September that I came up here, 'Fresher's Saturday evening Coffee Evening'. And at that time, the Society was 250 strong? There were 25 groups of about a dozen each anyway, and she [Mary] said we are in group 16 which had split from group 6 because there were too many. And this was the first sort of evening of term. They used to try and grab people to belong to different groups. Well, Mary said you're in group 16. I arrived and people were outside between the two buildings; 'Ah, you're new – would you like to join our group?' 'Sorry I'm in a group already'.

And that group became very special. I got very friendly with them and I've been friendly with them ever since.

4. Friday Lunch Break

Then when we retired, we got sucked into the Friday lunch break. It was formed by, I think originally, the Wingfield Sisters. They ran Wednesday Coffee and I think started the Lunch Break; just a sort of soup and sandwiches. Then Dorothy and Ralph Jones got involved and Vivian Jenkins when she moved here (which would be 30 odd years ago). Vivian had been an home economics teacher and a brilliant cook. We had a very big clientele. There weren't the number of restaurants around then. We used to do several hot meals; there'd always be jacket potatoes, you could have cheese, beans, salad, tuna, Macaroni cheese, cottage pies. Initially they used to have a 'making cottage pies' on a Monday once a month and they'd make them and they'd freeze them. And we had a freezer in the, well initially up on the first floor opposite the ladies loos, there was a freezer up there.

So, most of the people who came to Friday Lunch Break, were they a mixture of church people and local people? And what was that mix?

It was a certain amount mixed. You'd get some regulars who were church, majority not church. The whole place would be full.

And we're talking about the John Wesley room?

John Wesley room. You'd get a queue at the beginning of the morning. We'd open 11:30 to 1:30 and then there was the clearing up and everything. It was good fun

So when did Lunch Break cease?

End of 2013.

Was it a sadness to give it up? Or had it become so much of a burden that it...?

It had become a bit of a burden. We were finding that we were on every second week and the team were getting older, we weren't recruiting the new ones so much.

So, it had served its time?

It had served its time, yes.