

## ORAL HISTORY EXTRACT TRANSCRIPT

### 'Fighting for our Rights' project

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#### Extract 1: keeping going

I did work for the police department and then I worked, oh, selling tea as a representative. Then of course I got terribly ill at the age of 29. I had Jackie then I had Carolyn and she was only about, it was after I had her, but we don't talk about that, but something happened to me, I had to have a total hysterectomy at my very young age and didn't have radiotherapy or chemo then, I had solid radiation treatment, and I have been ill now for 49 years. They did, first they said I was going to pop, six months, they brought it down to six weeks. They woke me up, I was in the hospital one year and seven months in the Fulham, which is now the Charing Cross, and they said, "We've found a drug, we've got nothing to lose. Only thing is, if you do take it your body will be destroyed." So I took the drug, lost my eyesight. Well I dropped the hair because of the treatment of course, and various other bone problems, so the body is, so it's 49 years I've been like sick ill. In the meantime I had treatment, I still worked. I worked on the totalisator but it was a casual job, which was good. And, but then you're allocated so you can have two days off, they paid you sort of like daily, but it was good enough. Then I became, when I was disabled I was sent to the--, oh I did love it, Crescent Resource Centre, there were some beautiful people, ran beautifully, we had lunch there, they used to pick you up, it was all done by the local authorities. And I have started taking art. Once I got the hang of it then my godfather's--, my godfather's dead but his son still sort of helps in other ways. So he got me going with Bob Ross and he paid for me to--, oh, this is me you see. [indicates paintings] Yeah, see, I'm an artist, qualified, and an instructor. And there it is, I was in Kingston Council and I had a lot of problems because, a) I had homecare, it was a nightmare. I had a lot of personal problems and you're lying there, this is embarrassing, on a wet bed on a sheet, this is so embarrassing, and they would come, I would lie there and I'd wait, quarter past ten, ten past ten, they'd come in and say, "We've only got 15 minutes." That really got me so depressed. I wasn't very--, despite my illness or my blindness I was still able bodied, and I had to prove--, I'm terrible, I had to prove, prove, prove I'm great. You can't walk but you crawl and prove I can do it. So that's what kept me going really. Really what kept me going is this Independent Living fund.

#### Extract 2: gaining independence

We were very, very lucky because years ago if you were disabled you were shoved in the back room and you never, you pretended there wasn't anybody around. I mean this case was the front row, if KCIL had--, if this Independent Living hadn't brought this out, the awareness, we would have still been--, because some of the other places, they're still suffering. So we had some good--, we'd got the odd one who used to run the--, which wasn't good enough, but it changed my life. Once or twice, yes I have to admit that I, the girls are grown, I can't anymore, cut it short. I'm alive because of them. I was free, my gosh, I was free. I had the girls that I wanted to come to help me. Do you want to go shopping? I mean how lovely is that? Oh yes please! I could feel my own stuff and buy, oh look at that! I never got that chance. I mean before I got ill, certainly. I said, "Oh that's cheap, I'll have two of those," you know, sort of, I don't know, chicken legs, whatever. Oh, I'm only--, bring me

some cheese, you know, but there's a collection of cheese, I can ask for a small piece for me. I never got that, and there was nothing wrong with me, I had a life of riley. I slept, I ate, they allowed me to do this and I was, who was I? Nothing, but they did that. They gave me the independence. I didn't kill myself, they saved my life.

### Extract 3: spreading the word

Oh my gosh! I went up to Downing Street for all sorts of things with Ali got chained into the--, and all about going to work, and it mainly I did to the local MP and stuff you see about this homecare, please. I think they had a lot to do with it, the, who were the MPs? I can't even remember. But even our man, the Liberal, he's good. You go to him and talk about things and he did it, but I gone in, no one's spreading the word, I went to the Sutton meetings, Independent Living meetings. They're good but they used to have it all over the place. Then I used to go to the Greater London, and I represented the Kingston, talking about the Independent Living scheme, that's all I talked about really. But all I'm saying is that Independent Living saved my life. I don't mind talk about it now. If they didn't come to the rescue I would have gone, but I have been so happy, I've achieved an awful lot. Thanks to the Independent Living Scheme I've achieved a lot.