

Interviewer: You told me that you... you actually told a number of people at that talking of the troubles meeting, that you had what you considered to be a very cross-community childhood – the Shankill, Kashmir street...

2: That's right.

Interviewer: The interesting thing, I think the contrast for you was that your husband didn't really grow up in any Catholic premise at all, actually.

2: That's right. He grew up in – his grandmother lived in the opposite side of the Shankill, up Agnes street, and Eddy would have spent his, as his mum and dad worked there, he would have spent his days after school near his grannies; so that's what he would have thought as his playground as such when he was growing up. We lived on the other side in Sugarfield Street and if you walk down Sugarfield Street and across Cooper Street it took you straight into the Kashmir Road – and that was our playground. There was also a place where children, both Catholic and Protestant children would have all assembled. We called it the meadow but it was the old run-off of the mills, god knows what was in it. It was sort of what ran out of – you know the waste from the mill ran out into it. It was really just a dirty old river with bricks and bits of fish heads lying in it and there were two sorts of slopes or mucky banks ran down to it – and of course that's where we spent all of our time – wet days or dry days, it didn't matter. The "meadow" It was far removed from a meadow [Laughter] you know in your mind's eye you say the word meadow and it describes a beautiful place. It wasn't a beautiful place but we loved it. We absolutely loved it. So, the Catholic children from the area would have been there with the Protestant children, so we'd have all been playing there anyway. But I remember going up the Kashmir Road to call for people, you know, wrap their doors and I also remember swinging on the Clonard gates waiting on people coming out of mass as you'd have called for them while they were at mass and we'd just come down and play outside the chapel waiting on them coming out.

Interviewer: And why was it different for your husband?

2: He didn't know any Catholics; it was just the lay of the land sort of thing.

Interviewer: And did he grow up far from you?

2: No, well Agnes Street is just five minutes walk from our house

Interviewer: But that was enough?

2: That was enough. Agnes Street runs from the Shankill up to the Crumlin Road, you know. It must have been just a highly, a densely Protestant area, because Eddie said he didn't meet a Catholic person until he went to work. And he wouldn't have been brought up in a Loyalist type of household, even though his daddy was a country man and quite often people from the country were quite staunch in their beliefs, you know one way or the other. But Eddie wouldn't have had that dyed-in-the-wool Protestant type of upbringing anyway but he had just never played with Catholic children – it wasn't part of his childhood.

Interviewer: Just to go off in a completely different tack altogether, if you don't mind. I don't know if you remember this or not but you told a story about a woman helping getting home by getting through the house beside Forthspring...

2*: Yes I do, that was Sandra. I haven't seen Sandra in years. Sandra worked in the hospital and when the gates went up at the bottom of Workman's Avenue – they were closed, I think at supertime. She was talking to me one day and saying about to get home she had to go all the way into town because the gates were closed. So she lived round the corner there at the bottom of Woodvale Avenue and if she was working a late shift or had to work in...

Interviewer: She was working in the Royal?

2: She was working in the Royal. When she got up to the gates then, they would have been closed – she never knew if they were going to be closed or not, so she just always had to assume that they'd be closed. So she had to get the bus down into town and then a bus up the Shankill Road. So it put an hour on her working day really, you know? Whereas if she'd been able to go through the gate, you know, ten minutes it would have taken to walk up the road here. And I happened to say to her that I knew Paddy and May who lived in the house there, you know, they lived in the house beside Forthspring and I took her round one night and introduced her to them. Xxxxx. But the back of their house was on the other side of the peace line, so they had an entrance that took you out into Workman Avenue, so they said to Sandra, "Certainly, no problem", so she used to walk up, if the gate was locked, wrapped Paddy and May's door and they took her through the house and through the back door and out into Workman Avenue [Laughter] It's amazing, like, you know. It's a bit like Forthspring itself; you know the front of it is on one side of the peace line and the back of it on the other. It literally straddles the peace line.

Interviewer: You told me a very tragic event, it must be one of the earliest killings of the troubles; the three soldiers that were killed, and it seemed so odd to you because you were laughing...

2: Yes I was laughing because I was watching Ronan, it must have been a Sunday night and Ronan and Martins laugh-in was a big, big thing – there was nothing comparable to it here and I can remember that particular night, my aunt Miriam was there... Do you know what year that happened?

Interviewer: I think it might have been as early as 1971 or 1972; kind of when the IRA campaign first got started.

2: I know it was a long time ago, but our house was actually quite full; Eddies' granny was there and my aunt Muriel, Eddie's son and his mummy and daddy were probably there too. I can remember we had the light out as people used to switch the light off to watch television here, in the old days [Laughter]. I remember us all sitting... we had quite a big television at the time, it was a 26" TV; 19 was sort of the

standard then. I don't know if that's why they were over or if they were just over visiting; I've no idea. But we were watching Rowan and Martin's Laugh-in and that particular night... there was an actor, I think it was Masteranni, I'm not sure – something like that - a dark curly-haired Italian, he played some light-hearted roles in some of the films we seen him in. But he was on this show and Goldie Hawn used to be on but he [Masteranni] had been very good and very interesting in the show, at the end of Laugh-in there was always a really silly, funny thing with which they closed the show... as I say there's this big heart-throb actor, as he was, stopping with the dark curly hair and somebody reached out and pulled his wig off and he was baldy! It was a bit of a shock but it was hilarious and we were all sitting doubled up laughing while the credits were running and they interrupted the end of the programme to make the announcement that there had been three soldiers killed over Ligoniel.

Interviewer: Yes; up on the mountains.

2: And I remember the older others telling me, as I was an awful giggler as a younger person, they were sort of telling me shut up, you know "shut up till we hear this" and they, being sort of caught up in this laughter and finding it hard just to stop laughing, and that's what it was... the three soldiers it was the strangest sensation going from being doubled up in two laughing at something to hearing the horrific news... and two of them were brothers, two brothers and a friend. So I can remember that as clearly as it was yesterday, though it was over forty years ago is it?

Interviewer: It is over forty years ago, yes.

2: But it was just that very strange thing of going from hilarious laughter; it wasn't just a giggle it was like hilarious laughter. And then they broke the news – interrupting the credits which was quite a common thing – "We interrupt this programme..." to, you know. Sometimes it was just to call key-holders back if there'd be incendiaries or something found. You know it was quite a common thing for programmes to be interrupted and I remember that very clearly and how sad it was, you know, and they were very young men, they were young fellows. It's surprising how clear a memory it still is, more than half of my life ago

Interviewer: Thank you very much for coming.

2: No problem.