

**Malcolm Stern interview transcript**  
**6<sup>th</sup> June 2015**  
**After Hiroshima project**

Interviewee: Malcolm Stern (MS), Born 08.03.1932

Interviewer: Sam Martin

MS: My name is Malcolm Stern. Date of birth 8<sup>th</sup> March 1932.

*SM: To start with a general question, what were you doing at the end of World War Two?*

MS: I was at school, I was 13 years old.

*SM: And do you remember what it was like at the end of the war?*

MS: Very hazy memory, just relief that the war was over. Celebration, rejoicing, my dad was going to come home, it was peace at last- if we're talking about the end of the Japanese war. We had of course in May the end of the European war.

*SM: Do you remember when the bomb dropped on Hiroshima?*

MS: No I think my memories are just reconstructions of what I've read about it. I have no vivid memory of the event or my response to it.

*SM: And has anyone ever told you of their experiences of what they remember of the bomb dropping?*

MS: Nothing that I can recall.

*SM: So what would you say got you first interested in the peace movement?*

MS: Well I wasn't politically active or politically involved as a teenager or young man. I supposed if you had challenged me I'd have said I was on the progressive wing of things. What politicised me quite dramatically was Suez in 1956. I realised how stupid our government could be. We were governed by a set of people who had no understanding of the world. That woke me up and I went to a Trafalgar Square rally and shouted "Eden out, Eden out". Which seemed to work because he left shortly after. Then when CND was started I felt at once this is for me. And there was a dual motivation I think. One we were frightened – we realised what the power of this new weapon was and what it could do to the world – and two there was the moral dimension- we didn't want to inflict this kind of damage on anyone else, for whatever reason, on whatever pretext, in whatever circumstance. And we were saying "Not in my name". We were also scared stiff.

*SM: So taking you back to the Trafalgar Square rally, what do you remember about that?*

MS: Well, this was to protest against what was in effect – in fact a war although it wasn't called that- against Egypt over the Suez Canal, an attack that was done on the basis of a conspiracy with France and Israel which we weren't allowed to know about, it was a secret conspiracy. We thought it was a dreadful mistake. I think it was the Labour party that called this rally which was addressed by Aneurin Bevan and I think many others. But I found myself shouting "Eden must go". At which point I thought 'No'. 'I've become part of a mob...this is hysteria we're all shouting this slogan, and I don't want to be part of a mob, I want to think for myself.' And that was a bit of an education.

*SM: What do you mean by 'an education'?*

MS: I realised how dangerous a mob could be, even if I agreed with it.

*SM: And what sorts of people were at the rally?*

MS: I couldn't answer that question.

*SM: Did you go with friends or did you go alone?*

MS: I don't think so no, I may have had my wife with me, I don't even remember.

*SM: After the Trafalgar Square rally what action did you take?*

MS: Well that as I say kind of sensitised me. As I said before I hadn't taken much interest in political affairs but when I realised what a dangerous world we lived in, what a stupid government we had, I began to be more aware. Then when the campaign against specifically nuclear weapons came to a head in the formation of CND I felt this was where I belonged, I felt very naturally this was a cause that I could become active in, and I'd never been a cause man before, I'd never been involved in political activity, but this one I couldn't somehow resist. I felt impelled to play a part in it so I got involved in the first Aldermaston march. Which actually preceded CND, it wasn't originally a CND project, as you probably know it was planned by something called the Direct Action Committee which later became as it were the militant wing of CND. But CND took it over as a project and I went with the Hampstead CND because there wasn't one here locally.

*SM: How did you first join up with CND. Was there a meeting you went to that was advertised somewhere?*

MS: I think I probably wrote to somebody and asked where was our nearest local group, which was Hampstead, and went along. At that time the meetings were all to do with planning the march, the first Aldermaston march, so I found that very congenial, it had some specific objective, and I went all the way from London to Aldermaston over 4 days in 1958.

*SM: So Aldermaston then: what are your impressions of that, what are your key memories of Aldermaston?*

MS: It was a rather wonderful experience. There was this sense of comradeship, purpose, enthusiasm. We had to be pretty dedicated because it rained most of the time. It was the coldest Easter weekend for a hundred years or something, so it was quite an ordeal physically. And there were really very few of us, there were only I think 700 who marched the whole way.

*SM: So what was it like, you wake up...where were you staying on the way?*

MS: Church halls, community centres, private accommodation. There were supporters along the way who offered hospitality but a lot of it was dossing down in church halls and I was lucky because the last overnight stop was in Reading which was where my parents lived so I stayed with them.

*SM: So along the way did you bring a sleeping bag?*

MS: Yes, that sort of rough and ready arrangement.

*SM: When you were marching what was the atmosphere like. Do you remember...*

MS: Great enthusiasm, great commitment, excitement, we had jazz bands, we had choirs, a great sense of purpose and commitment. We felt we were making a statement – cliché- but we also felt we were publicising our ideas because it was widely reported. Mostly by a hostile press. But there were reporters, there were camera crews, television and so on.

*SM: Do you have an impression of what the other people were like?*

MS: What impressed me was the variety. They represented all strands. There were the political activists who I sometimes found quite tiresome. There were at one extreme the pacifists- the traditionalists (the Quakers), other pacifist movements, and the most inspiring thing was that there were people like me. Not active, they were not political, they were not pacifists, but they felt they must make their point of view known. There was a kind of compulsion- we had to be there, and there were quite a lot like us, and I felt that that was the most important thing. We represented the apathetic, and we'd stopped being apathetic, and as I say we were driven by a fear that the bomb might be used, and by a moral imperative if you like.

**(10.47)**

*SM: When you say the political activists were tiresome what do you mean by that?*

MS: Well we even had people who felt they must protest against the capitalist bomb but on the other hand the workers bomb was a different thing altogether and that was perfectly understandable, and justifiable, I got a bit, yes, annoyed...

*SM: You mean the Soviet bomb?*

MS: Pardon?

*SM: Do you mean the Soviet Union had the bomb?*

MS: Yes there were Communists – actually no, it's very interesting, while we were marching that Easter weekend the British Communist Party was having its annual conference and they passed a resolution condemning CND as the manifestation of bourgeois morality. I thought 'great! That's what it is. Good for us'. But shortly afterwards the British Communist Party changed its policy and supported CND which was a) a boost for the organisation and b) an embarrassment, for obvious reasons.

*SM: Did you directly interact with the Communists or the more politically-minded?*

MS: Well we didn't want to spend energy arguing with people, although we did in a friendly sort of way, but as we had this common aim we worked together, and that was the beauty of the thing, that people who disagreed on everything else, marching together for this one cause.

*SM: So going back to 'everything else', we disagreed on 'everything else', could you go over that for me?*

MS: There was a strong Communist presence particularly in the Hampstead group which was the one I was working with, walking with if you like, and I didn't want to get into political arguments. If

I was going to argue it would be with the uncommitted to try to convert them. After that with other people I started a local group. We called ourselves Hendon South, that was the constituency.

*SM: The unconverted were just everyday people who weren't involved in CND?*

MS: There was a lot of publicity, a lot of debate, and people came round to our point of view, particularly the young people. Local groups were being formed all over the country. It became a national movement of some considerable strength in quite a short period. The first Aldermaston march attracted 700 people and about 4000 supporters at the rallies, at Trafalgar Square and Aldermaston. Next year there were tens of thousands, the year after maybe a hundred thousand, that was the kind of development we were seeing. It was very encouraging. We felt soon the whole world would be on our side.

*SM: Did you feel the new people who were joining were previously quite apathetic people who had been persuaded about the cause?*

MS: Many of them were yes.

*SM: What were you doing at the time, apart from being in CND? Were you working?*

MS: Yes I was working in the City. What's now called financial services.

*SM: What did your colleagues think about that?*

MS: Ooh I was an eccentric. Definitely a suspicious character. Particularly when I started speaking in public. Again it was part of this motivation, I could not not do it. I worked in the City and at Tower Hill just below the Tower of London there was a Speakers Corner, so traditionally people would get up there, as in Hyde Park Corner, and say whatever they wanted to. And there were two things, this is quite interesting, I had no experience of public speaking, I felt no particular talent for it, but I wanted to convert people. I was a missionary. You know what they are. I used to go along and listen to speakers and there were two speakers who interested me very considerably. Now one was a man with all the talents, he was charismatic, he was fluent, he could deal with hecklers, he was funny, he was forceful, he was persuasive. His point of view was a pacifist Christian socialist point of view. And I wasn't a Christian, I wasn't a pacifist and I wasn't a socialist, but I found him mesmerising. I didn't know who he was. I'd go there every Wednesday, I used to go there, and he'd have an enormous crowd. I found out later who he was, he was a man called Donald Soper, who was very well-known although I didn't know who it was at first. He was I think President of the Methodist Conference and very well-known, and the best speaker I've ever heard.

So he inspired me and I agreed with much of what he said. On Fridays there was a man who happened to be working in the same company as I was although he was so senior that he wouldn't recognise me let alone talk to me. But anyway I knew who he was. He was speaking for the City Conservative Association, and he was the worst speaker that I have ever heard in public. The crowd loved him, they tore him to shreds, he was hesitant, he was...anyway as I was saying he was pathetic as a speaker. That was my inspiration. If he, knowing how miserable a speaker he was, if he had the courage to stand there and make a fool of himself in public, because he believed in this cause, what's to stop me? So I started speaking- all you had to do was get up on a wall. And stand there. And that's what I did and I found I could do it. And I did it every week for some time til I changed jobs. And in fact then I was working near Lincolns Inn Fields where there was also a Speakers Corner, so I kept it up.

*SM: So do you remember what speeches you gave, what sort of things you said?*

MS: I was talking about nuclear disarmament and what I tried to do, say something was in the news, some topic that had just happened, and connect it to the danger of nuclear war. Which wasn't difficult, with Vietnam, and all the things happening at the time. Cuban Missiles Crisis – that was my biggest crowd including a number of policemen. And I found that I had a certain talent for speaking. So that's what I did as long as I could. But at the same time I was helping to run the local group. We would organise local events, campaigns, and one of the things we did which all the local groups did was to show *The Wargame*. Have you come across *The Wargame*? The BBC commissioned a film from a director called Peter Watkin. He made the film and they wouldn't show it. In fact tonight on Radio 4 there is a programme about the way in which it was suppressed. But of course they couldn't stop anybody showing it. So they did, and the film won an Oscar for the best documentary. It attracted crowds and it was a very telling story about nuclear attack on this country. And it horrified people, and was meant to, and it started them thinking, started them debating. So we would hire a hall, show this film and sign people up on the way out, as it were.

*SM: Going back to your role in CND, do you remember any specific interactions with colleagues, ways in which people were suspicious towards you?*

MS: I don't think people took me seriously. They regarded me as a sort of maverick, eccentric. I think when I moved...I moved out of the City and into book publishing, that's where my work took me to, to Lincolns Inn Fields, there I had a more sympathetic set of colleagues.

*SM: Do you remember a specific occasion when you gave a talk at Speakers Corner? Do you remember what that was like?*

MS: Well, the time of the Cuban Missiles Crisis was I supposed the most memorable, everyone was tense and worried, or worried to petrified if you like, and the implications were obvious. There was an exceptionally good crowd, there were senior policemen there, I had things thrown at me, things got a bit heated, so that was my most vivid memory of talking in that particular spot. That was at Lincolns Inn Fields.

*SM: Do you remember what was thrown at you?*

MS: Sweets! Unfortunately I couldn't catch them and eat them.

*SM: How did that feel?*

MS: I shrugged it off. I actually got quite a reaction from the crowd they said stop this, let him speak and listen to him. British sense of fair play, they didn't agreed with me but they respected my right to say these unpalatable truths.

*SM: This is during the midst of the crisis when it looked as though war might break out. So when you were doing your speech, it looked as though we might get annihilated...if you were saying get rid of the bomb why were people disagreeing with you?*

MS: What people mainly felt was yes nuclear weapons were horrible, dangerous. but we shouldn't give them up unless other people did, and that was at the time called multilateralism. I suppose it's still a kind of underlying thought. This government is committed by treaty to total disarmament. Lots don't notice this but they did sign a treaty to that effect. One of these days everybody would give up not only their nuclear weapons but also their conventional weapons. Doesn't look like happening. But most peoples thinking, whether consciously or not, was that we should hold onto

these things while other people had them, this was a dangerous world we had. We were trying to persuade people to take a leap.

*SM: And did you get some very strong reactions against that?*

MS: Oh yes, there was a whole spectrum of disagreement, from reasonable to the other extreme

*SM: Which was...*

MS: Well, which was you're all communists, traitors, you should be stopped from saying these things. That was not common. But yes it was quite easy to paint us as the Communist party because we were supported by the Communist party.

*SM: How did your friends and family react to you being involved in something like this?*

MS: Well the family here was with me all the way. Sometimes ahead of me.

[Mrs Stern] Our two daughters were at Greenham Common. Our two daughters were at university.

MS: Yes there was always some campaign. Greenham Common was an inspiring campaign. The women's camp. The American base. And we supported them...people admired those women. And our girls yes, talking family, they were active in the local group supporting the Greenham Common women.

[Mrs Stern] Pulling down the fence, I've got photographs of Wendy.

*SM: So they took the lead from you, would you say?*

MS: Yes. Yes, I can produce photographs of Andrew our eldest, in his pushchair, being wheeled – poor helpless thing – to our local CND march with a placard on his head saying rather naively *FOR YOUR CHILDRENS SAKE BAN THE BOMB*.

*SM: Were there lots of children at these marches?*

MS: Yes, it was partly a family affair, and that was very heartening.

*SM: Going back to Aldermaston, I know songs were a big part of Aldermaston. Do you remember any of that? Singing songs...*

MS: Oh yes. If you're not careful I'll sing you a few. Yes it was a big element because there were bands, and people wrote songs especially for us to sing and that went on for many many years. Oddly enough after the Cuban Missiles Crisis because there wasn't a war, interest in the movement dropped off. There was a very significant downswing in support. And it surged back again when we had Reagan and Thatcher. And the cruise missiles came to Britain, and that's where the Greenham Common started. That gave the CND a new lease of life because we had a new focus for campaigning. Cruise missiles here in Europe, in England, making us a target. That gave new life to the movement. I think for some years there wasn't even an Aldermaston march but then it revived again. I remember I went on a 50th anniversary of Aldermaston, and being interviewed as an original marcher and saying – this sums it up really – I was saying “Nobody who went on that Aldermaston march in 1958 would have believed you if you'd said we'd be doing the same thing in 50 years. We believed that either the whole world would be destroyed or that our argument would prevail and that we'd have some kind of nuclear disarmament. But the idea that the whole

arrangement would persist for 50 years wouldn't have entered anybody's thoughts. But there we were back at Aldermaston in 2008 God help us.

*SM: What was 2008 like- that march?*

**(30.16)**

MS: Well I cheated I went down by coach. Well, I suppose it was just another reason, pretext if you like for holding another demonstration. The arguments were much the same.

*SM: Would you say there was a feeling that progress had been made?*

MS: Well one of the landmarks of the protest was the Test Ban Treaty. One of our campaigns, one of the elements of the campaign was to stop the testing of nuclear weapons, and whatever one felt about nuclear weapons as a means of defense or a deterrent, it was a fact that the testing of the bombs in the atmosphere was creating toxic danger, was actually killing people, in terms of strontium-90, caesium-137, all these harmful chemicals, and in a sense we were the first environmental campaign- and we won, because in 1963 the world nuclear powers signed a treaty that banned testing in the atmosphere. If you were a cynic you would say because they'd worked out ways of testing them underground, perhaps in a simulation, nevertheless we did succeed in persuading the powers-that-be to stop doing something that a lot of scientific evidence showed was harmful.

*SM: How did it feel when that victory was achieved?*

MS: Very satisfying. We thought now we can get onto the real issue.

*SM: So you were still involved after that, even though you said that the movement dropped off a bit/*

MS: Oh yes. The local group reflected the national position in that it more or less lapsed then came to life again, it revived in the 1980s with different people and started campaigning locally, and I was involved in that.

*SM: So in the 60s and 70s were you still involved?*

MS: Oh yes very much. I never joined. Originally it wasn't a membership movement, it was a mass campaign. Then they instituted membership, which I thought was a mistake. But I didn't join, for various reasons, a) because I wanted to maintain an independent point of view, particularly in public, b) because they did one or two things, had one or two policies which I didn't agree with, and I was what you might call a supporter.

*SM: This is CND...*

MS: Yes as an organisation.

*SM: What sort of things were they doing in the 60s and 70s?*

MS: Publicity and campaigning. They organised specialist groups. They had Christian CND, student CND, they had Labour CND, Liberal CND, Conservative CND – they had conservatives. That was one success for strategy I think, special interests and harnessing that to the nuclear disarmament cause. They produced publicity material, pamphlets, setting out the arguments, posters advertising the events, meetings, conferences. Unfortunately as an organisation, once you set up an

organisation, you have to set up quite a lot of time and energy into running the organisation. That's the drawback. You have to have committees, you have to have funds, the rest of the bureaucracy, which to my mind distracts from what you need to do which is get out and talk to people.

[Mrs Stern] I used to work in the evenings in the office, remember?.

MS: Yes I remember

[Mrs Stern] That was very good for my self-esteem.

MS: Got you out of the house

[Mrs Stern] Exactly. We were home with 3 kids. Had to [word unclear] by shorthand, proved to be very very useful. But not for long- I've forgotten what happened.

*SM: Was that round here?*

[Mrs Stern] Head office. We used to up to town. [unclear]

*SM: The media reporting of CND, the peace movement- do you recall any of that?*

MS: Yes the press – well I say the press because television was not anywhere near as important - the press was mainly hostile. They reported in what I would consider was a distorted sort of way. For example the culmination of the first Aldermaston march was a rally at the nuclear research centre at Aldermaston. That was the point. And there was some minor scuffle, there were some opponents who went there to counter-demonstrate. And there were some thumping on a car, something that you wouldn't really notice if you were actually there. That was the headline in some of the papers, 'Aldermaston march ends in fracas' or something. Ridiculous. There was the Communist slur, which was easy enough, because they were Communists, and they were an influence. So, these kinds of arguments and reportings were very annoying because they didn't address the arguments. In fact their function if you ask me was to prevent people thinking about the issues. To only think about personalities, politics or other things. But there was a lot of debate in the [unclear], in the weeklies, the serious journals, political journalists. But the popular press in the main were opposed. We were never fairly reported. A lot of events that were quite significant were simply ignored.

*SM: Can you give me any examples of those?*

MS: Certainly, if we had a local meeting we might send a report to the local paper which wouldn't be published. That sort of thing.

*SM: Can you think of any other examples of distortive reporting?*

MS: Well I've just given an example of the last day of the Aldermaston march. Difficult to bring specific examples to mind but the general feeling was either it isn't worth reporting, or if it is, we'll report it as something unfriendly, if you like. There was a left-wing press, the New Statesman, a left-wing paper called Tribune- I don't know if that's still going – and they reported much more favourably, in fact people involved...the New Statesman was quite a significant element in the founding of CND.

**(40:00)**

*SM: Again, on Aldermaston itself, can you remember any specific incidents or sensations or memories from the march- the original march.*

MS: Well, one thing I remember is being staggered at the size of this place. One thing I remember was being staggered at the size of this place. We went to Aldermaston which was just a name. 'Aldermaston' – that's where nuclear research takes place. But when you got there there was miles of it. Endless buildings, laboratories, offices, mysterious constructions of various kinds, and it stretched over I don't know how many acres. And that was quite impressive. And I thought 'I'm paying for this! Why?' In fact I, just to digress a little, I've always felt that we would actually give up nuclear weapons in the end for financial reasons. I thought- in defense people may think this is a necessary part of our arsenal, politicians think it is necessary to our prestige, one day somebody in the Treasury will look at the cost and say 'Isn't it about time we did a cost-benefit analysis'. And they'd think 'My goodness! This is insane!' Hasn't happened yet. But it might.

*SM: Did anyone ever bring that up at the time?*

MS: Well yes it was part of the standard argument that these things are dangerous, and immoral, and they are ruinously expensive yes. In fact with some people when you were arguing with them it was a good starting point. 'Do you realise how much we are spending on this? Can that be justified? What about the number of hospital beds etc etc?'

*SM: Did that get a fair hearing? Was it a persuasive technique?*

MS: Ideally what you would do when you were talking with somebody who was maybe open to persuasion you would try to find the way to their interest, where was their starting point, the threat, the expense...anything else.

*SM: Overall what was the most persuasive?*

MS: I don't believe in the overall. There were people to whom the moral point was the most powerful. Would you be prepared to inflict this kind of sufferign on innocent people? For whatever cause. With others it would be politics I suppose. If we set an example it would stop other countries wanting to acquire nuclear weapons. At the moment we're saying 'Ooh North Korea's got a bomb, how terrible to have a nuclear bomb! Ours of course is entirely understandable and justifiable and we need it, it's a dangerous world and so on. And IRAN is thinking of having a nuclear weapon DISASTER! Ours of course is necessary for world peace. So you would produce that as a sort of argument if they were interested.

*SM: Do you remember any specific arguments you had?*

MS: [Pause]. I'm thinking furiously. I must have, I used to argue with people all the time. But I can't think of anything specific.

*SM: Where would you be most likely to convert someone? To persuade someone, say in the street, or...*

MS: Well we used to have a stall in Golders Green Rd. So you'd have literally a table, and we had pamphlets, books, leaflets to give away. And you'd stand there and give them a leaflet and you'd try to engage them in conversation. And quite often they were willing to listen, to be persuaded. You took their name, got some money out of them if you were lucky, and the trick was to have a petition, you could always think of something to have a petition about, and then you'd ask them to sign a petition. And at the end of that line there was a little column for donations. So you could raise

some money that way. And you were selling booklets and pamphlets. And over that period, end of the 1950s, start of the 1960s, there was very substantial interest. People did buy the pamphlets, people did sign the petitions, and we made a few recruits. And that was from having a presence in public space, in the busy shopping centre.

It's another issue actually. There are trains that carry nuclear weapons, from wherever they are made to wherever they are deployed. So there is a campaign, the Nuclear Action Group or whatever it is, which holds events based on the particular railway stations that these trains run through. So you could be standing on a platform and a train loaded with nuclear weapons, nuclear bombs, nuclear warheads, will trundle right past you. We thought that was insane. So there is a campaign that focuses on the trains issue. And in fact, we had a successful campaign. The authorities decided to use the sidings at Cricklewood to organise trainloads of nuclear warheads, that's right, and when the news of that got out a local campaign started to resist the idea, and that attracted a great deal of support because you didn't have to be a nuclear disarmer not to want nuclear wagonloads at the bottom of your garden. Literally. And they actually persuaded British Nuclear Fuel, they were the ones organising this, they actually persuaded them to drop the plan. This is something I remember there was a meeting locally after a few months of this campaign, very vigorous widely supported campaign. Very local, very local. And there was a meeting. A British Nuclear Fuel spokesman came along. And he said...he apologised for the high-handed way in which British Nuclear Fuel had fobbed off the opposition. Which they had, they were very dismissive, little films of warheads being dropped from bridges to show how innocuous they were, you couldn't possibly come to any harm, they're only nuclear warheads after all. And...he got up on this platform at a public meeting and apologised and there was a noise around you. And what was it? It was all these seasoned nuclear campaigners falling off their chairs because they'd never heard anything of the kind! From some august nuclear body, and that was a victory. They withdrew the plans.

*SM: What year was that?*

MS: Oh lummy, about ten years ago.

*SM: So recently. This century.*

MS: Oh yes. The trains business is just one of the unseen ramifications of the nuclear weapons programme. But as I say there is still a campaign against the running of these trains through centres of population.

**(50:00)**

*SM: Have you made any lasting friendships from the movement?*

MS: Yes, yes the answer is yes. Can think of a few people we met that way, who we became close personal friends with.

*SM: They were living in the area...*

MS: Mainly yes. Campaigners.

*SM: Any from Aldermaston (the original march)? Going back that far..*

MS: Not sure there were any survivors – ha! - that we're still in touch with, no. I'd say most of the personal friendships were local campaigners. But going back many years.

*SM: Do you remember the differences between the different marches? Because there were four years...*

MS: Well the first march was the only one that started in London and ended in Aldermaston. Then the thinking was to go towards the seat of power where the decisions were made. But tactically of course that meant that support for the march would grow as you got nearer to London. People would be able to out for short distances, to march the last day, that was a very popular thing to do. Not many people started at Aldermaston but sometimes tens of thousands would turn out to march the last leg, whatever it was...from Turnham Green to Trafalgar Square. And of course once you got into central London there were swarms of people joining in. For the final rally. So that happened for many years.

*SM: Do you remember a difference in tone and spirit of each march? Where they similar?*

MS: Yes, there was nothing like the first march. We were pioneers, we were making history, making news, it hadn't been done before, it was a significant event. In our lives. And it was newsworthy. Thereafter it was newsworthy mainly for who was speaking on the final platform. So you had over the years trade union leaders, who were quite significant in shaping Labour Party policy, for example. You had church leaders, religious leaders, various others, you had what would nowadays be called celebrities, writers, presenters, television...I don't think we had television personalities in those days but if we had had they'd have been there. But it was more of a mass event. The first one was unique. It was band of brothers, and sisters, and so on. After all in a group of six or seven hundred you get to know people. You get to recognise them. There were celebrities, yes.

*SM: Do you remember any of the celebrities?*

MS: I remember Arnold Wesker. If you want my Arnold Wesker story... when I was in the airforce I went on a two-week course in moral leadership. God knows what that was but it was just an excuse for getting away from the base. You could apply to go on this course. And spend a lovely couple of weeks in London. And because I was Jewish it was the Jewish moral leadership course. And on this course there was a lad of my age, who was also in the airforce. And he was the opposition. Whatever the rabbi would say, he would object. He was very articulate, and very persuasive, very lively. Quite an attractive personality. And he was the, I suppose the outstanding person in this group of twenty or so. And I never knew his name. So that was a couple of weeks. And then years later, I went on this first Aldermaston march. [HOME PHONE RINGS- WE PAUSE]. Sorry about that, there is an answerphone.

Ok, so I'm on this first Aldermaston march. And I see this character. Hey! Remember me? No of course he wouldn't remember me, but I remember him. And so we have a little chat chat chat. But I still didn't know who he was. And coincidentally about three months after that I read a review of some play or other with a little photograph. Of Arnold Wesker. And that's who it was. Ha ha ha. I met him a couple of times after that but that was quite a, a sweet happening. Yes there were other people there, who were well known in their fields, writers, in fact there was a whole Royal Court group, Arnold Wesker was with this whole Royal Court theatre. Had a little block with a banner, Royal Court theatre. There must have been some fairly distinguished people supporting that march. In fact they always had the celebrities for the cameras. So whoever it was was in the front row. And they've always had the celebrities. You were asking about the different atmosphere. After that it became a mass event, thousands of people, a different sort of style.

*SM: Can you say anything more about that? How was it different...more people, did it feel different?*

MS: Well, if you're one of a few hundred doing something that hadn't been done before you feel you have...some significance. If you're one of a hundred thousand in Trafalgar Square you're just anonymous. So that was the difference.

*SM: Would you say you felt anonymous? Less important as an individual protester*

MS: Yes you went because you supported the demonstration. You went because you wanted to show that you and these other 99,000 people cared about this issue. But you were one of the mass.

*SM: Do you remember any of the chants?*

MS: Well I remember some of the songs as I said. Chants...it was 'ban the bomb' I suppose, a slogan. Which I always felt was a bit of a distortion. 'Ban the bomb' was telling people what to do. I didn't want to tell people what to do. I wanted to persuade them to take the responsibility for doing it. Not 'ban the bomb' but 'I'm not prepared to use the bomb'. That's what I wanted. But it was a handy kind of alliterative thing to shout.

*SM: Do you remember any specific songs?*

MS: Yes, yes I do. I wrote quite a few parodies of them actually for CND shows that we had. Ha ha! I'm not going to perform them now, no no no.

*SM: Do you remember the original songs, their names...*

MS: Ooh...The H-Bomb's Thunder. Think that was one of the most popular ones. And the Scots used to come down and sing about something to do with Trident and the Loch Ness Monster. Because of course Trident was based...no it was years before Trident, but whatever it was it was based on loch something-or-other, one of the Scottish lochs, Da Loch, Gare Loch or something. Polaris I think was the weapon. The weapons changed of course over the years. Think there was a submarine Polaris and it was based on Clyde Gare Loch, they had a song about that, which was rather attractive. "Och, och, there's a monster in the loch!" Something like that, ah hah ha, which was fun.

*SM: Did a lot of people have instruments?*

MS: Yes, oh yes. There were the official jazz bands. Humphrey Lyttleton and so on. And of course there were people with their own guitars. Strumming along. And they still have that on all the demonstrations. Quite a variety of instruments these days.

*SM: Were they playing as they were walking along, when they were marching?*

MS: Yes, yes.

*SM: I know you said you stayed at your parents' house along the way.*

MS: Well I spent a lot of my childhood and adolescence in Reading. That was the family house. I moved away from there when I got married, came here. But my parents were still there, so I stayed there when the march reached Reading. That was just a happy coincidence.

*SM: What did your parents think of the march?*

MS: Well my dad was quite a supporter. Not an active one but he was generally was in agreement. My mum was much more reactionary if you like in temperament. She objected to practically everything that er... but I didn't worry too much about that. She was my ma so we did stay there, ha ha ha.

*SM: And did you stay there at each march?*

**(1:03:48)**

MS: Well that was the only one on April or for the whole thing um, after that I just used to join in the err the last day and finish up in Trafalgar square.

*SM: Do you remember Trafalgar square, what that was like, the kind of erm, yeah those protests in Trafalgar square, do you remember any specific things, details about them?*

MS: Not so much the specifics, they don't always erm, an encouragement to see how many people there were there, they all agreed, there were speakers, they had some good speakers off course you really wouldn't have been any sense, there was nothing really, but what you were hoping is that err it would have an impact on the wider public, that was, that was the point, a demonstration is to demonstrate. Well I'd say that was it, the point, there were two dimensions to it, one was to reach out to the public and to show the strengths of the movement, and the second was a personal commitment to the cause, the act of Floringdale, well as an active if you like, the confirmation of ones elegance. Might sound a bit pumpus, but anyway, that far really there.

*SM: Do you remember any physical hardships, is it particularly hard, the first marsh in particular?*

MS: It was because of the conditions, it was actually snowing, for some of the time, and I said it was the worst Easter from the weather point of view for err 75 or something years 100 years I don't know, so it was feeling gruesome, and err rain come down in buckets, and we hadn't a lot of admiration for people who didn't agree with us in this particular British way "my goodness he's a he's a courage fellow, fellow hobbling and warbling you have got mile of of".

*SM: Had you brought the right gear, were you well prepared?*

MS: Yes, yes we were really full.

*SM: Do you remember where you where staying for each night.*

MS: Erm one night on a church hall, one night we were billeted as it were in a err a supporters home, so we had the comfort, and the third night we were back home in Redding.

*SM: Was it ever so hard you thought you'd give up?*

MS: No. No, no we started, we were going to finish.

*SM: So how old were you at this point?*

MS: Erm the age I was, 26.

*SM: Do you have any memories that stand out from that time?*

MS: Well a sense of achievement in having walked the whole way, and I remember coming back afterwards, and I thought, "I have just walked 52 miles in 4 days, why on earth am I taking the bus to Golders green". So I topped then, off my bus, ha ha ha ha, ha ha. And they put the fair up to a penny, what a ridiculous, so err anyway, so there was a personal milestone involved.

*SM: Looking back at the overall peace movement, do you have any specific feelings towards that?*

MS: Well it was always a uphill work, there was a moment when we thought that, opinion, a company opinion was swinging over to our point of view, there were opinion pose that swing the show, there was, almost, I don't think, I don't think ever quite a majority but certainly a very substantial minority that agreed with our point of view, but there were fluctuations, and there were moments and we began to believe that it might actually happen, but most of the time you felt more like a voice in the wilderness, the whole establishment erm against you, but you knew the arguments were valid, so you you never gave up hope, you never felt defeated, at least did, I never felt defeated, and there's still both of us err, committed, in our ways do what we can. Helen is actually member and not the most significant demonstration we go along and support it.

*SM: What was the most recent one you've been on?*

MS: Well there was one one, where the supporters knitted a seven mile long scarf, believe it or not, the idea of wrapping it around the ministry of defence, which we actually did, not that they took any notice, ha so err that was a modest demonstration. Um but as I said earlier to you, the decision about trident is quite a significant moment, because it changed the base of the argument from "You've got to give up nuclear weapons, because" which nobody wanted to do, changed it from that to "You have a decisions to make, whether you like it or not, and there are options, so you could go on with this ridiculous idea of defending yourself with nuclear weapons, or you could do this or you could do that. " In fact different political parties have taken different policy view, although none of none of them have gone as far as saying "let's not have any replacement" But the argument is unavoidable, and therefore that leaves an opportunity for people to put an alternative view. "Think of the money or say".

*SM: Do you think your opinions or views on this whole issue have changed at all in the last 60 years?*

MS: No, because the issue is the same, these are weapons that are dangerous and could destroy us all. These are weapons that nothing could justify using. These are weapons that cost a lot of money we could use in useful ways, so the main arguments are still the same, as far as I'm concerned.

*SM: How do you feel looking towards the future; do you ever feel a broad sense of optimism or pessimism?*

MS: Well I'm a natural optimist, so who knows come and sense may prevail. And it is common sense.

*SM: Do you have any final thoughts?*

MS: Well I think the experience of being part of a movement, or being committed to something that is greater than ones own individual concern, is always err an important part of being human, so I'm really glad that I found a cause that I could completely agree with, and it's a useful work full

*SM: Brilliant, well thank you very much, that's, I'm gonna leave it at there, that's brilliant. I'm gonna pause this.*

**(01:13:41)**