

After Hiroshima
Rosalie Huzzard Interview Transcript

Interviewee: Rosalie Huzzard (RH), born 07/08/1926

Interviewer: Ruth Dewa (RD)

Date: June 18th 2015

RD: Just to put a bit of context into this conversation, could you start by telling me what you were up to towards the end of the Second World War?

RH: Well... um... I was, as you can see by my date of birth, um, my birthday, um my 19th birthday, was the day after Hiroshima, the 7th of August and I was actually on holiday, in a village where I had been evacuated earlier in the war when I was at school. Um... and I'd gone back there for a holiday and um, we had no idea what was happening, we were just glad the Second World War was finally over. Um, I think we'd made a lot more, um, of victory in Europe than we had of victory in the Far East, Um... all we knew was that there'd been a big bomb and the Japanese had given in and that was the end of the war and um, to mark this, the village celebrated by having a bonfire on the land next to the village hall, which had been built as a memorial to the Second World [corrects herself], First World War and ironically was called the peace hall. And we had this bonfire, so that was what I was doing, um, at the time of Hiroshima in 1945.

RD: And was that after the first bomb, or after both bombs?

RH: I don't think we.... I can't remember. I don't think we really distinguished it in our minds that clearly.

RD: And do you remember how you heard the news?

RH: It was probably on the radio. I can't really remember. I'm afraid... it goes back a long way. It didn't make a great impression on me, I think I was a late developer. I wasn't a pacifist, I hadn't thought things through, um, I hadn't formulated my socialist ideals or anything like that at the time. I was completely apolitical. Um, so you know, I can't remember all the details I'm afraid. I can remember what happened later.

RD: And before, before this happened, what were your, uh, kind of opinions or views on the Japanese?

RH: [Long pause] I think we thought of them as... um.... being even more cruel than the Germans. The way they treated their prisoners of war and um, also their Kamikaze, um, bombers and um, we found that quite alien I think and difficult to understand.

RD: And do you remember how you heard about these stories, of the, of the prisoners of war and the Kamikaze bombers?

It was probably the newspapers and radio [long pause]. 'Cos I mean, they were the main means of communication in those days... nothing else.

RD: So when you said that you were aware that there was a big bomb and it had ended the war, would you say that it's fair then, that it wasn't - you didn't necessarily appreciate that it was a kind of entirely new form of technology?

RH: No not at all, it was just a big bomb. We had no idea of what it really meant and you know, the reality of the thing at all. I don't think any of us had.

(4:32)

RD: Do you know when the information started to filter through about that?

RH: You mean about the reality of it?

RD: Yeah.

RH: Um...for me it really didn't impinge on my consciousness until much later. Um, probably after I'd met my husband and he sort of... made me... I know what he said to me was that, um, 'cos I talked to him a lot about things. He said 'with your views you are a pacifist and a socialist, you ought to join the Labour party', which I did. Um and I can remember going to see the 'War Game', the film the 'War Game'; that's what really brought it home to me and I realised, you know, what the... the implications of an atomic bomb.

RD: And do you remember roughly what year that would have been?

RH: Well that would have been probably after I was married and I was married when I was 25 so it was several years later that I really understood what it was all about.

RD: And when you said you went to see the War Game, um, I've heard from people that it was censored, so were you able just to go to the pictures to see it?

RH: No, I think I saw a private showing of it.

RD: And... so would you say that was kind of a pivotal moment?

RH: I think it was for me.

[Long pause]

RD: And can you tell me a bit about the kind of discussions that were happening around you? Were people talking about the issue of the A-Bomb?

RH: I can remember that when we were first married, we lived in East Finchley in North London and um, uh, of course my husband had been uh, a pacifist, he was a CO in the Second World War, um and he took me to, to see um, an elderly lady called Miss Fishwick and she lived in Hampstead Gardens suburb and I can remember sitting in her garden and that conversation led to the founding of the Association... for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapon Tests and I think people were more concerned originally about the uh, tests, than they were about... it was before CMD and I can't remember when that was founded. What was that... 1963 or something like that? No it must have been earlier.

RD: '58 I think.

RH: '58, that's right. It must have been uh, earlier than that. We were married in 1952 so this would have been about 1953, it was certainly before I had a family. Uh....

RD: And can you tell me a little bit more about Miss Fishwick and -

RH: I don't know much about her. She was a, um, a very formidable maiden lady but I think she's disappeared from the history books now. I don't know whether anybody else has heard anything about her.

RD: And, and how did you.... get round to this conversation?

RH: Well my husband knew her because of his activities as a pacifist and in the peace movement.

RD: And, and did you agree with these sentiments of—

RH: Oh yes, I did.

RD: And uh, can you tell me how that progressed forwards?

RH: I don't really know, I can't remember. I think soon after that I started to have a family, um, and then my thoughts were sort of elsewhere really... um.... I was not active in the peace movement until somewhat later. 'Cos I think the first Aldermaston March, I mean my husband was on the founding Aldermaston March, um, and he always went every year...um....um.... but I didn't do it until I think my youngest was able to... join in. Um, and we did join the march for, for a while, um for some distance, um, but of course later, you know, I went to all the demonstrations. My demonstration days are over now I'm afraid.

(9:04)

RD: May I ask how you met your husband?

RH: Um, we met through rambling. I'd been on a, a, um, walking holiday and I met some um, people who introduced me to the London CHA rambling club and my husband was there, he was a rambler, that's how we got to know each other. So it wasn't through political activity at all.

RD: Yeah lovely, just a common interest.

RH: Yes.

RD: Um, you say that you think that people were more afraid of the testing rather than the actual bomb itself...

RH: I think that because that was ongoing at the time, you know, it was, um, I think people were realising the damage that it was doing, um in the Pacific.

RD: And I've heard that uh, mothers were particularly worried. Would you say that was the case in your experience, with people you knew?

RH: Um...not my direct experience, but of course, um, I always supported Greenham. I was never a Greenham woman because I didn't stay overnight, but I belonged to um, a women's peace group in Orpington and we used to take a catch and visit it and my husband and I used to stop off there, perhaps when we were off on holiday. Um, so I did support Greenham. Um, my daughter is a Greenham woman although I didn't realise that she's not particularly active in the peace movement now. Um, uh, but um, um, through the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom of course, I have been particularly concerned about the um, the role that women have in the peace movement.

RD: Can you elaborate on that a bit more?

RH: Well, um, uh, the reason I joined WILPF, and I joined it much later on, in the 1960s I think, because I thought it was something that I could do on my own account, not as a sort of adjunct to my husband you know, um, but then I realised that um, um, women have a- a completely different and uh, distinctive role in bringing about um, um, uh, peaceful resolutions to um, armed conflict, uh, in a way that men can't. Um, and I've been active in the WILPF ever since really. I had been the UK president at one time, we do a three year stint and I did my three years, um, at the time of um, 9/11 actually.

RD: Gosh, that's interesting because um, one of the questions that I asked Walter was what role did the women have in the peace movement and he suggested that um, in the 50s and early 60s when perhaps women weren't given as equal a platform, within the peace movement they were very much a driving force.

RH; Um... I'm trying to think back that far, Certainly WILPF wasn't very a- all that active, I think at that time. But of course, what made everybody more active was in the early 1980s, with the uh, um, the advent of, you know, the threat of cruise missiles coming here and the Cold War, um, and, um, in my own area, in South East London, we were very active. I can remember I used to edit a newsletter, um, which we put out once a month and it was full of peace activities, masses of them that were all going on in the month in that area and nearby in the London borough of Bromley. Um, but um, that sort of faded away afterwards but CMD was very strong at that time.

RD: And would you say uh, going back 20 years or so that it was also, or a bit further than that actually, that it was also strong because of things like um, the Suez Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis?

RH: Well that's right, I can remember the Cuban Missiles Crisis. I went on the march with my brother I remember, um because I think my husband was doing - I think he was abroad or something, can't remember, um, uh but I remember that we were really frightened, you know, we thought that um, a bomb would go off any day, uh...

RD: So –

RH: We think it was fear that um, brought everybody into activity. Once people started to fear that, you know, um, somebody would let off a bomb, um, that brought everyone into activity.

(14:03)

RD: And this march that you went on, um, around the Cuban Missile Crisis –

RH: Yes?

RD: Would you say that the, the feeling of it was different for instance, to the first Aldermaston march that you went on, because of that imminent fear?

RH: [Exhales] Possibly. Yes, I think it possibly was... yes. Because it was, in a way, the, the Aldermaston march became a bit of a jolly.

RD: And can you tell me a bit about the first Aldermaston march you went on with your youngest child... eldest child sorry.

RH: Well my, yes it was my youngest son who was about six at the time and we went on it, um, my husband and I were very active in Labour Action for Peace, cos we were both active members of the labour party. It hardly exists now. I think it's still there but it doesn't do anything. But it was very active, he was the, the uh, General Secretary for a number of years and I remember we were on the march with um, some of the MPs who were active in Labour Action for Peace, like Frank Allaun, who of course has died now.

RD: And can you tell me a bit about, um, the finer details, so kind of w-what you would do on the morning of the march and how would you prepare for it and....

RH: [Long pause]. I put on my walking shoes I suppose, walking boots....um.... get my map, ma- and food ready, drink ready and... I can't remember. [Laughs]. You know, what are the things you do before you go off doing something like that? I don't think I made any particular preparations.

RD: So one of the things I've been looking into is uh, the culture and also the fashion of these marches, so would you say that it was predominately um, practical and sensible?

RH: Well I can remember the very first one, where everybody seemed to wear black, all the young people wore black. Um, I don't think I was, although I had, that was my first job actually, I was a dress designer, I can't remember any particular things I used to wear. Just, I suppose, things I would normally wear, for uh, rambling or walking... you know an anorak and a mac in my rucksack... boots and trousers... nothing – I can't remember any special fashion. I know we used to wear lots of badges. One time it was the thing, the more badges you could accumulate, the more of a peace activist you were. And people had badges all over their hats and all over their fronts, um, but now it's not the thing, you don't wear badges, or if you do, they're very small and discrete. So it's completely different, um, um, fashion, now.

RD: And where would you get these badges from?

RH: Oh, um, they were always on the sale on these um, events. I've got rid of a lot now but I had all sorts of badges. I may still have a few in my, cupboard... somewhere.

RD: And as you took your children on this march, would you say that it was a family friendly atmosphere and quite safe?

RH: Oh yes, yes. No problem there.

RD: And what was the reception like when you entered a town, from the people who were locals?

RH: I can't remember that one, but I do remember going on one somewhat later. Um, we were, um, marching in East Anglia, it was Good Friday and it was marching to [exhales]... can you remind me?

RD: I'm not entirely sure.

RH: No.... it'll probably come to me. Um, but, it was taken over by lots of Catholics, I don't know whether you're Catholic or not, but they sang 'Hallelujah' all the way and we all joined in, um. and um, as we went through the villages everybody came out to their front gates to see us pass. I suppose because nothing much happened in the villages and they wanted to see what all this was, uh, happening... you know, what was all these people were doing, singing and marching and why were they marching and of course there were the banners as well. Um, I remember it was very hot, although it was Good Friday. Um....

(19:14)

RD: So you mentioned the Catholics and you told me earlier that you're a Quaker... um... how did these different, uh, kind of groups of religions work together or um, have any tensions?

RH: Um [long pause]. Well of course, there was um, um, the radical Methodists and um, uh, the Anglican Peace Fellowship, um and Catholic Peace and Justice and I'm not sure, some of them still exist I think. Um, I don't know whether we did anything particularly ecumenical except join with other groups, you know, joined the CND and things like that. Um but we, um, locally, you know, um, uh, we were quite friendly with um, uh, one of the local vicars, or maybe a rector, can't remember, um, who was active in the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship. Um and we kept in touch with him up until he died not long after he'd moved away. So we did work quite a lot with the local ones, um, certainly with local radical Methodists. There may be a Methodists for Peace, I'm not sure, but certainly radical Methodists. Um there were a lot of people in the peace movement in that.

RD: And uh, was your husband a Quaker too?

RH: Yes.

RD: And could you tell me a little bit about that? I was interviewing a Quaker last week and she was telling me that if, some of these, I think one of them was a pilgrimage and then some of other demonstrations felt like her witness and it was her, her calling to do that.

RH: Yes... well... um, we would call it 'faith in action'. Um, not just, uh, you know, going to meetings on a Sunday and meeting other Quakers and going home again. Um, we are called to um, work in the world. Put our faith into practical action. Um [long pause]. And uh,

certainly in my local meeting here which is a huuuge meeting, our membership is growing all the time, until recently we've had a peace group, um I think we're one of the last Quaker meetings to have a separate peace group but now the whole meeting would take part in peace activity. Um last year I organised um, um, an event for Conscientious Objectors Day in May, on May the 15th and um, WILPF asked women to join them and they did and we had a, um, an event where we um, those of us that had um, uh, relatives who lived locally, or certainly in the Yorkshire area, and who were conscientious objectors in either the First or Second World War, um, we um, uh, made a presentation about each of them. Um and it was so well thought of, we were asked to do it again in the autumn in the annual Sheffield Literary Festival, which is called 'Off the Shelf' and it takes place in October. And we did it again last October and we added music and more um, input into it. And um, it went down very well. Um but that was really mainly Quakers, in fact in our WILPF organisation I think we're nearly all Quakers as it happens, in our local one here, because we have a WILPF branch in Sheffield, which I started when I came up here.

RD: And um, you said that you originally joined WILPF because, uh, um so that, it was something of your-

RH: It was because, I, I liked its international aspect, because we are a worldwide organisation with sections in something like 33/34 countries, we're in every continent and it is that international aspect that particularly attracted me.

RD: And so, if, if you agreed with this organisation, would you say that the first step to becoming involved with them was to write to them?

(24:22)

RH: No, somebody I knew in the Labour party in Orpington, who ran the women's section which I, I, I wasn't a feminist and I really hadn't about being a fem – considered myself a feminist then, she kept asking me to go along to their meetings and she was the one who inspired me to join WILPF. Um and she ran a branch in Orpington.

RD: And once you were a member, um, how did that manifest itself? Were there kind of meetings and etc.?

RH: Well um, uh, I used to go to the monthly branch meetings, um, to start with I wasn't particularly active I just use dot go to the meetings but then I started going to the national meetings in London. Um and the executive meetings and seminars and it sort of grew from there really.

RD: And did you find it a welcoming community to enter?

RH: Oh yes, very. I hope so, I mean I do try to make it welcoming for all the new members. We are growing in membership, I think as a result of the centenary conference, We've done a lot of work on that, we got um, Heritage Lottery funding for um, for the UK for, um, celebrating our centenary. Um and um with that we've been able to produce a travelling exhibition and I had it up here at the end of March for 2 days, in the city centre, in the Winter Gardens, um you probably wouldn't know but that's a big indoor sort of greenhouse sort of place, where people could walk through, so that was very good there. Um also, um, we've got

a film because um, one of the conduits for our funding is the Clapham film unit, have you heard of them?

RD: No.

RH: Um and um, they, um have um, produced a film, um, re-enacting um, the events, um, one hundred years ago, um, because they were so horrified, um, at the slaughter of the First World War. 1300 women gather in The Hague to try and bring an end to the war and um, uh, British women try to get over to The Hague but no- in those days, not everybody had a passport, you had to apply for a passport and if you were considered um, safe and um supportive of the government you were given a passport. So, not many people had passports. In the end I think only about 14 out of a huge number managed to get them. But those 14 then travelled to Tilbury to get the ferry across to The Hague, um, but when they got there, there was no ferry and apparently Winston Churchill who was the first Lord of the Admiralty at the time, closed the channel to shipping, because he didn't want these dangerous women to enter The Hague and um, subverting the war effort so the women weren't able to get over there. Uh but um, um some of these um, a lot of them were Suffragists, um, we've had it is part of the um, Heritage Lottery Funding for the um, centenary work that we're doing. Some of the women in the UK um, researched the women that managed to get to The Hague, or managed to get to Tilbury and some of them managed to get to The Hague 'cos they were already in Europe at the time. Um, uh and they uh, researched them and they've written up um their, their, uh, life stories and this was going to be made, this was made into a film. They dressed up as the women that they'd um, researched and the travelled on the, what's the... Docklands Light Railway, that's the one that goes to Tilbury... does it go to Tilbury? Anyway they were filmed on the train and they said why they were going and they dressed up, you know, in the 1915 costume and then they were filmed walking down the um, the way to the um uh ferry landing and sitting on their suitcases waiting for the ferry that never came. So that, that has been made into a film and it's readily available, we're going to be showing it here later in the autumn. Um....

RD: I think this came up at our conference earlier. Is it called 'These Dangerous Women?'

RH: It is.

RD: Yeah someone recommended it to me 'cause they said it was excellent.

(29:51)

RH: Yeah. Amateur um... they're amateurs. And of course, I think it's a pity really that they weren't directed enough because some of them talked about the women that they were representing in the third person and some of them talked about it in the first person, which was a bit confusing, you know. But um, you have to remember that um, they are um, amateurs. I've got a copy here but I really need to hang onto that. But it's readily available. I'll give you a...one of our application forms with all the details and you can contact our office in London, and I'm sure you can get more information there if you're interested?

RD: Ok, brilliant, thank you.

RH: I think we've moved on from Hiroshima! [laughs]

RD: [laughs] I was just going to ask you...Walter told me a little bit about your husband but not much, do you mind telling me a little bit about his activities?

RH: Well, he um, he became a Quaker and a party member... through...he...his family were big Methodists and he went to um, uh, a Methodist class which one of the local minister ran at the time, and this would have been in the '30s I suppose, and it was through his influence that my husband became a Quaker and a pacifist, and it developed his Socialist ideals. And um, so he joined the Labour Party and became a Quaker at really quite a young age, and he was called up when he was 20, and he went to...had to go to his tribunal in York, because he lived in Hull, he was born and brought up in Hull, and um, he told them that he was a Conscientious Objector on religious grounds, and he quoted all that, but in the end um, they decided that um, his objection wasn't genuine and he was too political and therefore they rejected his application. But um, these tribunals were quite notorious because it depended what time of the day your case came up because if it came up just before lunch um, they um, the um, people on the bench, were just anxious to get off for their lunch, so they just sort of said, 'oh, we'll dismiss this one', so they didn't really get a fair hearing, you did much better if you got your hearing after lunch, when they were feeling quite mellow, so... Anyway, that was his very early life, and then he was a founder member of what was originally the Labour Peace Fellowship and then it became the Labour Pacifist Fellowship, that's right, and then it was thought not everybody could say they were a true pacifist, but nevertheless, they wanted to promote peace in the Labour Party, so the name was changed to the Labour Peace Fellowship, and then the name was changed to the Labour Action for Peace, and that is what it's called today. And um, he was the editor of its journal, for many years, from when it was founded in 1942 onwards, um, so um, he uh, um...and then it...he became the... it's um, general secretary for many years. But he was also very active in the Labour Party and he was um, Parliamentary Candidate in Croydon North West in...1955 I think it was? Yes, 1955, and um...at that time um, everybody was ruled with a rod of iron and you had to submit your electoral address to be vetted by the Labour Party and the Labour Party decided that it was too peace orientated and that he had to take various things out, so he did because he thought it was more important that he stood, um, and get his views across campaigning, even if it wasn't in the electoral address, so it shows, you know, things were very different then, um, and he also, um... he also um, was um, invited to be the Parliamentary Candidate where he lived, in Hull, but he missed it by about three votes or something, and really I think he was quite relieved because I think he wouldn't have been as happy in Parliament, in those days, as he was able to be outside, campaigning for peace. And he was a very active...councillor, in the London borough of Bromley, um, of course we were never in control in Bromley, it was at one time, it was a Lib Dem council with Labour support, um, but that was after his time. But he was a councillor for...eighteen years? I've got a tribute to him up on the wall there, you can see, uh, long serving councillors, when they retire, got this little plaque to say they've done...how well they've done. So um, he was active in the peace movement in CND, and uh, Labour CND, and um, Labour Action for Peace, until he died, he died in 1970...the very end of 1998.

[35:54]

RD: And was he involved in any direct action stunts?

RH: No. Neither of us were. Um, I think we felt that that was alright for some but um, and you needed both, you needed the direct action and the um, the political ongoing work, and both of us felt that that was more our, more our bag if you like...[pauses] do help yourself to a biscuit.

RD: Thank you.

RH: Edit that bit out!

RD: [laughs] Um, so when he was involved in CND, and yourself, in the peace movement, would you say it was more article writing then to kind of spread the word?

[36:44]

RH: Well, he did write articles a lot because he, because he edited the newsletter he wrote articles he got all sorts of people to contribute articles. And um, he could, you know... he edited...or he co-wrote a book with a Quaker friend called 'Bridging the East-West Divide at the time of the Cold War', and he did a lot of um, trips abroad, um, he was, um, a professional mechanical engineer, but he was made redundant in his late '50s, um, and normally you'd think well that would be it, no way of getting a job after that, but he was able to become the peace secretary for Quakers at a friend's House in London, and that gave him all sorts of entrée, um, he visited...he went to...I remember he went to a peace conference in Perugia, another one in the Black Forest somewhere, he went to Tbsi (?), he went to China, and he went to the States, and these were all, um, peace missions. And um, he and I both went to the Soviet Union, I was representing Labour Action for Peace, and I think he was representing Quakers, and it was organised by the Northern Friends Peace Board, um, and it was a quite a big delegation, but we were there in 1981, we went to Moscow, Leningrad as it was then, Lbubarov (?)...I think that was it, yes.

[38:49]

And, um, later on, in 1989, we went there on a holiday, um, organised by a Quaker who organised trips called 'Meet the Russians', and uh, that was really good, because that was very peace orientated, and we were able to visit the um, the um, [inaudible]. Not so much in 1989, but in 1981, it was all very much, um, official visits, um, and organised by the Soviet Union, I mean, we met in the Kremlin, we met Generals, and we met all sorts of people. I remember a fellow, Lbrokway (?), was one of the people on the trip, and that was really the beginning of the World...International Peace...I've forgotten the name of it! But it was the one...you've probably heard of it, um, it was Philip Noel Baker, Lord Philip Noel Baker and Lord Philip Rockway who founded this organisation, and it's now subsumed into, um, another organisation and it's called 'Uniting for Peace', um, I'm a member, but a sleeping member, I don't have any...I receive their newsletter, but I'm afraid it doesn't get me, it's a bit turgid! But um, I do support it. So that was our...that was his, mainly his foreign trips. I only did those two, to the Soviet Union as it was then... um... he's the one who really you should have been able to talk to about Hiroshima.

[41:13]

RD: Could you tell me his full name please?

RH: It's Ron- well, you know, Ronald William, um, but he was always known as Ron...Ron Huzzard.

RD: And, I'm just thinking back to the, kind of, early '60s, do you remember the public reaction, and your own personal reaction as well, to the signing of the Test Ban Treaty?

RH: Signing of the...?

RD: The Test Ban Treaty.

RH: I can't remember much about that, I'm afraid. I was not really very active in the peace movement at that time. I think because he was so active in it, um, I was mostly at home with the children at that time.

RD: And would it take up a lot of his time?

[42.35]

RH: Oh yes! Um, and if he wasn't doing that he was active in his Trade Union. Um, it would be every Easter he was away with his Trade Union Conference, um, when he wasn't marching, on the Aldermaston March, and of course a lot of the evenings during the week, he would be, um, at Trade Union meetings and uh, Labour Action for Peace meetings and other peace meetings, so I was very much, a mum, looking after the kids at home, you know! [laughs]

RD: And how did you feel about that?

RH: Um, I got fed up sometimes...'Oh my friends are all going out having a lovely time and I'm stuck in with the kids! But I'll do the Spring Cleaning,' so...But I wouldn't have had it any other way because I knew what he was doing was important.

RD: And you were talking about your kind of, pivotal moment in your thought process, being watching the War Game-

RH: Yes.

RD: – Do you think your husband would have, um, known about this and, kind of, had more of an awareness of this before that showing?

RH: I'm sure he would have done, but I don't think he came with me to the War Game, I don't quite know why, I can't remember, but I remember seeing it on my own...I think he had seen it...but he wasn't with me when I saw it. It goes back such a long way it's difficult to remember.

RD: And when the news did start to filter through, was there more-

RH: Sorry?

RD: Sorry, when the news did start to filter through, were people more sympathetic to the Japanese, and the fact that it was so many civilian deaths?

[44:05]

RH: I think so, many people, and you still get that, you know, when we have our CND stories at the centre here, uh, people still come up and say ‘Oh it’s a good job we had the bomb because they’d been so cruel and so terrible...and think of the Burma Railway and you know...’ There’s still a lot of that about...even now.

RD: That’s interesting. Would you say it’s because, um, because Japan is that much further away than Germany as well?

RH: I think so. I think distance has a lot to do with it. It was much more of an alien world.

RD: Do you have any specific memories of, um, anti nuclear marches, just kind of, flashbulb memories that pop into your head when you think about them?

RH: I can remember a women’s march that we did, um, and uh...I mean, you go on the Aldermaston March and other sort of marches, and there would be always, um, shouting and sloganising, um, which, you know, we all used to join in. But I remember the women’s march, we walked from the House of Commons up Whitehall to Trafalgar Square and we did it in complete silence, the whole way, and that to me was much more moving, more effective, than the sloganising.

[45.39]

RD: And do you remember the responses from the people around you, watching the march?

RH: Um, not that particular one. But um, I know, um, in Orpington, they always used to... [pauses] I think it’s on the anniversary of, um, Nagasaki and Hiroshima, we used to stand with um, have a candlelit vigil, along the railings round a large roundabout at the beginning of the high street in Orpington, and of course, the motorists going round it, they could see our placard, you know, they could see what it was about, and you know, there used to be lots of tooting, which, you know, to show their support. Occasionally you’d get people opening their doors and shouting abuse, but mainly it would be, um, supportive hooting. Whether that was because they thought, ‘Oh good on you, you’re making your mark’ although they may not agree with you, I don’t know, but that was interesting.

[46:55]

RD: Mmm. And did you personally have any interaction with the police while you were on these demonstrations?

RH: I can remember the first march I ever went on, and I think it was um, it was nothing to do with nuclear, but it was on a Peace with China march, and I went with my husband, and

we were in a street, it was quite narrow, and there was hardly any pavement, but railings, and the mounted police came up, and it was really quite dangerous, the horses were coming right up, almost touching us, and it was very frightening, you know, we thought we were going to be run over by the, by the police horses.

RD: And were they doing it purposefully to intimidate you?

RH: Probably. I think so, yes.

RD: Did you have any instances of coming across, kind of, sympathetic policemen?

[47:57]

RH: Oh yes, I mean, later on, when, um, they um, you know, they always sort of, as much as anything it was for our safety, um, and um, they used to say, 'well I'm not...' they would do everything they could to make life a bit easier for us. And they used to sort of, nod and a wink, 'well I'm with you really' sort of thing. So, you got that. But of course, they couldn't express that openly.

RD: Brilliant. And can you remember how, um, these, the peace movement in the '50s and '60s was portrayed in the national press?

RH: [pauses] Well, they always used to play down the numbers. Um, we would know the numbers on these events was so many through because there was a way of counting them, uh but they always, I think deliberately, underestimated the numbers, and it was always, sort of, the tail end of the news, as if it was, you know, the last thing they would think of, um, reporting. Quite different from the Iraq march, of course, that was front, you know, up front. Um, but um, for the peace movement, certainly in the '50s and '60s, it was very played down. Just a few crackpots you know, marching along the road. They're of no account.

RD: Were you aware of a particular stereotype?

RH: Yeah. And also, of course, there was a period, um, at the time of um, in the early '80s I think, where they um, there used to be snipers on the roofs of the buildings, along the route of the march, um, and they would take photos of us, so that we were on, um, you know, on record. And also, um, we were not certain whether our phone wasn't being tapped, because you could hear a little click, which was a sign that it was being tapped, and I remember saying once 'well I hope you're interested in my conversation.' 'Cause it was all sort of family chat, you know, it wasn't important. But um, we used to think, what a waste of time! Whether it was tapped or not is difficult to say.

[50:45]

RD: I was going to ask you whether yourself or your husband were aware of any sort of surveillance?

RH: There was a very interesting thing, and this is actually...well it would be after Hiroshima, um, it was when my husband and I were living in a flat in Muswell Hill, North London, and

um, the um, landlords actually lived downstairs in the basement and we had the first floor, and they were um, obsessive about making any noise. We couldn't giggle at night because they thought it would wake their children, their young children, up. They didn't like me ironing at night because they could hear the iron banging on the ironing board. And then um, one night, we'd gone to bed, and there was another woman and her son who lived in the flat above, and suddenly there was a terrible row going on on the landing outside, the woman from above and one of the landlords from below were meeting on our landing and shouting at each other and um, uh, apparently um...what...the one downstairs was doing on my landing I don't know because the one from upstairs had come down for the loo, which was on our landing, but the one from downstairs didn't need to be there, um, but quite apart from that, we used to find her, just outside the door sometimes, uh, obviously snooping and listening in, and years and years later, these people were Quakers, these old landlords, years and years later, my husband was, um, when he was peace secretary, he was speaking in um, Huddersfield I think, to a Quaker meeting, and when he'd finished speaking a woman in the audience got up and said, 'I'm glad to hear Ron Huzzard, because he and his wife were our tenants in Muswell Hill, many years ago, and the police came to us, and said that they had um, uh...they asked us to keep an eye on them because he was connected with Irish terrorists.' Well my husband had never had anything to do with Ireland, at all, so where they got that from I don't know. And they had all sorts of misinformation about us, the police, um, uh...on another occasion my husband had to get a visa to go to visit the States, on behalf of the Quakers, and he was ages waiting for the visa, and other people had come in and gone, and they'd got their visas, and he was still sitting there, and he said, um, 'why haven't I been called?' 'Oh, there is a problem with yours'. So they came out with a huge stack of um, information, about him, and they said, um, 'well you have been followed to meetings, and we think you are connected with subversive groups'. So he said, well, you know, I don't see how that can be. In the end, I think they were convinced that this was, that these tales didn't hold out, and he was given a visa. But it was not easy.

[54.17]

RD: Goodness me!

RH: Yes!

RD: It's so ironic that all this surveillance, for a, kind of, peace activity...

RH: Such a waste of time, and energy and costs, you know! But it obviously, we were not the only people. There must have been others who were similarly, you know, looked at...

RD: Mmmm.

RH: ...Spied on. [pauses]

RD: Are there...is there anything else from this period up until the, kind of, mid-'60s that, uh, you'd like to tell me about?

RH: I'm afraid it's a period that I'll say I'm not really very active on, because my daughter...my children were born in 1955 and 195...9. And during the '60s of course they were quite young, and my husband being so active, I personally was not.

[pause]

RD: That's interesting in itself to hear...unexpected.

RH: I mean, that's what women were like, in the 1950s. You wouldn't get it now, but it...um...it's all part of the, um, post-war...you know, when women were doing jobs during the war, when men came back from the forces and took up these jobs again, the women had to go back to the kitchen, and the um, the ideal was that you, um, wore a frilly apron and you, um, spent your time doing the housework and um, cooking and cleaning and um, when your husband came home you didn't ask him about how his day had gone... you asked him about how his day had gone but you didn't mention anything about your day. And the children all had to be washed and cleaned and presented to their hus- to their fathers, when their fathers came home from work, and you had his slippers ready and...awful. It wasn't quite as bad as that in our household but that was the...perceived idea that um, women, ideal women should be domesticated. Married and domesticated.

[56:30]

RD: That's interesting. And did you have any contact with, um, the women that were, kind of, integral in CND at the time, so... [pause] Or do you know what, kind of, people's opinion of that was, to be, kind of, so involved, as secretary...?

RH: Yeah, I think that people that were active in CND were people that didn't have families. There was one called Peggy Duff, she was an older woman, but she organised all of the marches. She was an incredible woman, um, loads of energy, but she was quite an elderly woman, she must have been in her '50s...'60s at the time. But on the whole I think, um... [pause] I remember there was one march that, um, I went on, which was a purely local one in Orpington, there was a woman sculptor, who was married to a doctor locally, and they were active in CND and the peace movement and they, she wanted to organise a women's march, and we carried these torches, um, which I remember there was quite a wind and it spread wax, um, all over our coats I remember. And we marched to the... what she thought was the Town Hall, the City Hall, but there was nothing going on there at all, and the papers interviewed us, and she said 'oh, we're just ordinary women, we're nothing special' and people were saying 'I'm not an ordinary woman!' you know. But um, it was a completely watered march, because there was nobody about, um, and she hadn't a clue really! But we all went on it. And those were the women who were in CND. I mean, some of my Labour Party friends were active in CND, um, but I can't remember wider than that, you know.

[58:37]

RD: And did you, um, have a particular opinion at the time, about when Labour, and this, kind of, went from that shift from being, kind of, anti-nuclear to...?

RH: Oh, I can remember. Oh we were ‘fight fight and fight again to save the party we love’, my husband *always* went to party conferences, usually representing his union, and he came home in despair, you know, and he tried to get it on the agenda for years afterwards and get that reversed...and it was briefly in the early ‘80s, when Michael Foot was the leader...and of course Labour ran a huge peace demo through Hyde Park I remember in the early ‘80s, but um...then you have the election and um...[pauses]

RD: Well I suppose you can keep your fingers crossed with Jeremy Corbyn in the leadership race.

RH: Well, Jeremy is a personal friend of mine, so you know. I don’t know whether you listened to the hustings last night?

RD: Oh, it’s on my to-do list, I’ve got it saved on my computer.

RH: Oh, listen, it’s really interesting, and Jeremy seems to have got a bigger applause than anybody.

RD: I think there’s a very large, at least cyber-campaign backing him, as the kind of, underdog.

RH: Well I think that’s it, I mean, I was surprised...I didn’t expect him to get the 35, but apparently a lot of people who...don’t agree with his views, backed him, nominated him in order to make sure he was on the ticket. So that um, different views could be represented. Um, I mean, he’s not going to win. But I would vote for him, with my first vote, but you know, I’m not expecting him to win.

RD: Just one thing that I was thinking about earlier, that I forgot to say. You mentioned the banners. Did you ever have any part in banner making?

[1:00:45]

RH: Um, no, I didn’t. Except that um, a Quaker friend of mine produced a local banner for us here, and I helped her with that, but there is somebody called Thalia Candall(?), she now lives in Pembroke, and she’s not that active, but she’s been a...um, she and her husband have been making banners for years and years and years, and that...they’ve made wonderful banners for trade unions and peace organisations, and she’s made one just recently, they’ve come out of retirement really to make a banner for our WILPF centenary conference, because she is a member of WILT. But I met her first at a party conference, because she was a member of the Labour Party, Arts for Labour, and she um, was uh, she was a Greenham woman, and she uh, was on the march from Newport, the very first march from Newport to Greenham, where they hadn’t intended to stay, but because nobody was taking any notice of them, they decided to stay overnight, and you know, they were there for years after that, um, but um, she um, she’s made a film of that, which was interesting um, and, gosh, she would be a good one for you to contact, but of course, she lives in Pembroke...

RD: My geography is terrible, whereabouts is that?

RH: Far, far West Wales.

RD: *Ah.*

RH: About as far away as you can get. [pause]

RD: *It might be interesting to have a telephone conversation with her?*

RH: Yes...well I haven't got her details but um, I think if you um, if I give you an application form you've got the telephone number for our London office and they'll be able to help you with that.

RD: *Ok, brilliant, thank you!*

[1:02:55]

[pause]

RH: I don't know how far back she goes, whether she was around, whether she was active in the peace movement as long ago as, well, you know... what she remembers about Hiroshima. Because it is going back a long time! I mean I was only 19 at the time.

RD: *Yeah. But this first Aldermast March when you went to London, did you stay overnight at all?*

RH: On the Aldermarston marches? No, I didn't, um, but I know a lot of people did, and a lot of places opened up schools for them to um, for the marchers to sleep in overnight.

RD: *And did you go home because you needed to take the family home?*

RH: Oh, when we went on it, yes, because we went for the day, and came home again, because they weren't going, you know, to be able to march all day, I mean, the youngest was 6. [pause]

RD: *And do you remember any music from the march?*

[1:04:06]

RH: Oh yes, things like um, 'Go study war, no war' and um, 'I'm going to lay down my...lamp by the riverside' [mutters lyrics]. Don't ask me to sing it! [pauses] What was it? 'Off we're off to holy lot, we dinnae want polaris!' that's right! 'We dinnae want polaris', that was the other thing.

RD: *Were there musicians throughout the march?*

RH: Oh, yes! There were a lot of people, had their um, you know, their um, musical instruments that they took with them, and drums as well, and all the people would sing, and you know, without instruments, and accompany them. [pause]

RD: *And did that do a lot for the spirit?*

RH: Oh I think it did, yes. That was one reason for...why people did it. You don't get that on marches now. [pause]

RD: It's interesting for me to think about how um, how marches have changed, from then to now, and, like, the way that people demonstrate, and naturally, the use of the internet nowadays, because as I understand...

RH: Yes, that's right! Because you can sort of, you can get a crowd together in no time at all with the internet, you know, put out something on Facebook or Twitter and you've got, you know, an audience.

RD: And I think it's made things a lot more disposable as well, because I keep thinking about leaflets and pamphlets that were produced, and am I right in thinking that people would read them and pass them on...um, and keep them, rather than just put them in the recycling?

[1:06:14]

RH: Yes. Of course, a leaflet has got to be, has got to get its message across in eight seconds, or you know, you might as well forget it.

RD: Is that the theory behind them...?

RH: Having done quite a lot of political campaigning I know, you know. I mean, if you have a two-sided leaflet...I mean, WILT produces a lot of leaflets and you know, you get your broad message across on the front, um, there's a slogan or something eye catching, but then on the back you can put the more reasoned arguments, so that people can read that if they want to, if they don't want to be bothered they just read the...look at the front, and the wastepaper basket, you know.

RD: And did you see the, kind of, uh, thought process and design of any, kind of, anti-nuclear leaflet or pamphlet?

RH: Um, yes, I mean, I used to design them, um, myself, um, but I can't remember, I haven't kept any of them now...

RD: And would that have been a collaborative thing or would you have just sat down and done it yourself?

RH: Um, well, on request really, because I mean, if you wanted, if you needed something...[pause] of course, you know, in the old days, the um, the press had a much bigger role to play, um, I can remember in the... '50s, um, the local paper would report in great detail everything that happened in council meetings, everything that happened in a little, you know, peace group meeting, everything that happened in a local Labour party meeting, it would all go verbatim into the press, where now it's very, very difficult to uh, use, um, the local press, and to do a press release that will be taken up...

RD: It is...I didn't realise that that was the case before.

RH: Oh yes. I can remember the local paper did yards and yards of stuff about...deadly dull of course! But you know, it used to go in.

RD: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about this time period?

RH: I think I've...It's been rather, sort of, piecemeal and hotchpotch I'm afraid! It's just sort of, general impressions of what the time.

RD: Yeah...not at all, it's been very interesting!

RH: I don't think I can think of anything else...that I haven't mentioned.

RD: Ok. Well, lovely, I'll just pop this off.