The Parish Centre, Cardinal Heenan Centre, 326 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1QP
0208 5533116 / office@ech.org.uk / www.hidden-histories.org.uk

Archive Reference: 2016_esch_STOS_04

Interviewer

Interviewee

Interview Details
Name of interviewee: Lew Ozarow
Project: Stadium of Stories
Date of interview:
Language: English
Venue: ECH
Name of interviewer: Joshua Adams
Length of interview: 97:16
Transcribed by: Sami Pontin
Archive Ref: Archive Reference: 2016_esch_STOS_04

Yeah my name is Lew Ozarow, I'll spell that for you

Yep

L-e-w… O-z-a-r-o-w … and I'm in my sixty-sixth year, so I'm sixty-five, sixty-six this year… and that magic number, I've actually been a season ticket holder, and erm… I will be a club member and foundation stone member at the Olympic Stadium… Yeah…?

Yep

I started supporting the Hammers in 1958 and this is my fifty-eighth season

Yep

Living back in East Ham, back in the day… I start my journey to the ground with a long walk; the full length of Wakefield Street into the Priory Road entrance to the North Bank. I lived at that time in East Ham and have moved to Ilford, Redbridge… and thirteen years ago moved to Shoebury(ness) near Southend, from where I now make the four hour round-trip each home game. I also go to some away games when I can… Okay?

Yep

Erm… I mean basically, I could read it on if you want…? Because it does track it all through…

Yeah…well how about I just prompt you with some questions… and then…

Yeah, yeah, do you… do you want to talk about background and family first…

Yes

…Because this is all about West Ham only you see…

Erm… it would be great if we could mainly talk about your grandparents first…

Grandparents? Yeah, it's interesting; given the modern immigration situation… err… My actual grandparents err… started life in Poland…

Hmm

…And came over to err… England, err… To Mile End, in 1921…

Yeah

Via… Australia…

And why did they move to the UK?

Err, basically to come back home, my grandmother was born in England, emigrated to Australia, married my Polish Grandfather, and then they moved back to England… In 1921…

Hmm…

Well she moved back to England, in 1921…

And they lived in Mile End? In London?

Err… Started life in Burdett Road, Mile End…

Yeah…

Where obviously my father lived, and ironically, it came to light that my Mother, also came from a German family that emigrated to Mile End… And… They lived a few doors away from each other without ever meeting and got married in 1948…

Do you know how they met?

Err… How they met? Through, err… an introduction through one of my Mum… My Mother's Sisters, who all lived in Whitechapel at the time.

Yeah, so did they always live in Mile End?

Always lived in the East End…

Yeah…

Yeah that's, sorry… they moved from, from Whitech… Mile End, to Whitechapel, Whitechapel to Bow Road…

Hmm…

And, I was actually born in Dalston…

Yeah…

At the German Hospital…

Do you know what your Grandparents did for a living?

Err… A tailor… Grandfather was a tailor, tai… err…He made uniforms for the Army, British Army, during the war. Err… My Mother, err… My Grandmother, never did work she had three children.

Yeah. It was… Do you think being a tailor was a common thing? Was that a common thing? Was that a common job, back then…? To do?

Back in the East End, a lot of immigrant families went into tailor, tailor work…

Do you know why that is?

Erm… That's a good question… Erm… I think it'll, erm… erm… Emanate because I've done a lot of research on this myself… Back in 1546, when the traders arrived in Poland, they all had skills to do with cloth-making… And I suspect a lot of the Polish emigrated, so came over from Poland and eventually to England and America, came from cloth-backgrounds, where they were used to stitching, or doing clothes of that nature… Is my guess…

Hmm, it just seems to be a common theme, erm… from interviews I've done in the past erm… About immigrants to coming to the UK, a lot of them kind of… Go into, erm… tailoring, or…

Yep!

Or, quite similar jobs…

Yeah, absolutely…

Erm… So what about the Grandparents on your other side?

Err… What, Grandparents on the other side? Erm… Right… In, in, interestingly enough, they ran a… dry-cleaning business, err… her Father and Mother… No, not at all… Erm… They did actually run guesthouses in Southend and Bournemouth, in their past…

Yeah… Interesting… So, maybe moving onto your parents then, erm… what where your parents' names?

Erm… David and Jean…

And when where they born?

Err… David was born 1918, died millennium year 2000…

Yep…

Mum was born 1919, err… died… 2007…

Hmm… And… were they born in London?

Err… No, Dad was… With they err… Australian connection… Dad was born in Sydney, Australia… in 1918, and then they emigrated, as I said to UK… three years… He was three, 1921… Err… Sorry… What was that question…?

(Chuckles)

Erm… So whereabouts did your erm… Parents live in London then…? Was that also in Mile End…?

Err… No, well that was… They started life in Bow Road when they got married…

Yeah…

They got married in Stepney, err… the first house was in err… Bow road… They then moved to, East Ham, in 1951…

Hmm…

…To a road called Caulfield Road…

Yeah…

Which sits in… Off, East Ham High Street… You can actually hear the noise of the Boleyn Ground, as a kid, from… From the house…

Hmm…So what did your parents do for a living then?

Err… Dad started life as a milkman, greengrocer for many years… And… Retired as a postman… He was actually, here's a bit of history for you… He's actually… His round included the err… The tower block that blew up in Canning Town… Oh God, what was it called? I, I can email that to you…

Yeah that's fine…

Bit of East London folklore, there, there was a Canning Town tower block…

Yeah…

Ronan Point, that was it… Ronan Point…

And what did your Mum do?

Err… Mum, was a tailoress… Taught by her Father…

Yeah…? So do you think that was passed down…?

Yep…

So, did your parents ever move around London, or did they always stay in the same place…?

They only ever lived… East Ham, they then moved down to Southend… In the 1990s…

Yep, do you know why they left London for?

Err, health reasons… Mum, Mum, was a bit Bronchial and the doctor said she needed, preferably to go somewhere where there was cleaner air…

Yeah…?

So they took the decision to go to Southend, which where we always used to go as kids…

Yeah…

For special days out… From East London… Incidentally, I don't know if you know, but the first steam trains, that went from East Ham to Southend actually went from East Ham Station…

Hmm…

When Barking was a very small station… They started life at East Ham, then when steam stopped they all started going from Barking…

Yeah… Again, it seems like quite a common thing, that people from the East End, in London erm… You know? Went to places... that are on the seaside, that were on the seaside…

Yeah!

… For holidays…

Yeah, yeah… I think you go for a day out and the conversation is 'Oh we'd love to live here'…

Yeah… And then one day they do…

(Chuckles)

Absolutely…

Yeah… erm… So I thought we could maybe talk about your childhood as well… erm…?

Yeah…

Do you have any memories of when you were young, about what it was like growing up in your area…?

Erm… well, it may or may not be politically correct…But you could use the information, yeah…

Yeah…

I went to Leyton Road School, Junior and Primary School… And at that time… 1955 to 1960, Primary School, Junior School… And there was one West Indian girl in the class who was a novelty because she had this frizzy hair that we all used to touch regularly, and be her friend… Newham has now obviously become a much, much more integrated area…

Yeah…

Erm… I think, I think it's the usual… That people would go in and out of each other's houses, err… Doors would be left open… Because people trusted each other…

Hmm…

You know? That's… That's the sort of memories I've got as a kid…

What sort of…

Everybody knew each other, everybody… It was almost extended family…

Yeah… What sort of games did you play…? What did you do in your spare time…?

Err… We played football in the street…

Yeah…

Err… Me' and my friends replicated games we'd seen and players… You know? We'd watch play… Err… Yeah, we'd play till dark; we'd play football…Err… We'd play cricket, using the local tree as the wicket…It used to be the days of England and Australia for the Ashes… We, we used to replicate those games…

Yeah.

Hop, hop scotch was quite regular, people used to, you know… draw pictures in crayon, on, on… And chalk, on the pavements…

Hmm… Were you part of any clubs or…?

Err… Youth clubs yeah, yeah… Local youth clubs… erm… Actually there in Whitechapel…Yeah… there's a club called 'The Brady Club' at Whitechapel, where Jimmy Hendricks actually played before he was famous…

Hmm… So what did you do at these clubs?

Err… Usual things, table tennis, music…

Was everyone in the community involved in these clubs…?

Err… No, they were like splintered, erm… I got dragged to these clubs that were friends, like the Whitechapel one, I would never have gone to Whitechapel except if a friend went there and said 'Oh why don't you come?' And then similarly in Newham or East Ham as it was then… the clubs were sort of run by youth clubs, err… Sort of Church or just community clubs… We didn't actually have one where I lived at all; you know I had to go into Upton Park, or Forest Gate, to the clubs that I went to…

Yeah…What was the Community like in your local area…?

Erm… (Exhales), what was it like…? Let me think, big question… Erm… It was, erm… ninety-nine percent err, White, in those days…

Yeah…

Err… If I'm allowed to say that…? You know? It, it… these were all, in my opinion as a kid, now looking back… these were all families that had probably moved there from the poorer East End areas of Stepney, Whitechapel… They all seem to have come from that part of the world, and in their eyes, moved up a bit, in the ladder to East Ham, that was quite an affluent place in those days…

Hmm…

I hope that doesn't sound snobby, but that's how it seemed to be…

No, I've, I've heard some of the stories about people living in say Canning Town, or Customs House (Custom House), and saying that moving to East Ham would be a step-up.

Yeah, yeah…

(Clears throat) So, do you have any other kind of erm… memories of what the community was like…?

Erm… just, a quick thought flashed through me' mind… I dunno if it's relevant, cos'… I don't know if this is relevant as a general story, or my story… but I made my debut for the school, Primary School, playing against a team called Vicarage Club, that was a Youth Club, and I actually scored against them; on my debut… We lost 5-1, but I scored… But then years later, I went back to that club, to manage their football team… I dunno if that's a story you want linking…?

Yeah we can link that in later on in the interview if you, you would like…?

Yeah it's just ironic, that, that's how it was…

Erm... (Clears throat) So, so what was your family home like?

Err…Very loving, caring, erm… Always food on the table, err… Dad was very hard-working… Mum, Mum had three jobs, erm… Mum was a tailoress, err… She done cleaning, for certain people and she also had a job at 'Standard Telephone Cables', at Woolwich. That was a job that started about eight in the evening and finished about midnight; where she was putting old transistors into radios in those days…

Do you have any siblings?

Yep, a sister who was five years younger than me…

Yep, and what, what was the housing arrangement like…? Was it terraced house…?

Yeah, it was a terraced house, err… Three bedrooms, yeah three bedrooms… Bathroom… Inside toilet, and outside toilet! We were very affluent…

Yeah…

(Interviewer chuckles and is shortly joined my interviewee)

Yeah… I've heard that story as well, about erm… The apparent sense of affluence if you had an inside toilet…

Yeah, yeah (Chuckles)

It's quite a strange one that isn't it…?

Oddly enough we didn't have a television…Erm… Initially, err, this is a story, all the kids in the road would go to a family called the 'Townses', who had a television, it was BBC only in those days… I'm talking about when I was probably four or five, and we would all go to not only birthday parties but… 'Jungle Jim' was a big programme of the day, we all used to assemble in the house for Jungle Jim, and then two, three years later, err… My Dad bought a Bush nine-inch TV, erm and he had the ingenuity to buy a magnifier, seventeen- inch magnifier that went in front of the nine-inch screen and turned it into a bigger screen…

Yeah… So what did you do for fun then, when you were at home? Did you read, or listen to the radio…?

Err… We had an old Ferguson Record Player, err… My Dad used to play a lot of err… Swing band stuff, and… The first, the first record, he surprised us, he bought 'Cliff Richard's' 'Living Doll' 1958… Err… It was mainly record player music, erm… My Mum was always inviting people in, for tea, cake… And you know? My, my Mum was a very, very much a erm…A catalyst in the road, she was a bit of a character, err… Everybody was her friend, err… I would come home from school and find all sorts of people there having tea, or

she'd say 'Oh this evening we've got so, and so coming over', there was that period, then there was the period when of course she went out to work in the evenings, so that all stopped…

Yeah, did you have a err… best room?

A best room?

Yeah… I've been…

The room where the record player was (sniggers), I, I would go in there, the TV was in a different room, to the record player… and I would go in, if we're going back to that period, and I would be playing my Beatles songs and latterly my Mo-town songs, what I fell in love with…

Just I've been told… Again, erm… To give a comparison say, a modern day living room, erm… Back then, erm… That room would have all of the best furniture in, and would have been used very sparingly, erm… People weren't allowed in there apart from on special occasions…

Okay, I get you, yeah… No, no we had a dining room, and we had a living room, and… neither of them were of that type, they were generally used by members of the family… You know?

Did you like to read at all, or…?

Read? Yeah, Yeah I used to read (short laugh), err… 'Eagle', 'Lion' and 'Tiger', they were the three main things I read, and books, I used to read things like the Jennings series… Have you heard of that one?

I haven't heard of that one no…

It was like Billy Bunter, it was school stories, Jennings and Derbyshire, Err… William Buckley, I think was the author…

And, did… Did you…?

And that was my first introduction to reading…

And did you pick something with say your pocket money, or did your Mum buy them for you?

Err… Bit of a mixture really…Mum, Mum and Dad used to encourage me to read… I was the first member of the family to go to Grammar School, so I was quite privileged that they really pushed me, when I was really lazy… (Chuckles)

Yeah… So what year did your parents move to the UK then?

Err, 1921… Oh sorry! My parents, erm… can't actually say when Mum came, but Dad came via this Australia route in 1921, we've got all… All the papers, there's a boat and everything…

Subsequently then, do your, did your parents have any memories of erm… the Second World War…?

Err… Dad fought in Burma, err… Because he was Polish, he was told that if he joined the Western Front, in Europe, he would be shot as a Polish person, so they put him in… Like a lot of immigrants like that, they put him in the Burma Campaign, so his war finished a year later… He got the Burma Star, erm… Not really, they didn't talk much about the War at all…

Why do you think that is?

Erm… I suppose, if I'm honest, I didn't ask much… You know? It wasn't a subject that, it, it was a horrific situation, because… Being a Jewish family, we got, we'd got Auschwitz members of the family, where, I can think of one Uncle that had seven Brothers and a Father killed there… Including witnesses, his Dad being shot in the head, erm… So I think it was more, from their side, they were horror stories that they didn't want to talk about… From my side, I never asked.

Yeah that's understandable, erm… So, you just said that you came from a Jewish background, and obviously the East End is well known for… You know?

Yeah, yeah, absolutely…

…Having a large Jewish community… Erm… What was the Jewish community like then, in the East end, from when you can remember…?

Erm… How can I put this…? I think there were two types of mentality; I think there were those, as there is today… Those that wanted to stay very insular, and kept themselves very much to themselves, and… Others perhaps like our family that wanted to mix and integrate… Erm…Certainly, my Uncle, the 'Rudd' family, R-u-d-d… Where wrestlers in the East End, they used to do Strongman acts, in Whitechapel High Road, of pulling horses along, like individual people, like my uncles, they were a big family of about thirteen brothers and sisters… But they were characters… But even to this day… Our family going back to the Grandparents were very much for integrating and becoming part of the community…

So why do you think one part of the community was quite insular and one was quite integrated?

I think same as today, I think there's a big fear that integration will lead to extinction, intermarriage and so-on…

Erm… Yeah… So do you think the Jewish Community say, today… Has that changed much from when you were younger to, to now…?

Err… That's a hard one to answer. I think, Anti-Semitism seems to be on the rise again… Err… And I think back then, if you're… I think it was just after the War, or if you're talking

about that period, I think there was a lot of insecurity in the Jewish Community, and some people cope with it better than others, erm… I think in the main, there's two camps, you know? You've got Orthodox camp that very much wants to keep itself to itself, as that today…And you've got the err… Liberal Progressive camp, which we're part of… That very much thinks that, when in Rome, do as the Romans do and integrate your culture and keep your religion as you can.

Yeah, so what synagogue do you go to now?

Err… 'Southend Reform',

And erm… Within the Jewish Community in the East End, what was the facilities like, for the shopping, erm… And the Kosher food, etcetera…

Yeah, East Ham particularly, you'd have Kosher Butchers, erm…There were delicatessens, a family that we got to know very well, in East Ham Market ran a delicatessen shop… There were three main synagogues as I remember erm… Manor Park, Forest Gate, err… And Ilford of course, which is a big Redbridge Jewish Community…

And what's the community like there now…? I was reading, obviously you mentioned Ilford there before as well, that Redbridge had the largest Jewish Community in Europe at one point…

Yes…Yes…

But it doesn't anymore…

No, I think, I think you'll find Redbridge is now; the Asian Community has taken over from the Jewish Community, as, as the main immigrant group, Erm… I wouldn't hazard a guess at the percentages, but you know? I can think of whole roads that used to be all Jewish, that are now all Asian, in Ilford, in Redbridge…

So why do you think the Jewish community left then? Or dispersed, like a sort of diaspora…?

I think to start with, you've got an age situation, where in great numbers they were older and died off, and the younger, sons, daughters marrying North London, or, or in their faith outside the area, so they moved out… Erm… I don't think the modern thinking is as, what's the word I'm looking for…? I'll say it an' you can put it into the word… I think back in the day, you very much wanted to stay in your own community, and maybe you'd even the same house would have three generations, one or the other after they died, now-days I think people are much more adventurous, that's the word I'm looking for…And they tended to move away to different places, erm… Jobs, mobility, much more… Widespread than it was… And I think that's caused a lot of it.

Because there is large Jewish Communities around London, like Golders Green…

Yeah, yeah… I think it's sort of, the Law of Economics, that as a community err… Reduces, the shops close that were specialist to them, and if people can't enjoy their culture in a given area they move to one where they can, and that happened as well…

Do you think though, with areas…? Say like Golders Green, erm… Do you think it's to the detriment of the Jewish Community, because obviously, you know? Everyone's moving to one area, and then their leaving all the other areas, and they kind of don't really have that Jewish connection anymore… So there's just those very, very singular places, erm… That have the Jewish Community there now…

Did you say to the detriment…? You make it sound a bit negative… Erm… I think we're in a changing world to be honest, and I think what we've got is a situation where, some people want to be living amongst their own kind, other people are happy to enjoy their culture and religion, in any community… Erm… You could argue that if communities break up, it is detrimental, but… That goes against the argument of why would they all want to live together in the first place… Do you see what I mean…?

Yeah…

I probably not making the point clear, erm… It, it goes against my, the grain for me that, that, that they want to live together in one place, I don't like that in any religion or culture… It's almost, 'no-go' areas in certain parts of the World, where you've got cultures, living in a group, where you can't go there because they're that and they don't like people outside that… Yeah? Erm… It's progress 'init, its progress.

It's all progress… Erm… So obviously we're just talking about the area that you lived in… Erm… What you got up to… Do you maybe want to talk a bit about your schooling, so the erm…? First school you went to, until you left…?

Erm… yeah Leyton Road, Infant and Junior School, that was off East Ham High Street, err… I had a very happy time there, passed the '11+', and went to East Ham Grammar School, erm… Again, it was a very happy place, the kids all got on well together, erm… They were all from similar families, with similar backgrounds… As I say, there was only the one, right through to when I left the school, I can only recall one immigrant child at the school then… Erm… I think in those days, the only word I can use is 'life was so simple' (sniggers), now everything is so difficult and complicated, no matter what you want to do, you know? Even to the point yesterday, I was trying to park my car with one of these flamin' mobile phone things, they wouldn't take cash, they wouldn't take a card… You had to try and go through these stupid questions on the phone… It was nearly twenty minutes until I actually parked the car.

Yeah, everything's more complicated now isn't it…?

Yeah… (Huffs)

So what School did you go to, after that school…?

Err… East Ham Grammar, fabulous school… I think that's the same school Ronnie Boyce went to, who scored the cup final goal in 1964 for West Ham… Err… Brian Phelps went there, who's an Olympic Bronze Medallist in 1958 Olympics I think it was, or '60, sorry Rome, it was a great academic school, for getting kids like me, who, who were lazy to actually shift their butt and make sure that they got through, and got a start in life, that's

what… I can never be thankful enough that they turned me into the person I am, because I could have blown it…

What was your favourite subject at school…?

Economics and French.

Can you speak fluent French now?

Erm… The answer to that is no, but we've been on a few holidays to Paris, and I've got by with my… I usually 'mug-up' before we go and refresh my memory with the vocabulary…

Where you always interested in sports at school as well…?

Ab… Absolutely so, yes…

Do you want to expand upon that?

Err… I was only a very, very average football player, but I also played cricket and erm… The year before the Grammar school closed down, my house relay team broke the school record, relay 4x100 meters, erm… That'll never be broken because the school closed down that year (chuckles)

That's lucky then isn't it…?

Erm yeah… I later became a football referee coach and I was far better at that than I ever was at playing…

Yeah, so you played football for your school?

Err, second team… (Chuckles), Grammar School Second Team, yeah.

Erm, did you have much Suc… Success… Erm… With that team?

No, because I was only an average player and it was only an average team, and my theory in life is, that it's the average players who understand the full range problems of players, that make what was to become a very successful amateur manager and, and qualified coach…

So what did you do after school then, what did you do say for, obviously you were probably a teenager at the time, erm… What did you do for recreation, fun…? Where did you go out?

Well I was sport-mad, and music-mad, err… Back in the late 50's, early 60's, as I hinted earlier, I got into Mo-Town Music, 'Pamela Mo-Town', 'Stax Atlantic', erm… Almost everything socially was connected to girls, Mo-Town, music, clubs, dances, gigs, we had East Ham Grenada, that had every single top act in the World did there; including the Mo-Town review, which came to us in 1966, I think it was, where every Mo-Town act was on the same bill, which would be unheard of today, you know? 'Stevie Wonder', 'Temptations', 'Four Tops', all on the same bill, 'Martha and the Vandellas'…

So what other venues did you go to then before…?

Err… East Ham Grenada, erm… Ah! Hammersmith, it was called the 'Hammersmith Palais', and there was the 'Apollo', which I think is called the Apollo now, it's changed its name backwards and forwards a few times, erm… They were the main ones, 'London Palladium'; they used to have a lot of individual gigs on nights… Yeah they were the main ones, because you could see everybody and anybody, Beatles played at East Ham Grenada, as did all the top chart acts.

What was your favourite gig that you went to? When you were younger?

Gotta' be the Grenada, because I met the Four Tops there.

Have you seen any, erm…? Great gigs since, because I know a lot of these venues are closing down…?

Hundreds, hundreds… We actually go to about four gigs a month now, even to this day…That's my main passion in life, and then it was home and away games with West Ham, that was the other social thing, taking girls out…(Chuckles)

So, erm… What was your first job then after you, after you left school…?

Yeah, my first job was erm… I came through and got Economics A Level, erm… I think my parents would have liked me to have gone to university, but because they weren't a wealthy family at all, Mum had three jobs at one point, as I said… I was keen to get out and earn money to contribute to the family as well, plus I didn't really want any more studying, so I decided to join the 'University of Life' (Colloquialism), at eighteen, I got a job which was quite well thought of in those days, it was up in the City, with 'Commercial Union Insurance', as an insurance clerk, I work there for… err… Four years, that's right, yeah till about twenty-two.

And what did you do after that job?

That's when things really took off, because in 1972, erm… My, I, I got engaged, to my first wife, and… Her Mother, my Mother-in-law to be, decided that I should have a respectable job like her, and she applied for me to join the Civil Service, so I ended up joining the Department of Employment, in 1972, and stayed there till 1988.

And how did you find working for the Civil Service?

Well the great thing is, I'm, I'm a bit of a, umm… An adventurous sort of guy, so if you was in the mainstream Civil Service, you'd drive yourself crazy, but I was always infringed by this, so for example, erm… I was in Psychometric testing, for… I always had an interest through Economics of Man at Work, that's, that's my main hobby theme if you like, Man at Work, and I worked for the Department of Employment Psychology Unit, where we did Psychometric testing and profiling, for different jobs, that was really interesting, then… Erm… I actually went to a former body that became ACAS, erm… So they were sort of fringe, where you went out and met real people, sort of, almost in the commercial world, yeah? Then came the big, the big career change, 1974, after getting promoted very quickly, I joined

an organisation called PER, Professional Executive Recruitment, and that, that was the Executive arm of the job centre service in those days. Government's first quango, so we charge fees to employers, for recruiting people, and I was trained by them in 1974, and followed a career from there, right the way through to this present day, in recruitment. But that was Civil Service, erm… Mrs. Thatcher closed it down in… I think it was…1988 would it be? Yeah it would be about 1988, I think it was, she closed it down and we all got scattered throughout industry, and I went and set, set my own recruitment agency up.

So, how's your recruitment agency going now?

Yeah, still going, thirty, forty years on (Chuckles), I'm not retired yet, I'm still sort of working through it…

What sort of recruitment do you do?

Erm… I basically have placed a recruitment company in-house, so we mainly do in-house recruitment for one particular company, you know? UK-wide, and it, it's the whole range of recruitment, from warehouse staff, through to, well I'm looking for a Finance Director at the moment.

Hmm… Financials, so when you were at the Civil Service, erm… Obviously that's a great career, erm… Did you not ever think about maybe trying your hand at somewhere like the Home Office, or…? The Foreign Office, or…?

Not at all, not at all, erm… (Chuckles), if, if I can relay back to one of my one-to-one annual reviews, my senior officer told me that because I spoke with this East-London Accent, I would never, ever progress in the Civil Service (Chuckles), so err… They changed the rules, that from marking me down on communication, I always thought I was very good at communicating, they marked me on me accent, which was East End in those days, early twenties and so on… But the rules got changed, that communication was then to be interpreted to 'do they make themselves understood, regardless of their accent', so the unions did a great job of changing that, and I think that held me back and err… I think having had two promotions I think it was, very quickly… I then got told virtually 'you've got as far as you're ever going to go', and I never, ever would have wanted to go into one of the more traditional Civil Service departments, because they were very much run by processes, and systems and I'm all about thinking outside the box, and coming up with new ideas.

Hmm, so do you think erm…? For people coming from the East End, do you think that they kind of, you know? Like yourself, maybe hit a 'glass ceiling', when it came to certain professions and jobs, because they were just from the East End?

(Sharp inhale) Hmm… (Exhales), I think probably you're right, erm… I think there was prejudice against, you know? Middle, middle… I, I mean, I work' for Oxbridge senior civil servants, and you could almost tell that they looked down on me as the 'kid from the East End', you know? One senior officer, actually said to me on my second promotion, err… He got promoted at fifty-something, I got promoted at early-thirties, and he said in his opinion, my first ever meeting with him as my new boss, he said that no one should ever be promoted to this grade until they're fifty, wouldn't have the experience, that's his words…

Did that not drive you on though?

Oh yeah! Yeah, another boss told me that because of the restrictions in the Civil Service, erm… I could flog myself as much as I wanted to but I wouldn't get promoted, so they did their best to demotivate me, (chuckles) and I wasn't having it, you know?

So I thought maybe, unless you have any other kind of stories to share regarding your working career…?

No not really, I'm a product of a hardworking person who makes what he can out of life through hard work, that's what my Mum and Dad taught me, and we were all, you know? We get the rewards of our hard labour, is it really, a philosophy I pass' on to me' kids. We haven't spoken about the family at all; did you want to sort of…?

That's what I was going to get onto next… erm…

Oh okay, yep…

So, do you maybe want to talk about erm… Your first marriage and subsequent children, or…?

Yeah, yeah, yeah… Very lucky, erm…married, for… How long was I married for? Twenty-eight years, to a local girl from Redbridge that I met, cos' I moved from East Ham to Redbridge when I got married, as I said earlier on, we had four, well… We had four children, erm… Do you want any more details about the children?

Err… Maybe, erm… What they do now…?

Oh God! Very quickly, err… Oldest son Daniel, err… Let me work it out, thirty-seven, erm… He's a Doctorate, that works at Middlesex University, he's got three degrees, I think he's got, err… And a Masters, he's currently in New York, erm… On just a conference trip, err… My Daughter, thirty-two years young… So she'd be thirty-five, she's a Doctorate Educational Psychologist, err… My third Daughter, err… Katie, who's just had my first grandchild, a year ago, she's now, not, not working… But she's got a degree in erm…I think it's Art and Media, and… My fourth child, daughter, err… Let me think, oh of course! She was born the day that erm… Linford Christie won his gold medal in the 192 Olympics, err… She err… Has got a degree in Education.

It's nice to hear that all of your children have been to university…

Well, well, I was the first one in my family to ever get A Levels, you know? And grammar school and you always want… They've all… I should say, my wife is a teacher, so from a young age, of two, three years old she'd be teaching them to read and study and they would do it naturally.

Yeah? So you think that's kind of worked out for them…

Oh, fabulous Mother when it comes to teaching kids and stuff, err… I had a dream when I used to sit in my classroom at school that I want to marry a teacher, for me' kids, strange! It's weird, seriously! And that happened.

I think a few people probably have thoughts about that to be honest…

Yeah?

So do all of your children live in London?

Err… I'll say yes because erm… Daniel lives sort of near Edgeware, because the others all live in London.

So I thought that maybe we could move on to West Ham obviously…

Oh right! Okay, yep!

So… How did you first get involved with the club, how did you know? Start supporting them…?

Everything I'm going to tell you will be in these notes but, erm… Let's think, I think I can give you exact dates if you want them, but they're all written down, erm… My, my Dad, actually worked on Saturdays yeah? If we take it back slightly, as a, as a seven and eight year old, my Mum and Dad would let me go to see the youth games that were played at Upton Park, on my own with my friends of seven and eight years old, because there was only crowds of about two, or three hundred there, and in those days at that age it was much safer moving around than it is now. So I started life going to the youth games, and then err… August 1958, erm… A friend of the family called Pat, asked my parents, could he take me to a first team game, and they agreed, okay?

That's great.

Now…Thirtieth of August 1958, we were playing the FA Cup winners Aston Villa, so I went to that game with some trepidation, that my first game we were gonna get beaten, but in fact nothing could have been further from the truth, because we actually won 7-2, and as I say in my notes, erm… I was actually hooked for life on what I saw that day, because I was mad on football anyway, watching telly, and stuff… And I'd seen the youth players, the youth team included: Jeff Hurst, Jack Burkett, Eddie Bovington; who all went on to play in cup final teams and Bobby Moore. Now in those days, with those sorts of crowds, a few hundred, you'd sit on the wall behind the goal and the players would talk to you… So I wouldn't say they knew me, but, but I could have a conversation with the players as a kid, can I read you this next bit?

Yeah sure!

Because this is really important to me, (Exhales), here we are… During the school holidays, I would go to the stadium and collect autographs of the players; they were in the stadium, training, doing business and then would come outside and would be more than happy to sign autographs, yeah? They were very engaging and very willing, I was there one afternoon when Bobby Moore came out, and said to me… Signing my book, 'I'm in tonight, are you going to the game?', that was his debut, that was the thirtieth of… Sorry that was a few days later, I think it was about eighth of September, eight days after my first game, err… He made his debut that night against Manchester United, who we beat 3-2, the game was a sell-out, and

there was a crowd of around five-thousand people outside of the ground, because they were locked out, that included my Dad, err… Going at that period, my other vivid of that time with the player, who was known to be reluctant to sign photographs, John Bond… I finally got his autograph after helping him to carry his shopping, to his house in the nearby Thorn Road, off of Green Street… Yeah? Is this okay?

Yep, yeah… Just speak ahead yeah…

You'll love the next bit, I can also recall one occasion, around 1960; I was 10, when our Scottish international goalkeeper Lawrie Leslie came out of the ground offices and signed autographs for all the twenty-odd young fans that were there, he then proceeded to organise a ten-aside game in the adjoining car park, which he refereed, not surprisingly, Lawrie, after retiring went on to become a teacher in Hackney…

That's interesting, isn't it?

Yeah, I mean to football fans it will… I don't know… I dunno Josh if you're a football fan but…?

I'm a football fan…

…But those sorts of stories just make me bubble even now thinking about them…

Yeah, I am a football fan, but I support Newcastle United…

Oh do you? (Laughs), Hey! One of your heroes and mine, I met about a month ago, Pop Robson, what a great guy he is, what a great guy…

So err… What was your favourite game then that you went to see West Ham play?

Oh God! Erm… I'd, I'd got a little section on favourite memories and there's a few you see…Yeah?

Just read it out if you want, yeah!

Well, I tell you what, shall I just read this through and then you might pick up some of the stuff on it, yeah…?

Yeah sure.

Okay… Erm… Carrying on from that, Lawrie Leslie was one of my all-time favourite players, and watching home games on the wall of the North bank, because even at the main games, you could sit on the wall, and virtually talk to the players, even at the first team matches… As a youngster you could talk to the players, couple of years ago, two years ago now…I spoke to him on the telephone, when I tracked him down to his home in Sidcup, he was only too pleased to talk to me, as even as he approached eighty years of age, he shared some memories of those great times, as an eight year old, my Dad worked at weekends, oh yeah… Then I sort of talk about the first game I went to, that's the one I spoke to you about yeah? West Ham united versus Aston Villa, right… err… Right pick it up here… On the

game in 1961, April… Goalkeeper Lawrie Leslie was injured and before the days of substitutes returned to the pitch, his arm strapped up on the right-wing, we were 3-1 down at the time to Arsenal, and ended up drawing the game 3-3, with Lawrie Leslie making one of the goals, John Lyall, who went on to become manager, took over in goal that day. In another game against Bolton, in 1962, Lawrie came out to make a typically brave safe, from Warwick Rimmer of Bolton, and broke his leg in the process; a very young Martin Peters took over from him in goal. He was hospitalised for weeks and I wrote to him, sending him 'get well soon' cards, and he enclosed photos which he returned and signed to me, I've never seen the hammers lose at Wembley and each visit had a memory. I was there for our FA Cup win in 1964, when against all the odds we reached the semi… We reached the final by beating Manchester United in the semi-final, as a fourteen year old then, I spent my hard-earned pocket money buying a ticket from a ticket-tout for ten times its value of seven (shillings) and six (pence), which in those days was three pounds fifty; pre-decimalisation. The following day the team paraded the FA cup on a coach journey through the East End, and I joined in along with thousands of others who lined the route, along East Ham High Street, past the tube station up the hill, a memory I've recorded on my video camera; a priceless possession to me. Are you okay with this? Shall I carry on?

Yeah just carry on…

The following year, I was there in 1965 when we won the European Cup Winners Cup (UEFA), the laces coach from East Ham Town Hall, only just arrived at Wembley Stadium in time, in time for us to see the kick off, on, on arrival at the coach park, we then had to run along Olympic Way, on a hot and muggy night, on arriving on the terrace, I preceded to open a can of Coke, which had obviously been shaken up on my dash to the ground and I soaked a policeman who was standing nearby, who was ushering us to the terrace, with this fizzy beverage. Back in the day then, he saw the funny side of it. I'll never forget that image again, of him covered in Coca Cola, dripping down his face, what, what a night that was… As Alan Sealy scored two goals, 'Long Live Love', the big Sandie Shaw hit was playing on the coach going home. It took us an hour to get out of the coach park, and we were dropped off back at the Town Hall, at East Ham, around one o'clock in the morning, the streets even at that time were full of cars sounding their horns in celebration, we reached a two leg final of a league cup, in 1966, losing to West Brom, was another memory… I was there at Wembley in 1981, when we held Liverpool to a draw in the League Cup Final, with that notorious referee Clive Thomas allowing a late Scousers equaliser when Sammy Lee was obstructing our goalkeeper, Phil Parks, yes studying referee decisions are not a new phenomenon for us. Keith Hackett, you can join that infamous referees club as well, I got there… I was there at Wembley on a dodgy Fulham goalkeeper, when a dodgy Fulham goalkeeper, helped us inspire, inspired us signing Alan Taylor, from watching him score twice, not only in the final but in the earlier rounds against Arsenal and Ipswich, leading… Playing a major part in us winning the Cup in 1975. My son Daniel was ill on the day the club gave out vouchers at a league game for the 1975 final, so I missed that game and thought that my chance of attending it was lost, however a work colleague, visiting the offices of Frank Pratt, the West Ham chairman's timber business, mentioned my plight and to my amazement he gave my colleague two tickets for me, the irony here was that my work colleague was a Millwall fan, so I'm forever in his debt. I was there in 1980 when I managed to obtain an extra ticket for my Dad to attend in his one and only final, when against all the odds we defeated Arsenal 1-0, when Trevor Brooking, could not get it out of the way of a Stuart Pearson shot, which eventually hit him on the head, to enter the net, defeating Pat Jennings attempted save. My memory that day was

of a teenage Paul Allen being hauled down by a brute of an Arsenal defender when he could have gone on to become the youngest ever scorer in a Cup Final. Paul's tears of happiness at the end of that match was a memorable memory for me, on the rollercoaster ride that is being a West Ham fan means, I've endured promotions and the magic of the 1966 team, and I've suffered the relegations. We also hold the record, in November 1959 of being top of the First Division, and losing our next match 7-0 at Sheffield Wednesday, a feat that's never been repeated by any other club. We were all singing as loud as I can remember at Wigan, when we lost the game and were recently relegated, which sealed our fate. An hour later, Avram Grant was sacked, I've enjoyed many great players, my favourite memories include Brian Dear's goal burst against West Bromwich Albion, when he scored five, in 1965, in twenty minutes, I was there the night of 1966 when the genius that was Johnny Burn, was the architect that took Leeds United apart 7-0, in a League Cup tie, with Jeff Hurst scoring two, and Johnny Sissons scoring a hatric, never forget that match. In 1968, in a match versus Burnley, the referee was knocked unconscious after colliding with Trevor Brooking; Bobby Moore grabbed the whistle and blew it to stop the game. Jeff Hurst's epic goals versus Sunderland, 1968 is a memory, when he scored six goals, one in each half, Brian Pop Robson's hatric versus Sheffield United, under the Boleyn lights in 1971, Paolo di Canio's magic volley in 19… In 2000, from a Trevor Sinclair's pass, then there was the Tony Cottee and Frank McAvennie, who was my Dad's favourite player's double act of 1986, one of our greatest seasons. I've enjoyed many highs, with most recently the Wembley play off final, when under Sam Allardyce's guidance we beat Blackpool to return to the Premiership in 2012, I've never heard 'Bubbles' sang so loudly as it was that day, with somehow the whole of the stadium seemed to be swathed in claret and blue. After a much unexpected amazing last season at the Boleyn, I'm looking forward to our new adventure here, at the Olympic Stadium, where I've got a foundation stone that my children made for me. So glad that we've brought so many of the memories and memorabilia from the Boleyn, yep? Is that all useful?

So just to dissect that though, a little bit…

Yep…

You mentioned, watching the erm… European Cup game, and the FA Cup, at Wembley, could you maybe describe it a bit erm… What the atmosphere was like at those games?

Yeah, well if we go back to that 19… Well, in chronological order, in 1964… Erm… I think everybody in the area was surprised, because don't forget this is pre, pre-Bobby Moore, Hurst, Peters, '66. So we'd surprisingly beaten Man U in the semi-final, that's the Best, Lord, Charlton Man United team, so it was a real shock. So it was really a day out when we were all looking forward to going, we'd all expected to win, because we were playing Preston, erm… And in the West Ham way, we managed to win 3-2 with a goal in Injury time, so it was touch-and-go during the game, the atmosphere in the whole East End was one of complete elation, everyone you went prior to the week before the game, err… There was lots of stuff in the 'Stratford Express', which was a newspaper at the time… 'Ilford Recorder', big articles, erm… The whole place, the whole East End, from my travelling around the East End, to clubs and what was in one state of euphoria, erm… On the day of the game, I don't think the fans would ever believe they were gonna get beaten because we were playing Preston, and it, inside the stadium and the game, it was a bit of a shock. As I say, I bought my ticket on the black market, because I was so desperate to get there, erm… And it was ten times the value of, I've still got the ticket to this day, seven (shillings) and six (pence) was the

ticket value then, fantastic. And I pay three pound fifty for it, you know? And that was all from hard-earned sort of pocket money that I'd saved up.

Yeah, so, what else do you remember then of the European…

Yeah European one was, was amazing. Erm… We were playing the German side Bayern Munich, who were a top, top European side in those days, erm… Packed with German internationals, erm… Although it was at Wembley, I think we went to that game more or less thinking 'getting into the final is great', we'd had an amazing run under Ron Greenwood, and John Lyall was his assistant, and Greenwood was seen as the master tactician, in those days, erm… Oddly enough, a story not much known is that the, err… If I can just side-track, because it is relevant, that the linesman, who allowed Jeff Hurst's goal in the 66' final, also refereed the game against Sparta Prague, in the rounds of when we won the Cup, the European Cup… And, I've, I've got a photo of it, and I remember when I met Jeff Hurst, I pointed this out to him and he was actually quite amazed that 'Bakarov' (?) I think his name was, he was Russian, err… Had actually refereed a game, during the, the away league in Czechoslovakia, erm… It was an amazing run, because we seemed to have the knack of pinching wins at home, and then going away and getting better results, like winning, or drawing… So it was a very, very well balanced team that Greenwood had put together, and if we're honest, it wasn't the best West Ham team; they just had a system that he devised that suited everybody, erm… On the night itself, as I say it was a bit manic, it was a typical… I mean, I don't think Wembley had ever seen an evening match where a club side had taken half the stadium, three quarters of the stadium across London in one go, so the traffic was absolutely manic, as I say the coach barely got there on time, where we had to run up Olympic Way, to get up to the ground for the kick-off, we actually arrived as they kicked off, and as I say we were all hot and sweaty and I just opened this can of Coke all over this Policeman, and I thought 'oh, oh!' Because my mates looked at me and thought I was gonna' get arrested and miss the game (chuckles). Err… yeah, that's, that's about my memory of it to be honest.

So why do you think West Ham were so successful during those periods, because obviously they were winning a lot of trophies and, there was obviously the…

Well, you talk to anybody and they'll say the same, Ron Greewood and John Lyall, they were way ahead of their time… Erm… They were supported, if you go back slightly before them, and around that time, players like Malcolm Allison, players like, err… Well the ones that we've mentioned, players like that were all very much erm… I think you'll find about eight or ten of the squad in that period went on to become managers, so they were all thinking players, who were always trying to think of ways of getting ahead of the game, and there's a famous, I don't know if you've heard of it before, but there's a café that's closed now, but in those days called 'Casa Terries' (?), where they used to sit there with their pepper pots and their salt pots working out moves erm… And this was the players at lunch time, they then in 1961, or was it 1960 I think? Ron Greenwood came, who was probably the most advanced technician there was in the country, he came with a lot of European ideas of near post-crosses and all sorts, that became revolutionary, then he had the General on the pitch in Bobby Moore, who probably had the best thinking brain you've ever seen. I've never seen a player who could actually think like a chess move, he could see two, or three moves ahead, you'd see a player zooming in on goal and out the blue, Bobby Moore would appear and just put the

tackle in from nowhere. He was just the most incredible footballer I've ever witnessed in my life.

So what was it like watching Bobby Moore then?

Sorry, say again…

What was it like watching Bobby Moore live?

Err… I'm a bit XXXX here because don't forget I grew up with him from the youth team, I'd seen him as a sixteen, seventeen year old and spoken to him at matches, you know? They were almost friends, the youth team, in those days, yeah? They'd see the same faces behind the goal; they'd talk to you when they were doing autographs like me. He came out and said to me 'I'm in tonight', those were his words, 'I'm in', and at the end of the day, he just had a football brain that I've never seen since. Even to this day, well what it was… I think that incident with the whistle proved it. That whilst all the players were just looking at the referee lying unconscious, he ran up to the referee and grabbed the whistle and blew it, and that about summed up the way he thought ahead of everybody else on that pitch; in every game. The, the blinding memory of Bobby Moore is interesting, because when I used to go to away games when they played average teams, he was nothing special… You put him in the World Cup Final, or play Brazil in the semi-final, or put him in a top Cup game, he was immaculate… It was like, the bigger the game, the better he played.

Yeah, he was a big game player.

Yes, yes, erm… I think there was a story that err… Brian Clough wanted to Moore and Brooking, err… To erm… Was it Nottingham Forest, or was it Derby, I can't remember… One of those, and he offered, I think in those days a million, half a million each for the two, and neither of them would move in those days. Err… It all came to a very sad end, I mean… Not many people know that err…The months before the World Cup Final, Bobby Moore was out of contract with West Ham, and therefore was not eligible to play in the World Cup Final, and it was only some dealings between the FA and club that got him some sort of temporary contract that allowed him to play in the first place.

So why did West Ham let his contract come down then?

Err… I think you were in a situation where the manager on Greenwood, err… Very much controlled the team and Bobby Moore was such an influence on the team in that time erm… That maybe, and this is only my opinion, maybe there was a bit of friction between them, maybe… Oh yes! Sorry, I can put my finger on it, it was the incident at Blackpool, where Ron Greenwood, who was a very, very politically correct human being churchgoer felt very let down by Bobby Moore, Captain of the team taking three members of the club to Brian London's nightclub in Blackpool the night before a cup game that we lost 4-0. Greenwood in the books, Greenwood recommended that the board sack Bobby Moore, erm… At that time and the board overturned Greenwood's decision, so I think it goes back to that, that there was always that feeling between them.

So when you went to football matches, did you have a pre-match ritual?

Unlike most, it wasn't the pub (chuckles), it was usually a nice little cosy, as it is up until the last days at the Boleyn, err… There's two places, there's Paul's Café in Green Street, and their Friends that recently opened up a few years ago in erm, the Barking Road, and we just go for a quiet little, you know? East End lunch and surrounded by West Ham fans, all chatting away about the game to come.

Did you ever go to the Pie n' Mash shop?

Err… Yes, erm… Moody's and Cooks', were the two main ones in East Ham, and pie n' mash very much part of the… The thing is, last thirty years I've been vegetarian, so… I would have a cheese pasty or something now, but back in the day yeah, yeah we had meat pie.

Yeah because there's Nathan's Pie n' Mash shop isn't there just around the corner from the stadium.

Yeah, and do you know, I've never been there…

You know? Apparently it's been a family business for sixty years…

Absolutely, yeah, yeah, yeah it's very famous, I know a lot of people that go there regularly erm… It's one of the few; you know we've got a very good one in Southend? Where I live now…

So, why do you think people kind of stick to these kind of traditions like pie n' mash and everything before a game, is it because West Ham are so ingrained within the community.

Its ritual isn't it, I don't know what the Geordies do, I've been up to Newcastle quite a few times and I, I think each area's got their own little rituals, you know? Pie n' mash and eels, don't forget eels, were the main sort of 'I'm from the East End and today's my day to celebrate with me' club', the clubs represent the area, and the area's traditions go hand in hand, to answer your question.

So what do you think West Ham means to the area then?

I think, I think it's changed, I think there was a time when hard-working, working class people, it was the one thing they could do fairly cheaply, and they could all go as a group, yeah? Home and away, back in the day when I used to go to away games, it was like the East End was travelling north to another community, we won't talk about hooligans and the ICF, and the element that I knew very well, but, unless you want to, but… Basically…

It would be great if you could talk about it erm… Obviously it wouldn't be used in the exhibition but it's just kind of interesting to hear, you know? About the ICF and kind of what it was about.

I mean basically there's been some very good films out, called 'Cass' if you saw that you'd know exactly the kind of culture and what it was about, these, these… You know? These weren't working class kids who were stupid, these were actual… Most of the ICF were very intelligent people, I mean Bill Gardner who's one of the most famous ICF members, you can see him regularly with his son as a season ticket holder at West Ham now… And I think

there's an element, and there is an element, I've heard rumours from Cardiff, that the actual clubs themselves encourage these groups, who become almost a secondary police force for them, and it saves them a lot of money if they've got a gang running protecting, like the stories that, that members of the ICF sat at the Bobby Moore statue, err… At the end of the Green Street, because there was a rumour that Millwall fans were coming, coming down to, to demolish it. Well, if the Club new that they'd have to pay for police to go there, you know? It's things like that, that are a bit strange. Erm…You never get in the mind of these people, but there's an element there that must like violence, but by the same token, if you're going to get innocent fans attacked there has to be an element that likes violence to protect them, and then it became an ego thing you know? Which, which club's got the 'ardest, you know? Some throw punches, some have knives and some have guns, you know? Where does it all stop, you know?

So why did all this start then, why did it kind of... Sort of... It was the eighties, wasn't it? Where… Or maybe the seventies…

No, no, I mean, I, I can remember going to… Everton were champions in nineteen-sixty something, and I can remember, as a, as a, kid then of about twelve, thirteen, whatever it was, erm… Looking at the whole North Bank at Upton Park, taken up by Everton supporters who were literally pissing all over the stand…

Yeah.

They were just, you know? Everybody was just, you know? They were just absolute louts, I'd never witnessed a group of fans of any club that were just so loutish as they were, this were the Everton… It just seemed to be that on travels, clubs used to take these club supporters, in inverted commas and they were real supporters, these were real genuine football fans who would die for their club, literally, some did. They would take their culture from that area to another place, as an ego thing, and if it meant they're playing football, it meant they were gonna' have a fight, it was the same mental approach to that.

Because they got very famous as well, didn't they? The ICF.

Sorry, say again.

They got very famous, the ICF

Yeah, they did, and umm… It's, it's quite weird that… And I can't get me' head round this, but with the films and the books and the personal appearances, they're making a lot of money, these guys, now; you know? Out of what they did then, you know? I find it, I find it, a bit incredible, you know? I mean, I do know one or two of them sort of not personally but I would certainly recognise them and go and talk to them… And as I say, Bill Gardner has now become a very respected West Ham fan, erm… One or two of the others have season tickets over at West Ham recently I've seen them, you know? So they all grow up and mature into sort of respectable men, with kids, you know? Erm… I think they'll all say that something in their brains said they must have violence, and that violence automatically connected up with their passion, which was their club, yeah? I don't ascribe to the argument that the ICFs of this world were outside people who just attached to a club to cause violence, I don't believe that for one minute, I know their mentality, and it's very much 'die for their clubs', all over the

country, the different groups, I'm sure are the same… It's how you show that passion for your club you know?

Yeah, in the correct way…

I mean, my way of supporting my club till I die, is and I think of a classic game at Everton, we were losing 6-0, one after the other, goals were going in and the singing from the West Ham fans just got louder and louder as every, every goal went in… That's how the average West Ham fan supports his team in a bad time; you don't go bashing, or smashing up the local market place, cos they've just lost.

So, just going back to erm… You know? The stadium and kind of, you know? Places around the stadium, erm… Do you have any idea of what the atmosphere was like on Green Street and the surrounding streets on match day?

Err… Yeah, what you mean? You mean in the past?

Yeah. Or, or even now.

Well, I think, I think there's two atmospheres, there's the excitement on match day that's there, where the fans just stream down, and that's very happy, jovial err… Everybody's in a good mood, the pub, 'The Queen's Head' is well protected, just down from Upton Park Station, err… No away fans can go in there, they've got their own pubs that their assigned to and so on, and that's happy, happy, and that's the biggest memory, happy memory I'll have of Green Street, on the other hand I can think of games where the away team comes in with a lot of supporters… Notoriously: Millwall, Tottenham, most recently Tottenham, where the Police march the fans in great numbers, on one side of the street, Green Street, to the ground; by the same token there's little groups looking to attack them, shower abuse at them, erm… I've witnessed a few fist-fights, erm… Knives and all sorts, with the Police completely out of control because they're so outnumbered, you know? So to answer your question there is two, there's two definite atmos…But, but I would say, if I used White Hart Lane as an example, its similar when I go to away games at White Hart Lane, where the Police march all the West Ham fans down from the station and you get an atmosphere there; so… Green Street is really only reflective of you know? What goes on, I will make a comment if you like about the, the bottle throwing stuff at 'Man U' recently, I think what's it… The Press, and I don't regard you as The Press unless you think you are (chuckles)… The Press grab hold of a story, and because it sells their papers, they'll hammer it to death, the reality of that day was, and I was in the area from about four o'clock onwards, five o'clock onwards, from Canning Town, which is a few miles away from the ground, the pubs were spilling out into the streets, people I know personally where drinking from lunchtime through to the match in the evening, it was one big final farewell to the Boleyn, it was a family East End atmosphere. I'm not for one minute gonna' suggest it was Hillsborough, but I think the Police, whoever was in charge did not understand the culture of that special day to East End, and what they got caught out with was… All Barking Road, if you look at the pictures, Green Street Barking Road, absolutely 'sea of people', at a time when the coach was trying to get through, now… How they could not organise a route for the coach… And the coach seemed to come a strange way anyway from Canary Wharf, because coaches normally come down the Barking Road, not across it from that angle which it came at…What was happening was, the Police and horses were pushing crowds back towards the walls, and people were getting crushed and people were in

fear, and certain members who had bottles in their hands started throwing them. It was as simple as that. It was as simple as that… But that's not a side of the story that the press were saying 'its West Ham hooligans throwing bottles at the coach'.

Did you go to the last game?

Yeah. As I say, I was in the area about four, or five o'clock, and it was absolutely mobbed then, so how they couldn't get a message to the coach, to say, you know? 'You better get your coach here early, because the streets are absolutely swamped at five o'clock, I do not know…

What was the atmosphere like inside the stadium on the last game? And what were the celebrations like after the game?

Probably, during the game, probably the strangest atmosphere I've ever felt; a mixture of erm… Joy, err… That it was a happy East End occasion, that this was the end, with sadness that we were leaving a very happy monument, 'cos as I say, my whole childhood, teenage years, growing up, was all built around going to games at the stadium, and I think a lot of us in the ground that day felt like that. It was happiness next… Happiness to go to the stadium, sadness to leave… Obviously winning the game helped erm… Particularly against Man U, yeah? So yeah? Good feelings, erm… The after thing was a bit strange, erm… How can I put this…? I don't that it exactly went to plan, there were some strange things that were happening, like they had about, I think they had about one-hundred and fifty ex-players in the stand, all been invited, and they were interviewing people like Marlon Harewood, you know? Great respect to Marlon, he was hardly one of our heroes, you know? Erm… Yeah it was little things, silly things… You know? Bringing taxis onto the pitch to unload players was a bit 'naff' in most people's view, quite how else they could have done it I don't know but… I think they made a genuine, I mean I've got to say, Gold, Sullivan and Karen Brady, their heart is in West Ham, yeah their gonna' make a lot, a lot, a lot of money out of this club now, yeah? They were the ones who took it from the desperate financial situation that the Icelanders got us in, to where we are now and where we're going, you know? With the foresight of bringing in someone like Slaven Bilić who was a risk, who's done amazing, I think all those feelings were all in that night, Gold, Sullivan might be… Providing an Olympic style final ceremony to please the fans, not a lot of it went down very well but they were trying.

Do you think erm… The culture of football has changed? Like you were saying earlier by talking to Bobby Moore and having, having a brief conversation erm… Do you think kind of the footballing culture with modern day footballers is completely different to back in the sixties and seventies?

Absolutely, totally, I mean I've, I've got those two stories, well… I mentioned some story of carrying John Bond's bags back to his house, I mean… You know? I can tell you… Daniel and I, my son went to an away game at Bolton about five years ago, we'd driven all the way up, we both took a day off work to drive to Bolton for an away game, the players come off the coach, the West Ham players, little kids were asking for their autographs to be signed, Daniel just wanted to say hello to one of the players and they just all brushed past, they couldn't get… They had their things in their ears, which I think is very disrespectful, yeah? And… they're all about, they're all up themselves, today… They're all up themselves, they

somehow have been, with the money they're earning, I don't know what's caused it, they all just think they're a, they're above people like the average fans who pay their money… Back in the day they used to respect… As I say Lawrie Leslie, ridiculous example organizing a little game of football with us you know? John Bond let me carry his bags, players used to come to matches… Players on the bus yeah? That's, that's all different now.

I suppose the, the footballers back then were a lot more localized, and they were…

I think there's an element of that, there is an element of that, and I wouldn't want to paint them all with the same brush but… Even the local players who get that sort of money don't really respect the fans anymore; I think that's the word. I think there's a lack of respect for fans now that you know? You're right, I mean when you've got guys coming from all over the world, to be fair three-quarters of them don't speak English, so you know? Without being funny, it's easier to communicate with a team when they speak your language, you know what I mean? Cos, 'cos a lot of them come and they really speak English, I think you'll find every club has got interpreters in the dressing room and God knows what else, and the bit of English they do speak they're, they're embarrassed, they can't hold a sensible conversation and if they do they probably say the wrong thing that upsets you…

Yeah, it's just when you share stories about them getting the bus and… You know? Things like that… it seems kind of… They seem more in touch with working class people, the community that they are representing i.e. West Ham which is a very working class club erm… Which is rooted in its erm… Tradition, it just seems to be kind of lost, a little bit…

I think to be honest it's been lost totally, you know? When you see a little club come up through the ranks with local heroes, be it… It might be Yorkshire, but at least they're coming from all over Yorkshire, I think that, to me 'warms the cockles of my heart', that almost back to the old days of what, what a great you know? Development that is, you know? The Bournemouth story is amazing, you know? That type of thing, the average fan, deep down, I wish West Ham was like that, you know? You don't spend a lot of money, we get some cheap buys and we turn them into the top, and Leicester, another great example you know? I think everybody admires what Leicester's done, but at the same time, its lost that local, as you said, that local feel that 'these are our boys', you know? I'll, I'll, very quickly I'll go through those youth players, it was six players in that youth team who ended up in the first team, and I'd grown up with them… That that would never happen now, if you get one come through every three years your lucky.

The only kind of example I can really think of erm… With youth players is Manchester United, erm… They seem to kind of have a, a constant conveyor belt of youth players…

Yeah, yeah you're probably right, Josh but I think the difference there is that they trawl them from all over the world, and funnily enough if you keep an eye on West Ham's academy we are very much doing that as we speak, you know? We've just signed a top Spanish kid who Barcelona were after, we've signed one from Argentina, so even these youth academies who are supposed to be local grown, they're all full and packed with the world's best players, youngsters it's crazy.

Can we talk a bit about, some people say Upton Park, some people say the Boleyn Ground, which one, which one do you prefer?

I think for reasons unknown everybody I know calls it Upton Park, the odd story is that when my father first moved to East Ham erm… Sorry, before he moved to East Ham he lived in Wem… Wembley I think on the way, and what happened… He came to a game and actually got off at West Ham, err… Which is very… I can never understand why they'd have a West Ham named station but they Club's sort of miles away walking, Boleyn really is a… What is it? You've got the Boleyn Pub, you've got the history with Anne Boleyn, you know? Henry, Henry VIII, because it was a castle originally, on the grounds of the ground… So… I think every football fan who's a West Ham man would call it Upton Park.

Yeah, has the stadium changed a lot over the years?

Oh enormously… Massively, I can think back to the days when the South Bank was a big open terrace, that's where the away fans went, that wasn't under cover and they had a big clock, and a man used to walk along the stanchion with err… Letters, big letters in his arm and numbers and… In your programme you'd have match 'number A', Arsenal vs. Sunderland, and he would go and put 'A' and at half time he'd put 1-0… And that is a very, very vivid memory of mine, it used to take him about twenty minutes to get to the end of the results by which time they'd kicked off again.

So how else the stadium changed over the years?

Erm… The East Stand, the Chicken Run used to be… Well the whole stadium was completely wooden built originally, erm… The East Stand, the East Chicken Run erm… Was developed first, was the first cantilever stand in the country, erm… I used to again, for a period, later on erm… My Dad used to take me to the Chicken Run, so we used to watch games from the side of the ground, as opposed to behind the goal, and again you could sit on the wall of the chicken run and touch the players and talk to them as they come to take throw-ons', you were that close, erm… The big Alpari Stand, I think change the whole, the whole image of the stadium cos' that's when we first became the major stand that looked more like every other… Everybody else's ground. We almost went from looking like a Second Division Club playing in the Premier, or a senior amateur club ground, we almost went with the Alpari stand as its now called, the main West Stand to err… A proper stadium erm… they'd fiddled about with the two ends for years, they finally put a roof on the South Bank, erm… The away supporters used to be put in the South Stand, now they're put in the North Stand, is another major change, erm… Certainly at the new stadium I'm told that the East Stand, the Chicken Run side, which is where I've got two season tickets erm… Is going to be the biggest stand in the UK I think it's gonna'… Twenty, twenty-five thousand, in that, on that side.

So how would you sum up the atmosphere then at Upton Park?

The atmosphere? Erm…

On match-days…

Happy, always happy… erm… To away teams playing there I think threatening, because of the passion, but it's the same one whenever I go to St. James', the Newcastle fans frighten me to death, cos' of their passion, you know? Passionate, I think is a good word to use for Upton Park, there's that strong passion that… Not many clubs, I think Newcastle are one, we're one, where the local community are so passionate about their team you know? And you actually

get that with Arsenal, I don't… Every Arsenal fan I've ever talked to over the years moans about something, even when they were winning everything, they just… You know? They're, they're not as close… Well, you probably know? Arsenal actually started life in South London anyway, so you know, end of the day Woolwich Arsenal, maybe its historic, that they just felt they'd change over, I don't know… Passionate is the word for Upton Park, and threatening to the away fans…

So obviously erm… You know…? West Ham are moving to the stadium in Stratford, and there's a lot to be gained there commercially for the club, erm… What do you think's going to happen to the local area, local businesses, the people that live around the stadium, erm… Once the stadium's gone?

Erm… You're probably not aware, or maybe you are, but the Boleyn Pub is advertising season tickets for people to come there, drink and then get a bus, a mini-bus…

Yeah, I've seen that yeah…

Erm… Local businesses, well let's think, what's it being replaced by? It's being replaced by a big housing estate, the thing that's intriguing everyone is… this promise of erm… Affordable housing, but it does appear that erm… What are they called 'Galion' is it? That are building it? Only about a third of the houses are going to be affordable, erm… If it's going to be a sort of an upmarket type Canary Wharf think, I think it would be very damaging, because those people won't want to go in the Pie n' Mash shops, and stuff, I don't think… If on the other hand it is genuinely going to be a big estate of people of shall we say, 'Normal East End Mentality', be it immigrants as well… Yes… Then I think the area will lose thirty-thousand once a fortnight and gain, all the people that are actually going to live right on top of their businesses, does that make sense?

Yeah it does yeah…

Because that's every day of the week, they'll be there, you know? That's my logic to it, but… There's a lot, there's a lot of unknowns about all this… And we only know what we're told (chuckles)

Yeah, like with everything, so… What do you actually think of the move then, to Stratford Stadium, do you think it's a good thing?

Initially, I was absolutely gutted and devastated, in time… I've, I've warmed to it, I've come round to it, and I think to be honest, the successful season we had last year has added that thought to a lot of our fans minds… That to go forward and compete and put bids in for £30 million for a striker, we need a bigger err… Arena, you know? I think we've sold fifty-two thousand season tickets, be it ten-thousand of them are going free, to schools… Erm… But I think at the end of the day, most of us now realize if we move with the modern times, if we really want to compete in the 'Top Six' shall we call it, then we gotta' go somewhere bigger.

Yeah, do you think it will be hard to re-create and replicate those memories in a new stadium? Obviously, because they…

Erm… it's never gonna' be quite the same but to be fair they've kept their promise, the board, and here's what I love about Brady, Sullivan, Gold; they are passionate West Ham fans… Well… Two of them are anyway, the two chairmen, err… Brady, I'm not so sure about, but… At the end of the day, she said West Ham is so dear to her, but I can't think now because she never had anything to do with West Ham, David Gold actually played for the youth team, and Sullivan is a lifelong supporter, but at the end of the day, I think they're going out of their way, moving the gates and putting them in the… All the memorabilia, all the stuff that we're talking about, I think they're making a damn good shout of trying to make it the same. It remains to be seen once we get there if we can get the noise in the stadium and the atmosphere to turn it into a real home game, my worry is everybody coming, like Wembley Stadium comes to the, they raise their game that day and we end up with a very average home record, it'll probably mean we get relegated (chuckles).

Hopefully not, erm… So, how would you like to see West Ham going forward then?

How do I see it going forward?

Yeah how would you like to see the club move forward?

How would I like to see them… Well… I think, contrary to public opinion I think we're going to have a hard act to follow from this season, err… Because when you look at how many points we picked up from the Top Six, or away from home particularly, we're gonna have to go some to match that, but by the same token, we are… This is the rollercoaster I talk about in, in, in the thing I'm going to send you; we, we, we can play away to Man City and away to Arsenal and away to Liverpool and win, and then we play the relegated clubs, Norwich, Bournemouth, and… Leicester, and, and we end up losing at home to all three of them… Well at least we lost two and drew one. But that's our club you know? Erm… I would like to think, once he's finished his summer dealings, bringing in… I mean, to be fair… Alex Song was our best player last season, season before last, sorry… Alex Song couldn't get into our team this season and they've let him go, so… Going forward, if we're gonna' bring in players better than the XXXX and the players we've got now, then I see a great future, and we'll get into our stride very quickly, erm…We go through this ritual every summer, where I think well up to about eight rejections so far for strikers, we usually get up to about thirty rejections till we actually buy one, erm… But I think that's the modern game, you know? You're competing with, with lots of money now, even the lower clubs have got lots of money to spend, the Stokes and the Sunderlands, and people like that are bringing in such top quality players, that the competition, to buy a good striker, particularly, is phenomenal, and I think with us, I think even someone, I could say average, Matt Jarvis who was an England international come to Upton Park, had the record number of crosses for a winger in the whole Premiership, and yet none of them got converted, and he got kicked out to Norwich, you know? So we make so many chances, that if we can put someone on the end of them, Andy Carroll's a bit indifferent and injury prone, Sakho seems to have fallen out with the club, erm… Emenike we'll get rid of, Valencia we will get rid of, I think at the end of the day it's all down to buying two or three strikers, then I'd feel a lot more confident about where we're going.

Yeah, so I've got one final question for you, erm… I would just like to kind of, what does West Ham Football Club mean to you and, how has it affected your life?

(chuckles)

Big question I know.

I think you know the answer to that already, erm… Me and my family, it's in our blood, you know? From, from when, when I was a kid err… You take your kids to games they either get it or they don't erm… My two oldest are more West Ham crazy than the two youngest ones for some reason, err… But, it's the thing you look forward to, it's the big, everyone's got a big passion in life and mine is football, apart from music, but… It's more than the club, its more than the club, it's a feeling, the passion, and I think Geordies would relate to that, very, very much, you know?

They certainly do.

You know? I will not have a bad word said against… I, I will tell you a very quick story Josh, yeah? I was on business in err… Gateshead, and it was a night, a Monday night, I tell you this, about ten years ago… Twelve years ago, something like that… West Ham were playing Aston Villa, on a Monday night game and I searched round where I was staying in Gateshead for a pub, and I found one just opposite where the Gateshead athletics thing is, it's called 'The Fox' and something I think it was called… And I went in there, and I got a table very close to the screen and I sat at it, and there was four empty seats, about ten minutes later, five Geordies came in, and surrounded me, and they said something about 'are you from East London?', because I'd said something to the barman, and I got very defensive and I said 'yeah, do you want to make something of it' (chuckles), and they said 'calm down Pal, we're going to buy you a drink', and I, I became friends with these guys, that's an absolutely true story, that I stood up, all aggressive like, God knows what I was going to do, but I thought they were coming to pick on me, and they'd actually come in just to sit down and enjoy the game with me, you know?

That's great to hear.

Absolutely true story and that sums things up that if we find away fans who happen to come into our, again… They can come into the cafés, there's no threat at all, but we'll help them, we'll let 'em know where to go, we'll talk about their team and ours, and to me, like when I went to the World Cup in Germany in 2012, it's a football family, and that's how football should be… And I think football, to answer your question, for me… Is an extension of your family, it's a love and a passion, yeah? Some, sometimes it loves you back, and it wins, and sometimes, like family it kicks you in the face and it hurts, because you love it so much.

Well, thank you for sharing your story, Erm… It was a pleasure interviewing you.

The Parish Centre, Cardinal Heenan Centre, 326 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1QP
0208 5533116 / office@ech.org.uk / www.hidden-histories.org.uk

The Parish Centre, Cardinal Heenan Centre, 326 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1QP
0208 5533116 / office@ech.org.uk / www.hidden-histories.org.uk

The Parish Centre, Cardinal Heenan Centre, 326 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1QP
0208 5533116 / office@ech.org.uk / www.hidden-histories.org.uk