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Speaker 1: [00:01](#) Brenda Meadows.

Speaker 2: [00:04](#) What year were you born?

Speaker 1: [00:06](#) 1932.

Speaker 2: [00:08](#) What did your parents do for a living?

Speaker 1: [00:11](#) I'm sorry, I couldn't hear that one. What did your parents, what did they do for a living? My father was a builder, worked on roads and was um, what they call a foreman, which meant he had a, you know, he had some importance and my mother worked in a shop in a dairy shop.

Speaker 2: [00:27](#) But your location every with like what you add the child before the war started

Speaker 1: [00:33](#) was, I, I, I can't hear you very well. I'm sorry. You some. Oh, right, fine. Well this was in Kilburn lane, West nine. It was at the, not the, um, what should we say? Elaborate Grove and it was queen spot station just down the road. And it was shops, very small shops and only one bus went along there. And I went to school in Wilberforce school, which was also in Kilburn lane. And just a little bit away was a church where I went to when I was better, which I tell you about later. And over the road was a public house called the Falcon public house. Very respectable. My dad and my brothers used to go there, but in then children of our age is your age. We had to sit outside and eat biscuits, drink lemonade, but it was very happy area. Everybody was friendly.

Speaker 2: [01:34](#) How did you and your family feel when Wu was the class?

Speaker 1: [01:38](#) How did we feel? Well, I wasn't at home. I was in the hospital and didn't mean anything to me. I had not known what war was and I was very ill. my brothers or my parents were probably quite frightened because they were older and they would know more what it meant. And my dad had actually been in the war previously, the first world war he'd been a soldier. So as I say, going back to how I felt, I was only well puzzled because suddenly people came into the ward, to the children's hospital, ward started putting coats on, started wielding children away, and when they said we are going to be at war with another country, I, I didn't even realize what that meant. Probably because I wasn't very, well, you know, I was ill and then they said to me, you're going to go last because I don't need had a

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very bad operation two days before and before I could travel in, wasn't even an ambulance.

Speaker 1: [02:47](#) They had to take the stitches out from my side because if not, the cars weren't so smooth and happy, then you know, and therefore the, it might have been pulled apart. So they took the stitches out, which was very proud. I remember that was very painful and I remember screaming and I think that was because they left me till last because they knew that I would be like that. But as you say, how did I feel? It was really surprise, but I didn't know what it really meant to live in London. Well, when the war broke out, as I said, I wasn't there, but I did come back. I was brought back. So living in London, I lived in Kilburn lane and every night we had to go to a shelter in a yard. We had a yard with a shelter, which was a big wooden shed.

Speaker 1: [03:41](#) Rarely, but my dad and his friends put big sandbags all the way round to keep it quiet and protected. And I went to school every day and in this school in where we kept our coach and there were the pegs, there was a bench and underneath the bow, I don't know whether you do that now, it was a little wire cage where our shoes went and when it was the war, we had an a bomb and a rage was coming, planes were coming overhead. We had to go into the cloak room, lie down on the floor and put our heads in these little cages because they want you to our heads not to be bombed. But that was what it was like. There wasn't much food. Are you going to ask me about food or anything later? Yeah. Yeah. Um, now you probably get bananas and oranges.

Speaker 1: [04:32](#) We didn't have any bananas. Didn't even, you know, miss them because they were came from abroad and because of the war there was no ships coming with food. So we didn't have any oranges or bananas. We, our food was rationed only so much sugar. A week, only Mo much butter a week and we had a book or my parents, we had a book each and it had little chickens in it, like raffle tickets and each one of those was torn out every week when my mother did the shopping, so if like there were five of us, so she had five tickets and she took these to the shop and she got five little rations of butter and five little rations of sugar. And she was rash. It was called rationing. And then later we didn't have a car, but later Petrel was rationed. So you couldn't go far because you didn't have enough petrol to go far.

Speaker 1: [05:34](#) So if you say, what was it like? It was made you closer in you, you couldn't spread out. Like you'd probably go out a lot now

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you go out most days, most weekends we couldn't, didn't do that. We were very close. And that's what makes your family better because you're closer together and you sit together. Every evening we used to sit together for company, suppose company, another word for comfort. It was so nice to be a family. What did your parents do during the war? What did they do during the war where my dad was too old by then to go in the army, but he was what they called an air raid warden. And when the planes were local dropping bombs, there was this gang of people used to walk around. They can, sure people were safe and there were no fires. And the other thing, which you wouldn't, you know, you have curtains in your windows.

Speaker 1: [06:34](#) We hike what we call black out curtains. We had to black out the light from inside. So she was standing out there, you couldn't look inside. There was no light. And the air raid wardens had to go round making sure that people had Blacktown their windows because they were worried that the pilot in the plane seeing a light would throw a bomb. You know, drop a bomb on it. In fact, I can show you a picture of an air raid warden. That was how they walked around the streets. That man actually was a policeman that is a police uniform. But when he wasn't being a policeman, he had to wear this. What we called a tin helmet. You know about chin helmets? Yeah. That was the F bombs dropped or, and if then agave again, same as us putting our heads in the cages. They want you to make sure your head was all right. So that was my mother. She still carried on working in the shop, but she was, um, my brothers and sisters got older and they went to work by then cause their schools stopped. So that was, they were working. Mom. Dad was working. I was at school.

Speaker 2: [07:49](#) How did you feel when you first found out you were going to be evacuated?

Speaker 1: [07:55](#) Well, that was Russ said I was in hospital. So I was a very puzzled, very puzzled. Well, I didn't even know that what the word meant. And they didn't say that word to us. They didn't say, you're being evacuated. That I learned that later. They just used to say, you're having to go to another hospital because there's a war and we've got to empty all the hospitals because people are going to get hurt. So we want everybody who's in hospital now. And I went down into the country.

Speaker 2: [08:26](#) Tell us about the journey on your further at that.

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- Speaker 1: [08:29](#) The journey going while I was in a big car, um, lying down on the back sheet, still miserable, still crying because this hurt where I'd had the stitches out, didn't know where I was going. Oh you know, I was frightened barely. But when I got to the place again, Nika country house, it was actually another hospital, but country house shared a room with another girl. And because I was still very ill, I stayed in bed a lot for the first while, but it was, you know, different altogether and I didn't do much exploring cause I wasn't very well.
- Speaker 2: [09:11](#) Who were you evacuated
- Speaker 1: [09:14](#) with? Well, with the other children from the hospital. My family stayed at home in London and I went on my own to this place.
- Speaker 2: [09:22](#) How did you feel when you last saw your parents, when you would go then when you were getting
- Speaker 1: [09:29](#) well, others, I didn't know what was happening. I mean they were told I was going to this place so they were probably being grown up. They were probably more frightened than me cause I didn't really know. I didn't understand it. You know, it was all strange and a bit scary. But for them it would be really bad because I was the baby, the youngest and there I was going somewhere where they didn't know. So they were probably more frightened than me.
- Speaker 2: [10:00](#) Tell us about the things he took with you.
- Speaker 1: [10:03](#) That's fine with me. Well I didn't have much, just the theme I was on wearing in hospital probably some books and I was wearing glasses then I had to read with glasses cause I'd been in a long time. So lying on your back or you know, cheddar vision. Okay. So I was laying on my back reading so my eyes got bad. So really all I chalked with some books and my glasses, I expect the hospital took everything else that I needed.
- Speaker 2: [10:34](#) Well what's, what are you feeling at first?
- Speaker 1: [10:37](#) What was I feeling? Just as I said, I suppose a bit wondering that it's different when you're very ill, you don't realize what's going on. And I'd probably be given something, probably some medicine to make me feel, you know, not frightened. So I don't know a lot about how, what it was other than wondering where I was going.

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- Speaker 2: [11:04](#) Describe how you ended up with your first host family.
- Speaker 1: [11:09](#) With my first, first foster family where that was again the hospital, it was nurses, nurses and doctors were my foster family. I didn't actually go to other children or other parents. I was in hospital, so it was doctors and nurses were my family.
- Speaker 2: [11:26](#) What was life like with your VR?
- Speaker 1: [11:30](#) What was life like? Well, look for a little while, um, because I was ill, I didn't do much, but then there was lovely gardens in this place. So as I got better, I used to just go out and play with the other or not play with them, but talk to the other children and wander around the car. It's like almost like being in the country to me cause I've been in, in houses, no garden. And this was like, like I could see trees and things here it was, that was like a big garden where I was. So I spent a lot of time outdoors. The flight when it was a big country house, it had actually been a hospital but not like hospitals. We see it with like a big old house, um, rooms, a big room like this where we, we played and ads. We did everything in that one room. And then you went to bed in a small room with a note, as I say with another girl.
- Speaker 2: [12:29](#) What was school like?
- Speaker 1: [12:30](#) What was Scott? I didn't go to school. I didn't go to school at all till I came back from there.
- Speaker 1: [12:39](#) How are you treated in your new area? Very well. Very well indeed. Very well looked after. I must be because I've got better, you know, I was very ill. I've been, had been very ill, nearly died couple of times. So the fact that they got me better and made me still alive, a very old age, they must have treated me well. Mustn't they experienced in the countryside, in the countryside? Well, it just walking around really, there wasn't much else to do and um, they weren't, I can see all your lovely games, equipment and picnic stuff. It was very, very simple. You, you literally just walked around and perhaps threw a ball to each other.
- Speaker 2: [13:26](#) So I was like, Oh,
- Speaker 1: [13:29](#) that was about any friend you made. Any friends I made don't really remember. I know not any body I kept in touch with. I could tell you about someone I didn't like. Would that be all right? I'll tell you about someone I didn't know it was the dentist

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after a little while because I'd been there or not had very good food. My chief started going, so they said send you to the dentist. But he wasn't in the same house. It was in another building in, in that area. And I sat quite wondering, thinking of, right. And then this big, big, big man came in. Oh, it was so big, bald glasses. And he had a horrible Bush and he didn't call me by my name, Brenda. He said, Oh, nurse and I fed out. Honestly, I freaked out and ran out screaming. So they never sent me to the dentist ever again. And any way I wasn't there very long. I came back home. What happened to your phone?

Speaker 1: [14:33](#)

Well, they just got on with their lives. My brothers and sister had to leave school because they rolled a lot older than me and the scores for the older children, um, closed. If you were 15, they didn't, you didn't stay on the, the schools were closed so they all went to work. My sister went to work with my dad in a place called action. My brother went to work for a learn how to do engineering on motors in Kilburn, believe it or not. And my eldest brother was old enough to go in the Navy, so he went in the Navy. So I, you know, they, we just, they just got on with their lives, went to work, came back home at dry, wet to bed, got up, went to work. Quite ordinary. Really. Can you tell us about any anytime or cases with your parents while you were away?

Speaker 1: [15:34](#)

While I was away, it was sad. Again, not much money that didn't earn much money. Mum. You know, so they only came to see me once a week cause it was a train journey into the country. So my mum would come one week and my dad would come the next Sunday. So her mother came Sunday, whole week. And then my dad came the next Sunday. So that was really all I saw of them. One I was away anymore than you have experienced during the war. Uh, just trying to think. I wasn't there very long because I was unhappy that dentists, man, um, not many friends because they were older than me or I was the only one of my age and I wasn't allowed to play out night tall, you know, with games. I just had to sit and watch. So after about three or four months and I was going to be ill again and going to have another operation, they thought I would be better at home.

Speaker 1: [16:44](#)

Uh, don't to make you sad, but I was told it was because they thought I was going to die. Okay. You know, I didn't, but they thought I might. So they thought better for me to be at home, although it was dangerous at home with my parents. So that's why I came back. I wasn't away more than three or four months. What did you do when there was an era when there

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was an air raid? Um, we were quite near a station, Queens park station and there was a railway line and we were also in the other direction. You probably know Sainsbury's, that brick Grove where there was something called a gas Amita, which was where we all got the gas and there was big huge deems. And if they were hit by a bomb pow, you know, the whole area. So the planes used to try and hit the station and then traveled down in that direction to hit that.

Speaker 1: [17:47](#) So every night practically they came over our house and I actually saw an airplane. I would say, well it felt very low to me, but you know, I can't see under there. But it looked just up there and I saw the cross on the plane's wings and it went over. And that was where it was going towards Sainsbury's. But what we did do and this warning when we had this place in the garden, a big shed that my data may safe and we had bunk beds and we shared that with I think two other families, only the children slept in the beds, the mums and dads sat up, sat around drinking tea and you know, helping us if we were frightened. And then you've got annoys which told you that the air raid was gone, that these planes had gone, there was a noise that started it and annoys that, finished it. So we just, we were sleep probably.

Speaker 2: [18:46](#) What was it like when [inaudible]

Speaker 1: [18:49](#) when, when it was falling? It was CLO noise because they didn't actually fall near me. The nearest one was just near Queens park station. So that was a, say we're from here to here, a road practically. Um, and they didn't hit the station. They hit the police station. So we just heard. And because the nearest places to us where there was actually what they called guns to shoot the planes was a long way away. We didn't really even hear the guns, but the planes when they were low, it was really allows you, you knew they weren't far ahead above you, but the actual bonds when they fell, it was just a boom boom. And perhaps the ground shook, you know, perhaps you felt the ground shake.

Speaker 2: [19:43](#) Tell us about any friends or family who you were injured.

Speaker 1: [19:47](#) None of us, none of us were injured. Um, my brother was in the Navy. My, I think the nearest trouble was my dad and my sister who worked in a factory where they made parts for airplanes. So sometimes they had the feeling that they were being targeted, but, and sometimes when I was home from school,

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we'd hear bombs go and we lived upstairs. And I remember once my mom looking out and she could see in the distance fire and smoke and she started crying and she said, Oh look, you know, that's your dad, that's your dad, that's all dairy. And I said, no, isn't, I didn't know. I was just trying to make her feel better. So I said, no, no, no, it isn't. No it isn't. And it wasn't, it wasn't them. So none of us were actually injured at all.

Speaker 2: [20:47](#)

What did you

Speaker 1: [20:48](#)

and your family do when you heard bombs? Well, we really, nothing you could do. It wasn't anything you could do. You're frightened obviously cause you didn't know. But as long as that noise wasn't very close, you really didn't have to be frightened. Although it was horrible for other people. You knew someone somewhere was getting hurt. It wasn't you though. Therefore, you know, you were thankful.

Speaker 2: [21:17](#)

What were your feelings when you came back to London after being matured?

Speaker 1: [21:22](#)

The, I was very happy, very happy to be back with my family and um, I had the other operations so I then came home and I stayed home then, so I was quite happy to come back.

Speaker 2: [21:36](#)

How has London changed while you were there?

Speaker 1: [21:38](#)

Well, there was houses not far from me that weren't there anymore, you know, houses that had actually been bombed. Um, I've just trying to think. The police station that my church right where I live that had caught fire that had gone well, it was there, but you know, you couldn't use it anymore. My school was still there, so that was where I, you know, I didn't go til I was nine anyway, but the school was still there and um, I suppose that was, it really wasn't a lot of difference where I lived. Other than the few houses that had got bombed.

Speaker 2: [22:13](#)

How did your foster family feel when you were leaving?

Speaker 1: [22:18](#)

Well, because it was the hospital. They, it wasn't like, um, people, family, you know, it was as I say, doctors and nurses, so it was a little bit different to what probably a lot of people told you. I can't help that. That's the way it was.

Speaker 2: [22:34](#)

Did you stay in touch with any of your foster family?



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- Speaker 1: [22:38](#) No, not at all. No.
- Speaker 2: [22:41](#) Do you celebrate the end of the war?
- Speaker 1: [22:44](#) How'd you just celebrate it? I'm just trying to think. I'm sure we did. Lots of people went down to Trafalgar square. I think we just went out in the street and all people who lived around or the neighbors, we all just ran out into the street and I spent the man drank some beer. I don't know about that. I been asked about, we add lemonade, but everyone don'ts. I remember that we would dance you rounded circles and saying hooray, hooray. And I'm talking about, you know, people who weren't there perhaps who either had got killed or were away as soldiers or something. So it was, it was happy. Yeah. P you know, thankful. You can say the war is finished. Well though, when you're a child it doesn't mean so much to you is when you're older. You know, I finished and I went on too long. I thought I've been on too long. Sorry.
- Speaker 2: [23:40](#) Looking back, how do you think your experience as a black,
- Speaker 1: [23:48](#) I think it has made me able to get on with different things that happen and to meet different people and being away from home is quite scary. But if you can get over that being scary, it makes you strong. Okay. People think because they think I'm not afraid of things anymore. I face up to them because that's the way it is, isn't it? If you can't, if you can't change anything, that's all awful. It's best to try and get on with it. And my mom used to say to me, just get on with it. And that's why I try and do still. What's your strongest memory from the war? My strongest memories from embassy in this plane come over that that is very strong in my mind. I remember that time when my mom was leaning out the window crying because she thought my dad and sister were up. I remember going in this bag, black car that I don't want to remember, but it's there and I remember that horrible dentists. I could never forget it. It was horrible.
- Speaker 3: [24:56](#) That's good. Thank you for coming. Any questions from the group? Did do I keep asking? Did you ever see the [inaudible]? Did I ever see the V one or
- Speaker 1: [25:11](#) Oh done. They were things that were called, um, the, they didn't have the, there'd be ones in the V2 Oh, sorry. The V ones in the V two. Yeah. We, um, heard them and do you know about them that they made? They had an engine noise and when the

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engine stopped, I mean they didn't drop like that. They, they went like that and we used to count after that noise stopped. The longer you could count, the further away you knew it would be. But I didn't actually have any, uh, really close. No, I don't remember any being really bad.

Speaker 3: [25:51](#) Yeah. The questions,

Speaker 1: [25:53](#) I probably talk too much and if we haven't covered, I'm just trying to think. Um, well no, because mine's slightly different to people who went away to families. Mine was a D or different to that. So it's, um, for me, I remember as I said before, being uncomfortable, being scared, but being looked after, that was the main thing. It wasn't the family that looked after me. It was the nurses and the doctors. And, uh, I, as I say, I, I didn't die. I'm still here many, many years later, 80 years later. Yes. 80 years later. So, um, I, I've heard people talk about being evacuated. Only a few of them seem to like it. My husband, who I didn't know at the time, but he went to an answer. He didn't like it. My very best friend, she went to, uh, grandmother's in the isle of white. She didn't like it because you weren't in your own home. That's it. You weren't with your family and family, you know, is what makes us what we are, isn't it really? Got another question in the hospital was over-treated badly. No, no. I can't say that at all, other than that aura, but old dentist. It was the one that I really didn't like. But no, I wasn't treated badly. I was looked after and as I've said couple of times I'm still alive, so I must've been treated well.