

Diana Derioz

Thank you very much Diana for talking with me today.

**You're welcome.**

And sharing your memories of your time at Greenham common. So what made you decide to join Greenham common?

**Well, I've been a pacifist all my life. I went on Aldermaston marches when I was in my early teens with my mother and my brother. And I had been on a lot of different demonstrations - I was used to it. And then I set up Totnes Women for Peace at the Totnes Women's Centre, which our women's group had set up. And we did a lot of demonstrations with that - local demonstrations. I've got photos of that in here. And then I went to the first big Greenham demonstration, which was the women joining hands round the base, which was in 1982. And that was it. I mean, after I went on that I was, I was, I was hooked as they say, because it was just amazing meeting you all those women that were so keen, and so fired up to do this work. And I've always been anti-nuclear, which, of course was the Aldermaston marches. And it was part of that, the whole cruise missile thing, the fact it was an American base on our common land. And the fact that it was women - because I'd been on a lot of mixed demonstrations, and there'd been a lot of violence, um, which was mainly led by the men. And I thought it could be very different - women could do it differently. And indeed Greenham common, was years and years of passive resistance. And that's how it won, because we were persistent, and we were stubborn, and we stuck with it. So I lived part time at Greenham for 2 or 3 years, and my mother went to prison. I went to court, I was fined.**

What did you go to court for?

**I went to court because I was caught with a friend clipping a hole in the fence, which we regularly just to show them that their fences were quite**

useless. It took a few minutes to clip a hole in the fence and just go in, you know, and we did it all the time - it was part of our, our daily, daily work there, really - was, was showing them that the fences didn't work. In fact, there was a wonderful demonstration called the Black Cardigan. And basically we, we had - all the peace groups got messages saying, we're going to have a party this weekend, bring a black cardigan. And the black cardigan was code for bring a pair of clippers. So we all bought these huge wire clippers - none of us have ever used wire clippers in our lives before. Went up to Greenham all wearing black - black cardigans. And then we stood outside the base, and we had soldiers the other side looking very nervous because they knew something was going on, but they didn't know what it was - they thought we were having a party, so they weren't very prepared. And then at the moment that someone said 'Right, now!' We all stepped forward and began clipping the wires that held the fence to the posts. And the, the soldier opposite me said 'Oh my god they've started bringing down the fence. They're armed...' well they didn't say armed, but '...they've got tools, and they know how to use them' and a minute later the whole fence, the whole area of fence that we were around, just folded down gently as if it was meant to. And then we all sat on the fence. And we brought down a lot of - I mean most of the fence that day. But it was really funny because I'd never used this before, but it was like cutting butter. It was like cutting butter, it just went 'choom, choom, choom'. So we had a lot of wonderful actions. There was an Easter bunny party, which was we made a big hole in the fence in several different places. And we all went in, and there were several Easter bunnies - women dressed up Easter - fluffy bunnies and chicks. And we just ran around with soldiers pursuing us, and we were put into a big hangar - there must have been at-least 100 of us, I imagine. And then they picked us up, and took us one by one and put us into jeeps and buses and carried us up out of the base. One of the interesting things here was that the engines always broke down when we were around, it was really funny. We always used to say 'Put energy into telling the engines to break down', you know, we do a lot of that, or 'Put energy into an invisibility spell' - several times when I was caught, and I ran for it and flung myself down in the bushes right near the fence I would say, 'I'm invisible. I'm

invisible', and they never found me. So you know, we really believed in these spells. But anyway, the jeep broke down and I said to the bloke that was driving the jeep, 'Have you noticed when we were around, things break down?' he said 'We have noticed.' Because you know when the cruise missiles used to come out of the base, which was usually in the evening - the whole point about cruise missiles was you bring them out of the base, you take them somewhere, and that's where the cruise missiles will be fired from. They're not fired from the base, they're fired from other places. So no-one can - so their missiles can't find us apparently. And so every time they came out of the base, often they would break down and have to - in-fact, I was there once when the whole thing broke down, and they had to tow them back into the base again. But if not, we would follow them in tiny cars all the way, and then we'd follow them back. In fact, they realised very quickly that it wouldn't work. You know, it didn't work because they're - all their strategies were been ruined by us. And another thing that we often did was we would padlock the gates. And of course, there were, I think 12 or 13 gates around the base, and they all had to be open for all their stuff to come and go, and we would padlock them - often padlock ourselves to them, and so they spent a lot of time removing them, removing people. I've got a lovely letter here actually about an action that I did. I know I'm talking very fast - I always do. I always get overexcited. I've got a lesson that I sent - it was an Easter action at Greenham, and I sent it to my children. And I say 'The week Greenham over Easter', and that was April '83. 'The week of Easter was a bit tough. The weather was icy, far colder than any have been when I've been here before. The first night Fenella - who was my 3 and a half year old - and I froze, although we cuddled together for warmth, because the ground was so bitterly cold it crept into the sleeping bag. The next night we got hold of some straw and packed it underneath the tent which helped. The tent stood up well to its first trials. We had sleet, hail, rain and gale force winds, some holiday - exclamation mark.' My children were in France with their dad, my sons, and I had my daughter with me. 'The second day there joined a blockade of the Green Gate, which consisted of sitting with about 200 other women, which was, which was peak hour. Sometimes we're only about 20. And we sang songs, spoke to the television and press, wove

webs for keeping cars out. The blockade started at 5 in the morning and continued for 24 hours. At about 3 in the afternoon, the police came up the road with a purposeful tread, and we all lay down and began to sing feminist peace songs. And our favourite song was (sings) You Can't Kill the Spirit: It is like a mountain. Old and strong. She goes on and on and on, you can't kill the spirit' etc etc. We sang that a lot, and we sang it as a round. So we were singing songs while we're on the ground. 'At that very moment, as if orchestrated for us, the hail began to fall and continued for about 15 minutes and then became rain. The police started picking us up, and dumping us in the gutters at the side of the road, which were flowing with rain, and then turned back to get more but they reckoned without the energy of the women who we immediately got up and went back and sat down again. This went on for about an hour, and the police - all 20 of them were busy picking up some 30 women and weren't getting anywhere they paused, looked around red faced with exertion and realised they'd got nowhere, and hadn't a chance of removing all of us. Clearly they had orders not to arrest us all. So they gave it up. It was an amazing exercise in nonviolent resistance.' Now that happened all the time. And it was about nonviolent resistance. We want the, we want the common back for us and we're going to do anything, anything we can to make life difficult for you. I felt very sorry for the police. Because they were the ones that had to do everything this side of the fence. The other side of the fence there were British officers and American officers. And they made absolutely sure we never saw or had close contact with any of the American officers, because they were terrified of an international incident if one of the American officers got too close to us. So most of the soldiers we saw on the other side, were British soldiers patrolling the fence just to keep an eye on us. And in fact once I- well often we would talk to them but once I talked to one of them said 'Hey, how you doing?' He said (whispers) 'My mum's coming up for the demonstration this weekend.' And I thought that was so, he was so sweet - he said 'Really looking forward to seeing her!' (Laughs). Another time I work in the middle of the night and I could hear rain - what I thought was rain pattering on the, on the top of my - I had a bender by then. We made benders with er, sticks that we found, or branches that we managed to

bend, and then we put plastic over it - several layers of plastic. And then we put blankets on the inside, because if you were in there for any amount of time, condensation would start to drip on you. So it was to keep us dry. And then I heard a policeman this side saying to the soldier on the other side, telling him off roundly, because he was peeing on the benders. And often you would get this - that the police would actually stand up for us when we were asleep at night, because they were patrolling on this side of the fence. It was a very interesting dynamic. And if ever there was a big demonstration, the police would have to join hands on this side of the fence, and stand between us and the fence. So a lot of the actions that we took were at night, when there weren't people around, and no police.

So how did you cope with having children at the camp? What arrangements were there for them?

There weren't a lot of children there. I went up for long weekends - I went up Fridays. I drove up from here - it was about 2 hours to Greenham from here, to Newbury. So I would drive up on the Friday afternoon, because I was working - I had a knitwear business in the women's centre. And then we would camp overnight, and then we would do the demonstrations on the weekend, and then we'd come back on the Sunday evening. And Fenella would sometimes go with me but not always. Sometimes she would stay with her dad, because it wasn't - you know, I mean, that was very rare for her to be there when it was that cold - all the winter demonstrations I did without her. And she came to a lot of the big ones, because some of them were great. I mean, we had a wonderful - um, a dragon, we called it dragon day, where we all sewed banners, and I've got pictures of them here. Sweet or knitted - I knitted my banner because I knitwear for the women for peace. And then we all went up with our banners. We spent the whole day sewing them all together until we made a long, long dragon. And that was taken in exhibition all around the country, which again, you see, we did some amazing actions. And guess what, there were no press there that weekend, because it wasn't a violent protest - or it wasn't, there wasn't confrontation. They only came from the, for the protests when there

**was some form of confrontation. Which I thought was such a pity, because it was so creative and it was so beautiful - but it did go into the Carry Greenham Home video. Did you know about that?**

Yes, I had heard about that.

**Peggy Seeger came down and sang the song that she written - Carry Greenham Home, which is wonderful. And Beeban Kidron was there. This was her first film. She was still student, I think. And she filmed her, and she filmed a lot. She was there when my mother was in court. And I spoke on camera at that point. And, er...**

So your mother was with you at Greenham as well?

**She, yeah, she came to all the major demonstrations with me. And then before I went to live there, this was. And then she was in court for dancing in the base. She climbed over the fence at night. We talked about this together, and because I had children, I couldn't afford to go to Holloway for - I think she went for 3 weeks in the end - 2 weeks? So we decided she would do it. I mean, she decided she would do it. We didn't, because I thought it could be really difficult. She was 63 at the time. But she did it. I was there when - the night before she went. It was really interesting because she was really strong. And then that night we were sharing a room in in one of the supporters houses in Newbury, and she trod on her glasses and broke them, and she sat on the bed and cried, and it was because she suddenly realised she would have glasses that weren't functioning properly, um, for her time in prison, which could be really difficult. And in fact, we managed to mend them with sellotape.**

And what was life like? Did you go and visit her in Holloway?

**I wasn't able to. My sister lived in London, and visited her and I've got - again I've got a letter from her here about her time in Holloway. And she did passive resistance while she was in prison, and got everyone very annoyed. All the women did while they were there.**

Would you like to share something...

**Yeah, of-course.**

...Of your mother's letter? So your mother's name is?

**Bersha Heathcote (spelt phonetically). There's the (references image), there's the women dancing on the base. So they climbed over the fence with blankets - over the barbed wire. That's my mother. And that's, that was them dancing on the bunkers at dawn inside the base. So they all went, and I can't remember how many were but you can see there there are quite a lot of them. 50? 80? And they all went into court on the same day.**

Were they all sent to prison?

**They were all sent to prison. Yeah, it was the first big demonstration and the first time they got into the base in like that, and the first time they decided to make an example of them all. So Ursula had - a local paper wrote about her and she wrote a letter.**

That's an interesting headline.

**Yes 'Gran's Strip Ordeal' - that was the local Herald Express. Which is what happened when she went into Hollo..into, into Greenham. And that's my letter again. So that's a bit of her letter there where she says... oh, I can't really read it. Anyway, she, she demonstrated while she was in prison, she refused - she did passive resistance, she refused to be strip searched, and they made a huge fuss about it. And, you know, she said the whole thing about Holloway was humiliation. They worked on humiliating people. So that's why they would do strip searches, and they would regularly try and humiliate them. So it was a horrid experience - it really was awful. And then I went to court for, as I say, cutting a hole in the fence. And that was something else I wanted to show you. And I went to court in in Totnes, because we made a point of bringing**

**Greenham home, which was - that was our banner for the Totnes Women of Peace, for the for the dragon day. And that was our courtroom after my trial. So some people came down from Greenham, some women friends of mine came down from Greenham, and they sprayed 'Greenham women everywhere', 'Bring Greenham home', and 'Take the toys from the boys' all over the courthouse and it was there for a couple of weeks. And all the kids going to Keviccs, the comprehensive, had to walk past the courtroom, so we thought it was very good. And that was my bender. I called mine 'Chez Moi' - at home!**

Lovely name.

**So they would get rid of them - every now and then they would come, and they would clear everything, and then they would - and so we'd have to start all over again. We started in tents and we ended in tents.**

And were you at a particular gate?

**I was at Orange Gate. I started at Green Gate, but it was very damp - it was in the woods and I just thought no. I woke up one morning and the whole of my tent - I was covered, my feet were in a pool of water, it was too damp for me. They were very stalwartly, the Green Gate, and so I went to Orange Gate, and I was there, which was just one gate around from the Main Gate. The Main Gate was just full of reporters all the time, and I couldn't stand that.**

And so you've spoken about your relationship with the police. How about the relationship with the locals, with the local residents?

**We didn't see them. We didn't see them. Unless we did a demo - a march. I mean, I did a march from which started in Cornwall and went all the way to Greenham. And I did, I did bits of it. I did days here and there all the way up. And I did the last bit that went through, um not er - what's it called again? I've lost its name, you know, anyway, the local town, and we were very unpopular. And we had marvellous supporters there - who made their houses available to us when we needed them,**



and gave us lots of support. But on the whole, the press was so awful. I mean, the press was just...

In what way were they awful?

Oh, they just said the most awful things about us. You know, they made up stories. They made out that we were, we were violent and we were everything - well, you know what social media's like now, although I don't take part in any of it, um it was like that - the press were like that, they were gutter press. They just told stories against us all the time. Obviously the papers like the Guardian that were very good, but, and they believed it, they believed a lot of it because - so every now and then they would come past the Main Gate, and they would throw their rubbish out, for instance, or they would throw bins out, or you know, um, which is a bit dispiriting. But then we had this marvellous support from, from the peace groups all over the country that would descend with vans and cars, and anything they had - and they would just bring out everything they had. So they gave us sleeping bags, they gave us boots, they gave us clothes, they gave us waterproof, they gave us Gore-tex, Gore-tex sleeping bags, which were - you remember I said I, I woke up with my feet in water? Well, it was a Gore-tex sleeping bag, so my feet were in water, but they were warm. And that was the Gore-tex because it breathes, you see. And we couldn't have afforded those things. We didn't afford those things. And I first ate Greek yogurt at Orange Gate, and I remember thinking this is divine. I'd never eaten it before - and that was a group that brought that, and then people would turn up, like Julie Christie turned up with a van from Wales, and full of goods for us and, and Tony Benn turned up several times, you know. A lot of politicians came down. Paul, Linda McCartney came down with a van as well. A lot of well known people that really supported us and that was, that was a wonderful, it kind of made up for the bad press, because they knew what we were doing, especially other women knew what we were doing, you know.

And so how were the daily activities at the camp organised, or at the gate? You know who did the cooking?

We spent a lot of time around fires - sitting around fires, but trying to avoid smoke - it was always smoky. So the smoke would come in your face, you would move, and then it would go 'errrr', and then it'd go in that face over there, so you can move back to there. I've never spent so long avoiding, trying to avoid smoke. But conversations were absolutely wonderful. I've never taken part in so many creative conversations, you know - because women were from everywhere. We had American women, we had Australian women. We had local women. We had women from all over the country - like myself from Devon, and we talked about what was going on where we were and, and the kind of, and what our peace groups were doing, and our plans for the future. And any other protests we were doing at the same time. And also, um, we had the miners' wives came down, because the strikes were happening, of course - that were coming to an end at that time. And that was amazing as well, because they said 'You know, we thought it would be the worst thing in the world that the mines would be shut down, and of-course we were all oppose to Maggie Thatcher shutting down the mines.' But in fact it was shitty work you know, it's the worst work you can do going down coal mines, and they said 'It's changed our relationships with our husbands - they're not exhausted and ill any more. They're helping in the house. They're, they're having a relationship with children.' And of-course, what happened in the valleys - they became tourist places, they became green instead of being these coal tips, you know. And that was interesting seeing that change over happening, and talking about that with them. So yeah, so we were round fires, we were sitting around fires we had, we had pits to go to the toilet, which were not good. And I think now you know, because I've lived in, in I lived in New Zealand for 7 years at the beginning of this century, and we, we were a solar powered community. And we had compost toilets, which were just amazing. You know, they had, we had bark mulch, it was never smelly, it rotted down, we did it in big blue bins, and you would fill the bin, and then you would put it aside. And then I think it was as much as a month later, you could put it over the trees, and it had all rotted down. I mean, and it made me really understand about compost toilets. Whereas all we had was this pit in the ground with a with a plank going across it, which was very, you

**know, very, we were all worried about falling into it. And then the helicopters would come over at night often, and circle with their search lights - deliberately to humiliate us, and to wake us up if we were asleep.**

And so what medical facilities were there at the camp?

**Do you know, I haven't the faintest idea. I think probably if anything came up we went to the local doctors, and the local dentists. Must have been - I can't remember anyone getting hurt, or being ill. And of-course, I was only there for the weekend so I wouldn't - long weekends.**

I just wondered whether people were very stressed with being disturbed at night, and not being able to get their proper sleep because of the evictions, and just wondered how the community cope?

**It was incredibly stressful at the Main Gate, because they had lots of press, so they also got the most, the most, um, what's the word, I can't find the word - but women that were a bit 'eeeuughh', you know, liked drama. So there was lots of drama going on at the Main Gate all the time. But you know, people who didn't like it moved away to one of the other gates. On the whole the other gates - of-course there were the weekends, so there were the weekend demonstrations - the big ones, like the Arms around the Base, and the Black Cardigan and the Dragon. And there were many more. But on the whole, we were women sitting around a fire, cooking food for each other, and telling stories, and singing songs, and it was fantastic.**

So how and why do you think the decision was taken for Greenham to become women only?

**That was very early on. I think the march that took place coming down was mixed. And then they had a mixed camp for a short time. And then the men got very confrontational, and the women asked them to leave - is what I remember. I can't, you know, don't quote me on that. (Laughs). But that is what I remember is that the women said, 'Look, why don't you go down to Portland Down?' - where there was another camp, 'And**

**we'll make this a women only?' And then it became women only from then on, and the Hands around the Base, I remember - which was the first really big demonstration, was women only. And from then on it was women only, so boys came to demonstrations. My younger son came to a couple. But on the whole, it was for that reason, it was because even though there was confrontation, there was far less - it was much more about passive resistance.**

And so how have the experience at the camp changed your relationship with men or authority figures?

**Well, you know, I realised very early on - my mother was a pacifist all her life, and my father was in the army - the Indian Army, and then the Australian Army - because my mother was Australian. And they were always in conflict about that. And I thought, here I am, you know, supporting my mother on this side - the women, and there are soldiers on the other side - my father. And I thought that's really interesting. So I think that was what part of my struggle was about, you know, the war. The way men go to war, the whole, the whole war effort, the whole fact that we could feed every child in the world if we weren't spending the money on arms. You know, I get really mad when I hear about things like cruise missiles. The money we put into armaments is just criminal. And, you know, I don't I don't need it. I don't understand it. I really believe in passive resistance. And even though people say 'If it weren't for the war, you know, we would..', I think, well, you know, look, what Gandhi did with passive resistance, you know, he got the Empire out, it was amazing. And that's why Greenham worked as well, because it was passive resistance. It wouldn't have worked otherwise, I think.**

So how do you feel about the way Greenham is being represented in popular culture, in films, in books, in plays?

**There hasn't been much - I've been amazed at how, you know, as women, we're not good at pushing ourselves. We're not good at making, I mean, that's changing - I really understand that. But we're not good at saying 'Hey, look over here. There's stuff going on over here', you know,**

and I think that's why to a certain degree, it's, it has got buried - as you said there's hardly anything that's available. There aren't ongoing exhibitions, there aren't ongoing theatre performances - it's quite amazing. And yet it worked. I mean, it worked. We got the American army out, you know, which is pretty extraordinary. Of all the demonstrations that I ever did, and all the dozens of marches that I've done against GM, against, against climate change, against, and working for Amnesty International and sending endless emails to fascists all over the world - particularly to America, I often felt none of that did anything, you know, whereas Greenham, I had that sense of it worked, you know, it actually worked, and it was worth it. It was worth every minute. And it showed how passive resistance can work.

So why do you think it hasn't been reflected more in popular culture?

It's hard to tell. I think the answer I already gave - that women haven't been really good at, at um - they hide their lights under bushels, you know? I think it must be that, because otherwise you would have thought it would be far more, far more um, I mean, Carry Greenham Home - I took the video round the whole of Devon and into Cornwall, to peace groups and showed it, and then we had discussions in the circle - talking about Greenham and what life was like there. And that was great, that went on - I did that for years after, after I'd been living there. And it was a way of keeping it alive. And having the video was fantastic for that. With all I mean, have you seen the video?

Yes, I have.

Yeah. Because it's very creative. You know, it's very exciting. And there's the music in it, and everything about it was very vibrant and very alive. And the peace groups used to think ah, at last - something is, something is changing here, you know?

So what else do you think needs to be done in order to see it represented accurately in popular culture?

Well, I would love to see more books about it. I would love to see more, um, I would love to see a good film - other than Carry Greenham Home made about it, and I would really love to see a theatre piece. That's why I asked you right at the beginning 'Are they going to do a theatre piece?' I think it would make amazing theatre. You know, the whole, the quiet sitting around the fire, and the conversations that we had, and then, you know, the 'Right we're up for another, you know, going through into the base, cut a hole and in we go' - and then coming out and, and back to the fire again, cook another meal. You know? It was very interesting that contrast between the two all the time. And we got press from all over the world. I mean, I remember being interviewed by East German, East German television, you know, and, and we had people from Russia. So it really did fire up the imagination of a lot of people - all these women's sitting in camps for years and years and years. It was an amazing thing to do.

So, what do you think we need to do in order to get the younger generation to be aware of what the Greenham women did? I always find it interesting, particularly....

**Well look what they're doing...**

Yeah, so why do you think it is that the Suffragist movement - um, young people seem to know about that, but not about the Greenham common women?

Hhm, that's an interesting question. I mean, we we talked when we set up the Women's Centre in Totnes, and it was the most successful Women's Centre of its time, because of the way we set it up. We set it up with a women's bookshop at the bottom, and workshops. I had - we had Greed Shoes, who was making shoes, and I had my knitwear business. And there was someone making smocks, Andrea making smocks, and we had a carpenter in there. And then the top we had meeting rooms, and in the back we set up a cafe, which interesting is a small French cafe now actually, in the centre of town, on the plains. And we thought we were you know, we were the first among the first

feminists, even though we were reading all these feminist writers like Adrienne Rich, and wonderful, wonderful writers - Dale Spender. Um, and they all talked about how every time there was a movement, it came up, and then it was suppressed. And then it had to start all over again. So we were constantly starting again - as if nothing had ever happened before. In fact, Dale Spender wrote a wonderful book saying 'Women have ideas, and what men have done to them'. And it was all about women, women writers who were famous in their time. And then the minute they died, they were buried by male scholarship. I mean, it was really - well, we all know that now. I mean, Women's Hour now has constantly someone new who's just been discovered, who, who, who discovered something in her time, was a scientist, was an engineer, who was a this that and the other, and her brother took the credit - her husband took the credit, her son took the credit. There was always someone else that took the credit, or her partner took the credit. I mean, Marie Curie is one of the few, and that must have been because her husband allowed her to have the credit, you know, but it's quite extraordinary the way this has happened. And of course, the reason the Suffragettes are so famous is because we didn't have the vote. We had no say, we had no power. And it's that sense of, of power that we got back at Greenham, I think. There was something else in your question that interests me that I haven't addressed yet. What was the rest of the question? Oh yes, young women, young people today, I mean, look what they're doing, you know - I was walking on Aldermaston marches, they're going on marches for for climate change, which I think is absolutely wonderful, and quite right, too, because when you're a teenager, you have lots of energy. You get the sense that you've got absolutely no power, you're told to do O' Levels and A'Levels when you want to be doing dozens of other things, you know - expressing your life force. And climate change is a great thing for them. And the whole movement around guns in America, you know by those young schoolchildren who were so amazing. And again, you know what happened in New Zealand and the fact that they instantly changed their gun laws - I just thought that was so wonderful - I lived there for 7 years, so wonderful as an example to America who had, I mean, they have these school shootings every year, and sometimes twice a year. It is

unbelievable. If this was happening in England, I would have chained myself to the door at 10 Downing Street, I wouldn't allow it to happen. It is extraordinary. And what women have had to put up with over there, you know. There was a wonderful demonstration in America years ago, where women went to the Pentagon, and they brought baby shoes with them, and they put baby shoes all the way around the Pentagon, and it was to show how many children, and tiny children - toddlers had been killed with guns, and it was an amazing demonstration. You don't hear about it nowadays - god.

So what do you think the police and the lawmakers learned from Greenham common? And perhaps reflected...

You know, I mean, the police were amazing. I have huge respect for the police still, they were amazing. They really were. I mean, but then I've never been black in London. I remember walking through I think it was Brixton in London with an Australian friend of mine from Greenham - we'd gone up for something. And a young black man was walking in front of us, and the police car stopped, two policemen got out and they started accosting him. And so we went, we carried on and we went up to them. We said 'Excuse me. Why are you accosting this man?' And they look very embarrassed, and they said, 'We're just finding out...' and they couldn't think of anything to say - they'd just seen a black man on the street, and they were, and he was young - it wasn't anything to do with knives or anything. They were just accosting him, stopping him, and they got back into the car and went away. And I've never been stopped and searched. And they didn't ask us to produce our credentials or anything. And I thought that's what life is like for our, our people on the streets. You know, it's extraordinary, really. Sorry, what was the question?

So what do you think the police and the lawmakers learned from Greenham?

But, there was one time when I was arrested by the police at Greenham, and it was the time in-fact that I was, that I went to court for - which was



a friend of mine and I had, had done a hole in the fence. And then we were immediately arrested, and taken in the van and all the way to the station. The men in the van were laughing and joking about us, and saying 'Eeurgh, isn't that an awful smell? What do you think it is? I don't know, but it's pretty...' that kind of thing. And I said, with my best English accent 'Why do you think you're going to get away with this? How do you think - why do you think you can treat us like this and be this rude?' And one of them said 'We're SPG', which was special, special police brigade or special, maybe SGP - I can't remember, anyway something like that, but they were special forces. And they kept them away from Greenham as much as they could because they were such a violent, um I was going to say uneducated - I don't know if they were educated or not, but they were awful. They were truly awful, left such a bad taste in my mouth. It was just awful. I complained, I put in an official complaint, but of course, I don't think it went anywhere. But it was the only time in all those years that I was treated with total disrespect, you know, and, um, and I felt often that there were police that had daughters and mothers and sisters that were there, you know, and that many of them were sympathetic. Like that policeman who spoke up about that man peeing on my bender. You know, that was lovely. I remember going back to sleep feeling safe. And that was really nice.

And what happened to you when you went to court?

Well, we - I started to tell you. At first we all went to court in Newbury, and then they got overloaded. And we asked at the same time, if we could go to court in our local boroughs, because we wanted to bring it back, so it would be - so that I wouldn't be tried over there, I'd be tried in Totnes. And so local people came and protested, the local peace group came, the courtroom was full. They heard my speech - because we always stood up and gave speech about peace. And then I was, I was given a fine, which I refused to pay. And then I would have gone to prison, but the local peace group said 'Look, you know, you can't afford to go to prison with your kids. So why don't we pay for you?' and I paid with a cheque on a piece of wood this big - about 3' long, and the

**cheque, I just painted the whole check, as it would look. And it's perfectly legal, and handed it over to the police when they came to get it. So I don't know how they cashed it, goodness knows.**

But how much was the fine?

**I can't remember. It wasn't a lot. It wasn't a lot, maybe £125, something like that. I don't know.**

But in those days, it would have been quite a lot of money to find?

**Yes.**

So you painted a cheque on a piece of wood?

**Yeah, it was a way of protesting to the end, you know.**

And presumably it was cashed?

**Oh, I'm sure they cashed it. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, otherwise they would come back again.**

That's a good story.

**I know. There were lots of things like that!**

So how were decisions made at Greenham ?

**It was always, I mean, most of it was women getting together and acting on consensus. It was always consensus, as far as I could see. I mean, I do remember going to meeting at the Main Gate about a demonstration that was going to happen that day. And one of the women there said, 'There aren't any women, there aren't any local women here, you know, what's going on?' And another woman who I knew a little and really liked, she said 'You don't understand, you know, every woman here is here because she believes in Greenham, you know, whatever, wherever**

she comes from, or whoever she is'. And that was lovely, because you would often get this sense of, um, that there were people who lived there all the time, and then there people like me who were part time, and then there were people who came on the big demonstration - as far as I can said was concerned everyone makes sacrifices, you know, it was difficult for everyone. And for a lot of people who lived there all the time it became a way of life. That was their life. It wasn't, it wasn't as if they were giving up an awful lot - although I'm sure some of them were. But that sense of belonging to your gate was really lovely. So we would get together and decide what we were going to do that weekend. And if there was a big demonstration, whether we were going to go on it or not, whether it was going to take part in all the gates or not. Um, and I love that - I love the consensus. I mean, I was already part of the Women's Centre where we did everything by consensus.

And so it was a very effective method?

Very effective, incredibly effective. I don't remember ever having situation where there was anything that was unresolved - we always managed to resolve what needed resolving. It was really great. I still believe in consensus - takes longer, it does to take longer consensus, because you've got to get everyone's agreement.

So how did your Greenham experience impact on your personal life then, and today?

Okay, can I just put that question aside for a minute because something came up while I was thinking about consensus.

Yes.

When I lived in um, New Zealand they have MMP, which is proportional representation. And their Green Party not only had 7 members in Parliament because I've always been Green. But as well as that our local MP was Jeanette Fitzsimons, who was head, who was co head of the Green Party. They did what the Greens in Germany do, which is

one male, one female - always, they always have two, a couple who are heading the party, which is what I think Labour should do. I think it'd be absolutely great if they had a man and a woman. Anyway, so whenever there was an issue that was important to me, like GM food, which by the way they completely banned - any seeds, any anything in New Zealand, nuclear power - completely banned, and they've banned all American submarines and, and ships from fuelling in New Zealand. They have huge policy on safe waters around a no fishing area, because they've got a lot of unusual dolphins and whales. And whenever there was an issue that affected me, there was always someone who stood up in Parliament and spoke for me. Do you know, in all my years living here in Devon, I had never experienced that - because our local MP is Conservative. I voted Labour sometimes, Green always, and never got the sense of being heard in, in Parliament because it was a - and same now, we have a Conservative well actually she just left the Conservative party, but she's very conservative. And I'm very much in favour of MMP - proportional representation - it means everyone feels represented, you know, even if you've got a right wing, you know, um, a Nigel Farage party - a UKIP member in there, it's only one or two you never, it'll never be more. And, you know, even UKIP supporters have a right to be supported, you know. So I just um, want to say I think, I think that's really important. I think that way of living, and that way of working is really important for government, but of-course they don't like it, because they have to talk about things more. And they, and they don't have that sense of confrontation to the same degree. I mean, you must have listened to Parliament. I mean, they just yell at each other, and they just go 'Boo boo', or 'Yeah, yeah'. And they talk through each other, it's like a boys club. It sounds awful. And I just think we've got to get equal representation.

And how do you think we'll get that?

I think the more women there are in Parliament, the more likely we are to get MMP, to get proportional representation. We've just got to keep pushing for women. You know, even, even though we've only got a Conservative MP, she is a woman and I'm glad about that, you know,

I've forgotten her name temporarily, you know. But she's very vocal. She's an ex GP. And she talks on National Health, but the trouble is, aargh, she's, a Conservative! She could be doing doing such wonderful things with National Health, you know?

So how do we get young people interested then, young women interested?

Well, you know, there was a group that came down to talk at our Women's Centre. No, I think it was in Plymouth, and a lot of us from the Women's Centre went there. And they call themselves The 300 Group and it was run by, and again, I'm having a senior moment. I can't remember names. But anyway, she's still a member of Parliament. She's great. And she had set up this group. And she was going around the country, and was called The 300 Group, because 300 would have been half the amount - there was 600 MPs then. And we still got, I think it's 45 out of 645, or something like that, are women. I mean, we are very low, as you probably know. And she was going around the country trying to encourage women to stand for their local, local, to, local MPs. And a friend of mine stood as Green for several years. She was great. She never got elected, but she was great. So we've got to do more of that. Now you need to ask that question again.

Yes. So how did your Greenham experience impact on your personal life then, and now?

Hhm. The impact has definitely lessened over the years, but I carried on, I always carried on it. I did a lot of local actions. We did - we had someone, a teenager locally who died of toxic shock syndrome. And they were linking it then to tampons. So our, our Women's Centre went into chemists and put on the side little stickers on all the tampon packets saying 'This can cause toxic shock syndrome', because there was an additive - not only were they not cotton, they were other things. But they had an additive they'd put into tampons, to make them more absorbent, and they believed that it was that - so if women didn't change a tampon, they had a chance of going into toxic shock syndrome, which

was a fever that killed you. That worked: they changed it. I mean, I don't know if that worked, but women were doing it all over the country. So I think what did it was that. Another thing was we heard that, I heard that the local barber under the Civic Hall in Totnes was giving away - is this okay? Are we okay with time? Was renting out porn videos, but hardcore porn videos to his clients. He was a barber. And so we, a Greenham friend of mine, Miranda, and I went late at night at about midnight with pots of paint - white paint, and we - did we spray, or did we paint? I think we painted the local video shops, the front windows and the barbers on on the pavement in front, saying 'Porn is sold here'. Or 'Porn is rented here' - for the video shops. And the next day there was a huge fuss about it, and one of the local - the owner of the top video shop said 'Great, great, great publicity - I'm going to rent twice as much out tonight.' And of course they didn't have hard porn - they had very soft porn. And the barbers had a visit from the police that very day, and he was closed down. So they must have found the videos. So again, we really kind of 'Yay, that worked!' And then I belonged to Amnesty International for many years, and did urgent action which is sending videos, um, which is sending emails to - to help people who are prisoners of conscience, and to I mean, I sent a lot to the governor of Texas because of-course, there were young black men on, on, on death row all the time. And they - and Texas is one of the main states in America that just got rid of them all. Didn't, didn't pardon any of them. The governor never pardoned anyone, of-course the governor at that time was brother to George Bush, Jeb Bush, I think he was called. And then one day I realised that actually, and I was also raising money by going - putting things in cafes to get money for them. But then one day, I realised that actually I was writing to fascists. I was writing these heartfelt emails to fascists. Again I didn't feel I was doing much good, although I think Amnesty International is wonderful. So I've carried on doing that kind of work, you know. Went around all the greengrocers in Totnes to ask them not to stock South African food - fruit and veg. And that worked - all of them except one at the very top of town stopped stocking any fruit and veg from South Africa. So that was good. And Ruth and I, Ruth was my friend who was South African, she had a stall every, every Friday on the market, which was, you know, which I helped

with occasionally. She's now back in South Africa - I miss her. So there are a lot of things like that, that we constantly - it's probably a lot more than I've forgotten about. But it's just a way of life, in a way - protest. You know? I write letters now I write letters online. You know whenever there's anything I don't like, I'll just write a letter about it to someone. I mean I'm really worried about Palestine, it's getting worse and worse, and the fact that Netanyahu's got back in, and and that he's going to legalise the, the, the settlements is such bad news. I mean basically they're raising Palestine. I saw a demonstration last year, and there - it was in the streets of the Israelis, and an Israeli was asked question, and he said 'Palestine? Palestinians? Who's that? What's that? No such a place, no such a people.' And I thought, oh my god, they just erasing the name, and they're erasing the people completely. It really is, you know, not only apartheid, but genocide. It is just appalling. So yeah, that's - I give a lot of energy to that. There's always something isn't there?

And so looking back at your lovely album there, is there anything else that you - perhaps a favourite moment with a photo? Or a reading that you'd like to share?

**That's Aldermaston, that's me there - look, on Aldermaston.**

Yes.

**No. That's me there, that little blonde person with the boots.**

And that's Easter 1961?

**It is yes, I was 16. That was one of our Women for Peace posters. That was a demonstration we did in Totnes about trains going through in the middle of the night carrying nuclear waste. Because of-course, if there had been a crash, we didn't know anything about it, of-course, so we let people know. That's, that's my son with my daughter in the, in the pram, that's me. That was the first march.**

And that was...

**I think that was the first march....**

27th of August to September the 5th 1981?

**That's right. That was a local demonstration by our peace group. 'The average British family spent £16 a week on arms last year'.**

And that was in 1982?

**Yeah. That was the first - the poster about the information about the first demonstration around the base, with all the gates around the base. And that was on the 21st of March 1982.**

'The New Age Gate'.

**They all had different - at first they all had different, like Green Gate, I think was the women's gate. Main Gate was main gate, but all the other gates had different, and then they just got called by name - by colours.**

Yeah, so the Artists' Gate - that will be poets, painters, dancers, actors?

**Yeah. It's a lovely idea.**

'In the evening a blockade of the base is planned for a maximum of 24 hours. This will probably take the form of women being chained to each, and to the gates, with a minimum of 20 at each gate'.

**That's right. Yeah. (Laughs). There you go - 'Greenham common women's peace camp - an international action'. December, that's me sitting by a fire. That's the women around the gate. Arms around the Base. That was wonderful. When they actually said 'They've joined hands, they're going all the way around. That's it. We've done it.' I mean, that was a lot of women. Look how many women in that small stretch. There were thousands of women there that day.**



And how long did it take?

**It took most of the morning. And then by late morning, there were women with um, Skeeter - who was a friend of mine, had a, had a radio and she said, she went 'Yay!' And that was a picture that was in a lot of papers at the time. But it was - that's it, we've gone around. That's the action with my mother, which was '82. 'Take a risk for peace now.' Fenella, 3, follows in the family tradition. That's me here and that's my daughter - where's Fenella? Oh that's Fenella. So that was again a peace march that we did locally.**

Yes. So a 3 year old Fernando is following in the 'family tradition' by following in her grandmother's footsteps.

**That's right. 'Cause Mum had been in prison by then.**

Yes.

**That's my mum. Back from, and my letter to my sons about my Easter, Easter holiday in Greenham. More photos. That's the hole in the fence that some women have just gone in. That was the Easter Bunny demonstration. You see she's a chicken?**

Yes.

**(Laughs). Dragon day. Some dragons are fighting back.**

So that's a poster there saying bring mirrors to turn the base inside out. Trees to plant, candles for silent vigil, and instruments for songs.

**It was always very creative. I mean, the fence got covered in people's - especially that day when all the women came - but we were constantly making webs and making little tapestries from what bits of wool, and leave, and people love photos, dolls, teddy bears all sorts. That's the council. That's the benders, which as I say kept getting taken down.**

**And that's after the benders were taken. 'Women's struggle won the vote to use it for disarmament'. An apron.**

Fascinating. So we've covered a lot of ground. Is there any question you would have liked me to ask, that I haven't asked?

**Oh, crikey, no, your questions are great. But I think it's very interesting to see. You know, I mean, my children are very aware, and, and my grandson will be very aware of all of this, you know, because I talk about it a lot with them. And, and that is lovely - knowing that it's going to pass down, and knowing that they they're all really aware of all the issues that are important. You know?**

What kind of questions do they ask you when you're telling them the stories?

**I did a lovely trip with my son down to, down to South of France to visit his dad a couple of years ago, and we talked all the way. And it was just lovely because he asked me all those questions - he asked me about my mum, and her actions, and about my actions. And I know my mum loved the fact that I was going on all the actions, and that I would carry on that work after her, you know. And in fact, after she went to prison, she didn't go up much anymore. And it was me going part time. But of-course I fed it into her all the time. So that thing of passing it down from mother to daughter I think is incredibly important.**

And to grandchildren?

**And to grandchildren. Yes, very important. Because it went on for a long time, and in the end, you know, at the end of it, it was very quiet. We didn't have a big reunion - which we should have, and walk on the - we should have walked on the common together. And I think I might even have been abroad when that happened. But it was many years later.**