**Audio Transcription**

**Rewind - Leonard Cheshire Disability, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund**

**Title:** Challenge

**Duration:** 29 minutes and 45 seconds

**Transcription Date:** 19th August 2016

**Summary of main points**

1:09 History of Le Court and its residents’ involvement in the community

2:27 Brian Line recalls beginnings of Le Court Film Unit

4:10 Brian discusses Living Proof

8:30 Brian discusses No Limit

10:03 Discussion of technical equipment

10:47 Brian discusses Challenge

12:53 Brian Line discusses Words Without Hands

15:48 Le Court Film Unit drafts in a professional cameraman

16:12 The difficulties involved

18:00 Making Maybe Today

21:14 Reactions to the new film

23:49 Brian further recalls reactions to the film

27:15 Brian discusses future plans

28:38 Extract from No Limit

29:17 Credits

**Start of transcription**

No audio 0:00 to 0:17

Test signal 0:17 to 0:22

No audio 0:22 to 0:38

Music 0:38 to 1:09

1:09 **Male Narrator:** The Le Court Leonard Cheshire home here in Hampshire was the first of the famous homes founded by G.C., V.C. and grew from his decision in 1948 to care for a homeless friend who was dying of cancer and had no family to care for him. Now, 54 men and women, all severely handicapped, live here at Le Court. Right from the start, the people here put great emphasis on helping themselves on personal enterprise. They started holidays for the disabled, which has become a nationwide charity, the Cheshire Voice, a talking magazine, which comes out twice yearly on cassette, was begun at Le Court, and now it's well-known in the world of the disabled, and the Le Court Film Unit was the first film unit ever to be manned from wheelchairs. It was first formed by Neville Thomas, and it was his black and white film, a sort of diary of life at Le Court, which Leonard Cheshire took to India with him to raise money for the homes he wanted to start there. So useful was the film that Cheshire actually wore the print out on his fundraising campaign, but there were obviously possibilities here, and 3 other people joined Neville Thomas and formed the Le Court Film Unit. One of them was Brian Line. I asked him how they shared the jobs out.

2:27 **Brian Line:** This was sorted out really partly um, by need...and partly by what we were able to do, physically. Um, we needed a scriptwriter, and therefore, uh, Barbara Beasley, as she was then, now Barbara Lloyd-Evans...um...was very good at writing, so therefore she naturally became the secretary and the scriptwriter. And...Neville, who was the only person among us who had any technical knowledge, so it's obvious that he would take on things like setting up lights, and directing. Um...Laurie was very interested in, in camera side of th-the whole set-up, so he expressed the desire to, to try camera work, um, under Neville's direction, and he was physically able to handle a camera, which, um, neither Neville or myself or Barbara could do, so...by building a tripod and putting it on his chair he became the cameraman. And then I was interested in, in cutting and sound...and so I took on the sound side of it, th-th-the setup, and...Neville and I discovered that, that by sitting side by side in an editing bench...um...we could work the machine between us but we couldn't work it on our own. [Unclear]...He could pick up the big heavy of, o-of, of film and, and I could um, do the more intricate things like placing the machine up and so forth. ... Uh, the group of 4 of us made 4 films in all, uh, Living Proof, Words Without Hands, No Limit...and Challenge.

4:08 **Male Narrator:** Tell me about the first one.

4:10 **Brian Line:** Living Proof, uh, was the first film we made...when...G.C....brought back the 9.5 film, which Neville had made, it was very worn out...and when Neville and I were viewing it...he suggested that we might make another one. I thought this was a good idea, and suggested the idea of an...just the day in the life...of somebody living here at Le Court. ...And so the 4 of us got together...and started to shoot the film...it was a simple sort of script, no shot directions or camera angles, or any fancy stuff, just simple notes on what we'd like to take.

4:55 **Male Narrator:** What was the technical quality of that first effort like, Brian?

4:59 **Brian Line:**I think a lot to be desired, frankly, because we started with...a camera which Neville had, which was a 16 millimet-millimetre silent camera...and we gaily...shot away with this camera and it wasn't until...we were towards the end of the film...and, we were wondering how to finish it off...and by sheer luck a BBC producer Ian Curtis came to live in the village...and it, he offered to help us...finish the film off...a-and he looked at the film and he started off by saying, well you should take out all the out-of-focus stuff...um, and then see what you've got left. This we did...and, lost about 20 minutes of our film.

5:49 **Male Narrator:**Where was the editing done?

5:51 **Brian Line:** That was done in Barbara's bedroom, in fact, um...had a little machine with, with 2 wheels each end of a, a viewer, and we hand-cranked them. Uh, later of course, the Beeb was gonna help, to help us with...equipment, but that's to come. Um...we hand-cranked this equipment and it was jolly hard work. When we got all the editing done...we then had another technical problem which was, we had to chop...all the film on Neville's camera which was a silent camera...and, when we put it on the projector of course... \*laughs\* it made able-bodied people move like Charlie Chaplin but thank goodness, uh, disabled people move slowly.

6:34 **Male Narrator:** You mean, you shot it at, uh, too many frames a second, was that it?

6:38 **Brian Line:** Yeah, that's right. Uh, you see, 16 milli...metre film goes silent speed 16 frames per second. Sound has to be 24 frames or for TV, 25. Um, so when you move from 16 to 24, then you're going much faster.

6:55 **Male Narrator:** It must have had you whizzing about in your wheelchairs a bit though, just a touch.

6:58 **Brian Line:** Well, just a touch, but only, not enough to really make people laugh. So we had to make this, decision, shall we make...people laugh at times when we really don't want them to, or shall we...keep it as a, a silent film? Anyway...Ian convinced us that if we're gonna make our name as filmmakers at all, we had to make sound, because, you know, talkies had been with us rather a long time. So, he said he could get it done through his...uh, department, at the BBC, and...we had a sound put on for us. When the premier was over, everybody said what a marvellous film it was so, we, just for luck, put it into...uh, the Amateur Cineworld Competition, and, um, to our utter surprise we got a 3-star award, and this, I think, did more for our uh, uh...sense of achievement, for our ego, to go on making another film than anything else.

7:54 **Male Narrator:** Now the very basic thing, matter of cash. Where, in the first instance, did you raise the finance?

8:01 **Brian Line:** Oh, that was a laugh, that was, because we started off with 70 pounds worth...of Kodachrome...borrowed from the local Boots the chemist. The only condition was that we paid it back before...next stock-taking day, so that the manager, y'know, the top blokes, up the top, no-one knew what had happened. Um...well...to raise this money, some ladies in the village and friends put on rummage sales, mostly.

8:27 **Male Narrator:** So, you'd made your debut. What did you follow it up with?

8:30 **Brian Line:** Well, we followed this up with, um, No Limit...which was a film about gadgets we've developed here at Le Court. All sorts of gadgets for daily living. We felt the best thing to do would be to talk about the subjects we knew best, and we knew about disability, that's basic, so...out came...a film about gadgets.

[Film cuts to an extract from No Limit]

8:52 **Female Narrator:** Clive Dunner, a garage owner, and one of the original members of Independence Unlimited, undertook to devise a motor-driven door opener. His prototype he'll put on the workshop door. Arthur's coming to fetch the motor for the door - a retired gramophone motor, actually.

No audio 9:13 to 9:28

9:28 **Female Narrator**: The door opener is also worked by an ordinary switch inside the workshop. A cord runs from a huge cotton wheel...to the door...pulling the handle down...and then winding in the cord. ... The switch cuts the motor when the door is wide open.

No audio 9:50 to 9:56

9:56 **Female Narrator:** And the door is gently closed by a spring.

[End of extract from No Limit]

10:03 **Male Narrator:** Technically, I can imagine it must have been some sort of improvement.

10:06 **Brian Line:** Oh yes, no end, because in the first place...[unclear], who had been invited to become president of our film unit...very kindly persuaded...uh, Bell and Howell to give us uh, a sound camera.

10:19 **Male Narrator:** She lived nearby, didn't she?

10:20 **Brian Line:** That's right. She'd come down to live down in [unclear] as well, uh, she knew Ian Curtis as well...and, um...Ian said...would...she become president because he felt that we want a bit of credibility...um, we're unknown, unknown people, unknown source, and when we wrote to people with her name on a heading, note paper, it would help us get in on the trade, get things at discounts and so forth like film stock et cetera.

10:45 **Male Narrator:** And what about film number 3?

10:47 **Brian Line:** Film number 3 um, was Challenge....um, and this film...was again following on gadgets which we hadn't already covered.

[Film cuts to extract from Challenge]

10:58 **Male Narrator #2:** Sylvia had almost reached the stage when she couldn't even push her wheelchair about. Electrically-powered wheelchairs were developed and she was saved from complete inertia. She has muscular dystrophy, and had also grown too weak to get herself on and off the lavatory. Electricity saved her from this predicament too. These electric hoists are suspended from racks bolted to the ceiling. One or two slings support the back and legs. A gentle pull on the up cord...a swing over...a pull on the down cord...and there you are.

No audio 11:32 to 11:40

11:40 **Male Narrator #2**: A closer view of hooking the sling on for the return journey.

No audio 11:44 to 11:47

11:47 **Male Narrator #2:** Electric hoists are invaluable equipment for getting in and out of bed as well as on and off the lavatory. To some people like Sylvia they restore independence. To others, more helpless, they can make living at home still possible after their relations get too old to lift them bodily. Hoists lift the heaviest person with no exertion at all.

No audio 12:08 to 12:16

[End of extract from Challenge]

12:16 **Brian Line:** We'd been approached by uh, a...group of people called Concorde Film Council Limited. Uh...

[Video freezes from 12:22 to 12:35]

12:35 **Brian Line:** …disability like you have before…uh, and nobody has made a film about gadgets from the disabled point of view before, so please can we distribute your films on a 50-50 basis…uh, so, having this sort of encouragement we felt there was a need to go on making this type of film.

12:53: **Male Narrator:** And the 4th and final film in the total series was called Words Without Hands, I think.

12:59 **Brian Line:** That’s right, and you should remember that [Male Narrator tries to cut in] very well, Robert.

13:03 **Male Narrator:** That’s right, Brian. I simply tried to nudge you into saying that because I was trying to boast of the small part you kindly invited me to play in the whole thing.

13:11 **Brian Line:** Well, this again was following along a, uh, a trend of, of, uh – gadgets but we s- tried to be a bit more adventurous because we’d only stayed within the confines of Le Court, our own home, and in this film we went to Mary [unclear] Lodge…uh, the, um Nuffield Orthopaedic…Centre, to look at gadgets developed there – do you remember Paul Driver, the frog-breathing man [Male Narrator: Hmm.], who used his staff to type with?

{Film cuts to extract from Words Without Hands]

13:42 **Male Narrator:** People whose breathing muscles are partly paralysed will sometimes learn to do without a respirator by using a method called frog-breathing, and this is done by drawing back the head and that raises the chest cavity and thus inflates the lungs. Mr Driver has gone one better and can project his voice for public speaking. He types with his feet. The mechanism he uses is called a distaff. He rests his feet in strapped soles, like the top halves of roller skates, and by remote control works the two typing fingers. He types articles and short stories with speed and accuracy.

No audio 14:22 to 14:26

14:26 **Male Narrator:** The electronic unit beside the typewriter in front of Mrs Cornford is called a POSSUM – Patient Operated Selector Mechanism, and this will translated a muscle flicker, uh, into other actions as well as typing. You’ll have turning on and off television, radio, a heater, uh, and adjusting their volume, ringing a bell, answering a telephone, opening a door, just some of the examples. Well, when Mrs Cornford started typing with a POSM, she couldn’t swallow and she had to be fed by tube, and the slight suck and blow movement on the mouthpiece had the unexpected, very happy effect of strength – strengthening her throat muscles, and she could swallow normally again, so now she types with 2 fingers and microswitches. Well, Mrs Cornford is about as paralysed as you can be and still stay alive, but her wheelchair with a built-in respirator makes it possible for her husband to take her out in the minibus at weekends and with her parents, they also go away in the minibus on holiday. Here, she’s using the original suck-blow method for typing. The [unclear] of the POSM worked out a series of long and short impulses similar to Morse code for the letters of the alphabet. A skilled operator can achieve ordinary typing speed.

[End of extract from Words Without Hands]

15:42 **Brian Line:** This film was sponsored by the, uh, Central Council for the Disabled.

15:48 **Male Narrator:** I think on that occasion you used a professional cameraman.

15:52 **Brian Line:** That’s right, yes, because, uh, [unclear], if you remember, was our linkman, and to do this, uh, we had to have a lip-sync camera, and 1, we hadn’t got a lip-sync camera and 2, if we had got it we couldn’t contend with using it, physically, so we hired a man to come along and do this part for us.

16:12 **Male Narrator:** Something that’s been implicit in all that we’ve been talking about, although you haven’t touched on it directly I think, is the difficulty of actually getting to grips with equipment, immensely complex equipment when you’re disabled.

16:26 **Brian Line:** Ehh…yes, this was really the problem which was on the horizon when we made a 4th film. … In the first place, we had kept our equipment to the bare minimum, um, a very small light camera, um, which can be mounted on that wheelchair, uh, editing on a [unclear] which was electrically operated, um…and not doing most of the sound work, by Barbara going up to London, uh, to a studio and having technicians lay it…and put it together under her direction. Um…we were all beginning to feel, though, at this time, we were reaching the limits of our disabilities in, in the field we were working in.

17:18 **Male Narrator:** I mean, it’s rather sad but it was a very realistic appraisal. I mean, you took it, as it were, on the chin. You had to face those facts.

17:24 **Brian Line:** Yes, it was a very hard decision to face, this is true, Robert, um, because we all loved filming, we were all interested in filming…um, and I think, in a way, uhh, fate, if you like, helped us to make this decision because while we were mulling it over along came the idea that we should build the west wing – where we’re sitting now – um, of single rooms, and before we knew where we were we were all swept away on a tide of new jobs…[Male Narrator: I was going to say, I expect…]…in this wing, you see.

17:54 **Male Narrator:** Although filming is absorbing for, or was absorbing for all 4 of you, perhaps the others also wanted to do other things.

18:00 **Brian Line:** Well, yes uh, I did to an extent, we all did, um – but I found as I was go…involved in the, in the fundraising side of, of raising money for the wing, that I, I felt a need to make a film about how this was all done because we were achieving something unique here again at Le Court. I, I, uh…wrote a script…and then, uh I, we had a voluntary worker here who was doing social work and he was up in London at Bedford College; he met a young lady in the Royal College of Art who had a brother who was mentally disabled. She read my script and liked it and said ‘I’ll ask my tutor if I can help you work on this project because I like it’.

18:43 **Male Narrator:** So you started working with able-bodied people at this time really?

18:45 **Brian Line:** Yes, I found myself um, in a new situation which I, I saw as a challenge, of working with a 4-man crew of able-bodied people as a kind of producer-director, and I found it very challenging – especially having a woman director, I might add.

Music 19:06 to 19:31

[Film cuts to extract from Maybe Today]

19:31 **Male Singer:** Another day begins, the world it awakens, this private world that I must call my home. In this different world, a different kind of family, related by misfortune, together yet alone.

Music 19:59 to 20:07

20:07 **Male Singer:** There are no walls around this prison, no iron bars to show it is a jail. But who is free, who cannot move unaided? Palace is a prison if you cannot walk away. … And last night, I had a dream, I dreamed that I was free. I could choose to follow any road, to go wherever pleased me. Last night I dreamed I was free.

[Extract ends]

21:14 **Male Narrator:** What were the feelings of the people here, Brian, when they saw this film, Maybe Today? Uh, not only the people in general here but the people who had been members of the old film unit?

21:26 **Brian Line:** Oh, well, very very mixed, to be honest with you. Uh, I think most people thought I was going to make the same type of film as I had made with the group of 4 in the film unit…sorry, I should say group of 3 in the film unit. But I felt a need to, because I was in a new situation to sl- break away and to produce a musical documentary.

Music 21:53 to 22:01

22:01 **Male Singer:** When you were a solider, daddy, did you march with your head held high? Were your buttons bright and your belt pulled tight, and your uniform [unclear]?

22:18 **Male Narrator #3:** The concert was held; money was made.

22:21 **Male Singer:** No, I slouched with a twisted neck, honey, and I also slacked at the knees…my buttons were blacked and my belt was slack, and my shirt had to blend with the trees…

Music 22:37 to 22:44

22:44 **Male Narrator #3:** Another resident, another way to raise funds - and all for a very special campaign.

22:50 **Female Singer:** Did you fight a war for a flag, daddy, the country over the green? Or did you fight for democracy and the parliamentary scene?

23:07 **Male Narrator #3:** One day we got together and asked for single rooms, our urgent need for privacy. This meant enterprise, effort and ideas. What could we do to find money to build a brand new wing? Brian’s hitchhike, Edinburgh to Petersfield, was one answer. Collection boxes in pubs were easier. When the plans were made, 62,000 pounds was needed. Campaigns for the new wing became a massive operation. Our annual fete played its part and was opened by G.C.

23:40 **Leonard Cheshire.:** Being here today in these grounds brings back many, many memories to me.

23:49 **Brian Line:** Now I, I believe, it, it…it didn’t g-, it didn’t go down too well because that’s not what people wanted. It wasn’t what they were expecting.

23:59 **Male Narrator:** What…

24:00 **Brian Line:** So it never got…sorry.

24:01 **Male Narrator:** What, what, what were they expecting though, Brian?

24:03 **Brian Line:** Well, I think a, a sort of John Gregson type, uh, situation, here is the – you see the story in the film is about the building of the west wing and how we raised the money – and I think they want to say ‘now here is a problem, uh, and this is how we did it, and this is the west wing, and this is how we built it’ and so forth, step by step.

24:25 **Male Narrator #3**: Suddenly, just as the dream so nearly changed to reality, and we began to see ourselves each in a room of his own, the money ran out.

No audio 24:33 to 24:43

24:43 **Male Narrator #3:** The only possible solution seemed to be a drastic cutting back – 18 single rooms instead of 24. No lift, fewer bathrooms and toilets. Even to manage this revised plan, we still needed luck.

24:58 **Man with cheque:** Congratulations, Mr Grimes, on the first half a million pound dividend ever paid on the full in the United Kingdom.

25:03 **Male Narrator #3:** Mr Grimes, our accountant, gave us a cheque which enabled us to continue, but more money still was needed. Many projects were started both large and small, by residents and friends, and the whole campaign was underway again. Under the chairmanship of [unclear], the building committee went into the detailed planning stage. Adjustable [unclear] units, purpose-designed light switches, intercom, powered hoists.

Music 25:31 to 25:37

25:37 **Male Narrator #3:** Because we were living on the actual site, we had one unique advantage: we were able to discuss structural and functional points with the architects [unclear]. Were the fixtures at the right height? Was step height for wheelchairs another problem? … All the residents we’ve met now have rooms of their own because they, with the help of their friends, were able to make something happen. This new wing is not the end of an endeavour, but the beginning of many more to come. Not just here at Le Court, but through Le Court to inspire others in other places to build their own homes and to develop their own ideas and hopes.

26:27 **Female Singer:** Sometimes we thought we’d never make it, sometimes the end seemed far away…but we kept trying, our [unclear] kept working, we made something happen today. … Maybe today everyone will be happy… [fade out]

26:58 **Brian Line:** This is what I was trying to do, work on 2 levels: show the hard facts and also show the feelings through the music, and uh, perhaps I bit off a bit too much more than I could chew, I don’t know. But it didn’t go down round here as well as it could have done, as well as I’d hoped, anyway.

27:15 **Male Narrator:** And now, you’re off on another branch of the same medium: video.

27:20: **Brian Line:** Yes, again. Uh, accident, I think. I set out with the idea of making another film. Um, I’d borrowed money from Southern Arts to do the script. [Clears throat] But it turned out that they didn’t quite like, uh, my type of script, the story I had in mind.

27:38 **Male Narrator:** They thought it what? It was too much of a propaganda exercise?

27:41 **Brian Line:** Yes, um, I think that Southern Arts felt that they wanted something a little more artistic, and I was, let’s face it, doing what I know best again – which is preaching the gospel of the disabled, if you like.

27:53 **Male Narrator:** Do you see here a developing line for yourself from now on?

27:58 **Brian Line:** No, not really. Um…I, I don’t think I can keep up the sort of…mental energy necessary or physical energy required to go on making films sort of all the time. Maybe to do one every couple of years or something like this, but then you find as you’re getting older, you just can’t take the pace – that sound terrible but the truth is, it does become more effort each year to do many things that you found the year before, um…so I, I don’t really see it as a career or anything like that. I enjoy doing it and whenever I see the opportunity to do something like this I think I should go, should take it.

28:38 **Female Narrator:** Given the tools, there is no limit to what disabled people can do. … The members of the film unit would like to thank the many people who have helped them make this film. The members are Laurie Mawer, the cameraman…Barbara Beasley, the secretary, who wrote and spoke the commentary…and Neville Thomas, the producer, and Brian Line, the sound technician, who together cut and edited the film

No audio 29:17 to 29:45

**End of transcription**