**Film Transcription**

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

**Film Title:** Challenge

**Duration:** 23:56

**Transcription Date:** 2017

**Archive Number:**

Please note: this document does not contain the transcription of the actual Audio description for the film.

**Start of transcription:**

**00:29 - [Narrator]** The Leggs are an ordinary family. David is a farm worker, Joan works part time as a nursing auxiliary.

Their elder son is abroad in the RAF, but Pat, their daughter is often home in her off-duty. She’s training to be a state-registered nurse.

Pete is still at school of course.

Eating with a spoon was one of the first lessons Pete learned as a young child. It comes as naturally as breathing when you’re 11 years old.

All the intricate movements involved in having breakfast are automatic. Done with a minimum of thought and effort.

Take buttering toast. What marvellous pieces of machinery hands are. Carrying out the most complex operations dictated by the brain. No computer could be programmed to do anything like the normal range of actions done by the human hand.

A mother’s hand is strong and dexterous pouring tea.

Her daughter’s hand lifts the cup with ease.

It would never occur to Pat that one day she might be crippled with arthritis.

**01:53 -** Frank is arthritic. Every year in Britain alone, thousands of people must come to terms with arthritis and learn to do even the simplest things in different ways.

Frank does a balancing trick with his cup on a pad, like a kettle holder. For some years after he became disabled, he couldn’t feed himself. But a surgeon fixed his arm at such an angle that he can spoon food into his mouth and also move his hand downwards to write.

He works more than a 48 hour week in his job as an editor.

Doris is paralysed by damage to her spinal cord, which also makes her very shaky. She uses a length of plastic tube for drinking.

This sort of tube can be bought at any cycle shop. Perspex is more practical for some people. As rigid as glass, but unbreakable. It can be bought in varying lengths, straight, or bent, with or without a flattened mouthpiece.

The common belief that drinking alcohol through a straw makes it more intoxicating seems to be untrue.

**03:10 -** Mary Marlborough Lodge is an annexe of the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre at Oxford. People come here from all over the country for assessment and help.

A pen clip from Woolworths stops the tube falling out of the cup. Each person at the table has a different aid for drinking.

Gran uses an Ovaltine mug. The big handle and the plastic holder protects fingers from being burned.

Mrs Mortimer at the end of the table has an un-tippable beaker on a stand so that she can drink sitting upright without having to lift the weight of a full cup to her mouth.

Rosie was a Thalidomidebaby. She drinks her milk from a beaker with a built-in tube.

**04:02 -** Back into a Cheshire Home, where Bob lives. He has Ankylosing Spondylitis, a disease that fuses the bones of the spine and makes people as stiff as the proverbial ramrod.

Bob can’t sit down. To eat standing up is tricky, so he lies down. He prefers to use techniques rather than gadgets, and his techniques are distinctly original.

Tea just doesn’t taste the same out of a feeder as out of a cup, and a tube isn’t practical in this position. A tea-fall may not sound as graceful as a waterfall, something from ‘Alice Through the Looking Glass’ perhaps, but this, is definitely a tea-fall.

As he can’t bend his head and look down at the food, Bob uses a hand mirror as a periscope. He has prismatic spectacles which are ideal for reading or for watching films and television lying down, but not for eating.

Incidentally, people who can’t raise their hands to their mouths can sometimes solve their problem by using long-handled spoons and forks.

**05:50 -** Pat and Sheila will want to repair the ravages of tennis after the game.

Women’s magazines multiply like rabbits in our affluent society. Much of their income is derived from advertisements for cosmetics, and the fashions in makeup change almost as often as the fashions in clothes.

A girl can’t call her face her own these days.

Think of the complicated actions in making up. Pat takes her lipstick out, pulls off the lid, screws it out of the tube, holds it in steady fingers as she rubs it on her lips.

Much the same process is gone through in applying mascara. It would seem essential to have a steady hand and fingers that can grip and move freely.

Terry keeps her makeup in the same sort of zip bag as Pat. She uses her teeth as an extra hand, because her hands are clenched and reflexed by muscular atrophy. Her movements may be slower and clumsier than Pat’s, yet the effect she achieves is the same.

Fingers that grip and move aren’t essential.

That translucent, alluring look is all a question of using the right formula.

Again, teeth act as subsidiary hands.

Painting with a brush held in the mouth is now well known because of the Mouth and Foot Painting Artists Association, but there are many other things disabled people do with their mouths.

Writing with a pencil held in the teeth. Undoing tubes and other containers as Terry does. Holding objects and so on.

Last touch, the lipstick. Doesn’t look as if it tastes very nice. Maybe one day we shall have fruit-flavoured lipsticks and gummed labels and envelopes.

**08:40 -** This is Joy. She can manage without fingers at all. She was born with paralysed arms and fingers and her whole body is convulsed by spastic movements. Nevertheless, unless she’s agitated by excitement or indignation, she can control her legs and feet.

From constant use since early childhood, her toes have become like fingers. Of course doing ordinary things is an extraordinary effort for her.

This is true of nearly anybody with a severe degree of handicap. But human beings are the most adaptable of animals, and problem-solving seems to be a natural attribute. In a way, the more difficult the problem, the greater the satisfaction in solving it.

Joy’s handbag is no exception to the rule. Everything in it but the kitchen sink.

Although we haven’t shown her opening the tin, she did.

Joy can weave, and she can make baskets. She can feed herself with sweets, biscuits and such dry food. She smokes with a long elegant holder held between her toes. And, as you can see by the gleam in her eye, she likes men.

Joy is a devoted reader of women’s magazines and along with the law about cultivating beauty, she believes in putting into action the advice about romance. Life does get wearing sometimes when she has two boyfriends at once. The jealousy is so hard to handle, but nobody can say it’s not interesting!

Now, for that smooth, matt surface he loves to touch.

It’s a strange thing, but many able bodied people find the idea of disabled people having romances or getting married disturbing, even horrifying. Yet disability doesn’t reduce the human need to love and be loved.

**11:03 -** Shaving oneself is nearly always preferable to depending on other people. Brian is arthritic and can’t raise his arms. Though there are always more ways of killing a cat than drowning it. A long handle to his shaving brush and his razor brings them up to his face.

One of the greatest advantages of Brian’s set-up, which he had made for him, is that the handles can be dismantled and the entire outfit packed into a small case for travelling. Brian is keen on travel.

Draping his flannel over a stick enables him to wash his own face. This extremely simple solution, extending your reach by sticks or long handles, has the merit of avoiding a lot of clutter.

Complicated gadgets sometimes defeat their own object. The saturation point, when you feel so over-gadgeted you can’t be bothered with all the preliminaries, comes more quickly than with simple gadgets.

**12:40 -** Mary Marlborough Lodge again. A place that reminds one of Popski’s slogan – “we do the impossible every day, miracles take longer”.

Valerie’s Australian. She had polio when she was a child. This glove flannel for single-handed use is a bit like an oven-glove with a pocket to hold the soap. Valerie has no use in her left arm and hand, and her right arm and hand are weak.

With incredible determination she trained herself to be completely independent of help, and until recently earned her living as a clerk. She decided to see the world, travelled to England and at Mary Marlborough Lodge was persuaded to try a more ambitious career.

The next step is a further education college in Wales, and ultimately she wants to take a social work qualification.

Teaching was also suggested as a career. Equally suited to an intelligent disabled girl interested in people, but as she had already done voluntary work for the Samaritan organisation, social work appealed to her more.

This ingeniously designed mirror is on the market for people with use in only one hand.

Valerie would like to have a car which she could drive with her feet. This may sound an impossibility, but it isn’t. At least one man with no arms drives a car which he steers, gear changes and breaks with foot controls.

Valerie prefers trick movements to long handled brush and comb. Trick movements may well be the answer for some people and some problems, rather than gadgets, and you don’t have to carry them about.

Here’s another problem Valerie solved with trick movements. She could have used elastic shoelaces which make it easier for shoes to be slipped on and off without tying and untying the laces.

Watch this again. It really is clever stuff.

**15:49 -** Mrs Mortimer can’t reach down to put on her shoes, so she eases them on with a long-handled shoehorn.

This brings us to the subject of walking. In the same effortless way that he eats breakfast, David drives a tractor, climbs on and off it, and his legs carry him about as if mobility were one of the inalienable rights of man.

It isn’t. Disease and accident are daily to deprive people of this precious asset. Until recently, when legs failed there were three alternatives – sticks, crutches, and finally, wheelchairs.

**16:50 -** 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 has 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.

A closer view of hooking the sling on for the return journey. 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.

**18:08 -** Charlie’s spastic and can’t manage a standard electric wheelchair’s controls. A special control was designed and made to top the tiller of a standard model.

He turns on the engine with a rocker switch, presses down the right arm of the control, and he’s away.

To get into second gear, he presses down harder, and to reverse he presses upwards.

Bob’s wheelchair has two motors which drive directly on to each large front wheel. The controls are similar to the gear change on a car. The advantage of a two-wheel drive is that you don’t need the strength or range of movement necessary for steering a tiller control.

Iris broke her neck in an accident when she was fourteen. For her a standard side control is the most convenient. A switch on the tiller shaft turns the engine on and off, and a twist grip changes gear.

**19:24 -** The Ministry of Health now supplies indoor electric wheelchairs. For years has supplied so-called invalid tricycles – single-seater cars powered by petrol or electricity.

Sylvia’s is electrically-driven. Her battery, like those of the indoor wheelchairs, is charged from the mains. Her range is about a 10 mile radius, and her top speed 10 miles an hour.

Pressure on the hand grip energises the motor and steering needs little effort. A switch on the steering column is pushed back for reverse, on for forwards.

If you want to go farther and faster you have to go by car.

**20:32 -** In this film we have tried to show that although disability literally hampers ones movements, it’s not the end of a normal life. With simple gadgets and techniques a tremendous amount of independence can be regained. With the more complex equipment available now, even greater independence is possible.

Yesterday most disabled people would have been condemned to an inert existence, today they can take an active part in society.

Whether disabled people take advantage of these opportunities depends more than you might think on able-bodied people. Are they going to offer practical help? Are they going to treat disabled people as equals, with the same feelings, needs, virtues, faults, hopes and fears as themselves?

**21:32 -** Disability is a challenge to the disabled individual. Is he going to sink into a morass of apathy and let *it* overcome him, or is *he* going to overcome *it* and live to capacity. This does depend greatly on his character, but not entirely.

The attitude of society, which is largely made up of able-bodied people, will have a profound effect on him. What is the good of spending vast sums on high-powered physical rehabilitation if he then returns to a society that rejects him.

To be continually dismissed as socially inferior is a bitter fate, enough to daunt all but the most determined, and make no mistake about it, this happens the whole time.

Sometimes in the crudest form, but more often in subtle ways.

So disability is a challenge to society too, are we going to accord disabled people full rights as human beings, or by treating them as second class citizens, make them so?

[Text on screen: The End]

**22:41 -** Four disabled people and one able-bodied person made this film. Laurie Mawer was the cameraman. He could not have managed [audio cuts out] help.

Neville Thomas completed the camera team.

Neville and Brian Line did the cutting and editing together.

Barbara Beasley wrote the script and commentary and tied up the loose ends.

**End of transcription**