**Oral History Transcription - Christine and Jo – Alder House**

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

**Filmed** – 2017

**Start of transcription**

[Text on screen: Were you born nearby?]

00:11 [Christine]: I was, she wasn't! [laughs] I'm an Essex girl [laughs]

00:17 [Jo]: Well, I'm a refugee. I came here as a refugee in 1947. My parents escaped from Poland, I'm Polish and met up with the Polish army in the Middle East and married in Jerusalem, and I was born in Tel-Aviv. Then at the end of the war we didn't have Poland to go back to, no home to go back to, so we came... we were taken by the English army here.

[Text on screen: When did you first come to Alder House?]

00:50 [Jo]: I came after Christine, it must have been 80.., late 89

00:54 [Christine]: Mmm, yes, yes.

00:55 [Jo]: I think it was, yes. They were advertising... it was Three Forests at that time. The home was called Three Forests. They were advertising for a physiotherapist because Gwen was going away for, Gwen who was the physio here, was going to the Missions, to Malawi to help with polio children out there. So I took on the post, as part-time physio to the home.

01:22 [Interviewer]: Christine where were you...?

[Christine]: I was the Activities Organiser.

[Interviewer]: So you worked quite closely together?

[Christine]: Very close

[Jo]: Yes, we did. We shared one big room. The Act... which is called the Activities Room, even today I think, isn't it? And we worked together, we could work very well together with activities and the physio that the residents needed.

[Text on screen: What are your fondest memories of Alder House?]

01:51 [Christine]: I think the amazing people that we were able to work with really

[Jo]: Yes.

[Christine]: Inspiring... people who you felt that you had improved their life a bit because whatever they wanted to do, we tried to do it.

02:13 [Jo]: Yes. And I could perhaps also ease their discomfort or pain whenever they were in pain and discomfort, on the physio side, on the therapy side, which was perhaps was perhaps, you know my sort of job satisfaction then.

02:30 [Jo]: And of course, there was always Leonard. He was, he did his rounds of all the homes and he came here as well. You felt his presence, you know, even if he wasn't here. You knew Leonard was somewhere at the top and thinking about each home.

02:52 [Christine]: He came here and on the day they said to me 'Oh you can show him around Christine' [laughs] But I was glad I hadn't been warned before actually, because I would have got more nervous. But he was quite frail, he had to sit because his back was bad, every now and again, but he went around and talked to every resident and I felt that I was in the presence of somebody very special.

03:20 [Jo]: Everybody could say, especially the residents, that when he spoke to ... to you, the world didn't matter to him, it was just you and him, and he was so interested in your life, in what you're doing, how you are in the home, that it was just something quite unique.

03:43 [Christine]: We had a young man here at the time who was Indian, and Leonard Cheshire spoke to him in several Indian dialects but Dibi had been brought up at Barnardos - he didn't know what he was talking about [laughs] He was looking at me as if to say 'what's this man on about?'

[Text on screen: How do you feel about your experience at Alder House?]

04:04 [Christine]: Certainly very worthwhile, I got as much as out of it as I gave and a very important part of my life.

04:12 [Jo]: I was certainly enriched, all round by working here and being here [nods] in the home.

04:20 [Christine]: We're still here as volunteers! [laughs]

[Jo]: Yes, exactly.

[Christine]: I retired twice and I still give.. keep being dragged back.

[Jo]: Yes, well when, when we retired we sort of, one after the other, in a way. I had to retire because my hips gave way and I had to have replacements, and you can't come back to a heavy job like it was on the physio side here. But you can't just leave, close the door behind you, because there are people that you've known for years and years and...

[Christine]: They're your friends aren't they?

[Jo]: They are your friends. They were such wonderful people that you can't just forget, they are part of your life.

**End of transcription**