**Leonard Cheshire Resonate Project**

File title: “SC 2". 'John' interviews GLC about his life and work

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Start of Transcription

00:00 John: Service Corp introduction, slate 1, take 1.

[pause to 00:14]

00:14 Man: Camera ready.

00:16 John: Action. All of you who’ve joined the service for the work of Group Captain Cheshire, few of you will have never met him. In fact, because of the signs of the foundation trust today, few of you will have many opportunities of meeting him - so here is one of the very few opportunities we have of meeting him at an early stage.

00:37 GLC: Well, I suppose perhaps I’m not going to be too popular with you for taking you away from your studies. I hope you’ll forgive me, and I’ll not be more long-winded than I can help.

00:49 John: Can we just start again? Your hands were moving across your face at the important part.

00:53 GLC: Oh. Well, I suppose that I may not be too popular with you for taking away from your studies for this time. But I hope you’ll bear with me, and I’ll try not to be more long-winded than I can help.

01:09 GLC: First and foremost, I want to try and tell you how pleased I am and how grateful I am that you’ve joined the Service Corp. And on behalf of the Trustees, and everybody to do with the foundation, I would like to try and assure you—

01:27 John: Cut. I want to start again. I feel it’s a…

[recording jumps to next take]

01:33 GLC: Slate 1, take 2.

01:40 GLC: I think that probably what we’re trying to do is something that’s really new. We’re trying to combine the old, the experience of the past in the field of hospitals, with something that’s quite new and appearing in this age - the care, the long-term care of the disabled. And it really is calling for somebody quite different. On the one hand it’s got to have a very personal, intimate understanding of those with whom we’re working, with whom we’re sharing a common task. And on the other hand, it’s got to have real professionalism. And what I would like to do is to try and really tell you how important to us and to all those connected with the foundation is the role that you’re going to play. I mean, I absolutely realise that not all of you will find this is the work you want. Some of you will want to go on to hospital training, or higher studies… you might want to get married. You may find this isn’t what you want. But I know that some of you will, and in my own words what I want to do is to tell you that of all the elements of the foundation - you, the Service Corp, is probably the most important in the development of this work. I’ve come to learn over the years that you just cannot generalise, you cannot say, “the problem with disability is so and so, so and so, so and so…”. It’s absolutely different with each individual. Every individual is a person. He’s got his own wishes, his own ambitions, his own problems, his own nature. And so, the solution to his situation is entirely individual to himself. And I absolutely realise that our homes are not necessarily the ideal solution - we’re still finding our way. And the purpose of the Service Corp is to experiment with new ideas, to collate all the experience of other people, and of the past, and to give it to you. From then onwards it becomes a question of how you yourself respond to it. And so in these little talks which I’m looking forward to giving, what I would like to do is to share with you some of the experience and mistakes, and I hope also successes, in which I’ve been involved over the past 25 years and more.

04:30 GLC: You may know that I started as a total layman, I had no knowledge whatsoever of disability. I still have very little, but my life happened to lie in this field. I remember very well the first occasion when I had to answer a night call. It was my first night with the first patient, as we called him then, Arthur. The bell rang, I’d been dreading that night call - we had no electricity, and I decided it’d take too long to light an oil lamp in the middle of the night, so I got a candle. Then I thought, “oh, the candle will go out and it won’t give him much light, so I’ll go back to the oil lamp”. The bell went, it was like a klaxon, it woke me up; I lit this lamp, hurriedly, went in there, dreading it, expecting to see a hemorrhage or something, and all Arthur said was, “I think the window’s a little bit too wide open. Just close it a little, will you?”.

05:30 GLC: Now, I know what it feels like to start from the beginning. And… stop.

05:37 John: Cut.

[recording jumps to next take]

05:41 GLC: Slate 1, take 3.

05:51 Man: Second clap.

05:53 GLC: Thank you.

05:54 GLC: Well, first and foremost—

05:56 John: Cut again, sorry. No, no, just [unclear].

06:00 GLC: Well, first and foremost, I would like to say how pleased I am and very grateful that you’ve come to take this Service Corp training on. And I would like to think that you’ll find this is the life and work you want. I know that some of you won’t, but to all of you I do offer a very warm welcome and I do thank you. What I’d like to do, as best I can, is to tell you something about the way that the foundation is built up. I’d like to share my own experience with you over these last 25 years. As you see the foundation now, in some ways it probably looks fairly successful. But I can assure you it’s been through many ups and downs. We've made many mistakes, and I know we’ll make more. Because this is a field that’s new. We’re really entering a new world now, the world of disability, and everybody is trying to learn. And we hope that our Service Corp, in its own small way, will contribute to that learning. Because one thing I’m absolutely certain of, and I’ve known it for 12 years - it’s 12 years now since I’ve personally hoped that we’d have a Service Corp - is that the care of the disabled is a work all of its own. It isn’t a question of a hospital nurse who’s not quite so well trained, it’s a question of somebody who has the specialised knowledge and understanding, a personal, intimate understanding and rapport with the disabled person. It’s a question not of we the fit and you the disabled, it must be a team - it must be a family. I hope that you will feel here in the Corp that you are joining a family. I know there will be difficulties. I know there will be disappointments, perhaps disillusionments. But I do hope that you’ll feel this is part of a team which is trying to achieve something and break new ground.

08:28 GLC: Now, before I go into my talk, I would like to introduce you to my home. Because I am sitting here in my office, at my desk. I spend a lot of time here, much of it spent dictating letters. I have a little dictaphone here, and I can give any instructions I like. I can write to Matron, and I can say, “Dear Matron, I think that discipline needs tightening up a little”. Whether she’d take any notice doesn’t matter. This is where I sit and write my letters. We don’t live in a little house of our own, we live in the Sue Ryder home. When I say ‘we’, I mean my wife and myself. This is the headquarters of my wife’s work. Hers is a separate organisation, though we work together as best we can, because they have different objectives, the two foundations. Hers works for those largely who suffered in the war - the countries that were overrun in the war. It began with those who were in the concentration camps. And here in this house, there are 30 survivors of those concentration camps. It’s not the moment for me to tell you about that, except perhaps to say that they have been through suffering and agony that few people have been through. And the marks and the scars are still on them. But this is a little different in the sense that this is both a home and a headquarters. We have the general office where, as you’ll see, there are about usually 5 typewriters hard at work; the Christmas card room where something like £55,000 worth of cards are sold every year; the appeal office. And in all this fairly large—

10:29 John: Cut.

10:31 GLC: I was just about to say cut.

[recording jumps to next take]

10:33 John: Shall I mark it for you?

10:34 Man: [unclear]. Running.

10:35 John: Wild track SC intro.

10:38 GLC: This is Service Corp introduction wild track.

10:46 GLC: Where’d I got to?

10:48 John: You’d got to the [unclear] offices.

10:49 GLC: [overlapping] The appeal office, oh yes.

10:52 John: Yes, go back over that. Start at the office side again.

10:55 GLC: We have the general office, which—

10:57 John: Can I interrupt for a second? I’d like to say that one point I think you didn’t make clear was that there’s a lot of people living around you.

11:03 GLC: I was going to come to that.

11:06 John: Okay.

11:08 GLC: I think that the… [sound of bell chiming] Let’s unplug that. It’s—

[recording jumps to next take]

11:17 Man: Running.

11:19 GLC: What’s different about this particular home is it’s both a home and the headquarters. In addition to the 30 residents, there is a whole headquarters organisation of the Sue Ryder Foundation. That means the general office, whereas you’ll see there’s something like 5 typewriters going on. There’s the appeal office which is responsible for raising the £250,000 a year that the Sue Ryder Foundation has to collect for its overseas homes and its homes in this country. There’s the Christmas card room where over £60,000 worth of Christmas cards are sold every year, just from this room - they’re sent out by post. And their different departments. You’ll find that there’s a lot of young people here, they’re called the slaves - the residents are called the bods. In all, there’s 60 of us. We have one little part of it, we have our bedroom, and Jeremy and Elizabeth, our children, they each have a little room. My wife has her office and I have this office here that you see where I spend a good deal of my time. We’re very lucky, with a garden - we’ve got a little lake, it’s really only a pond, but it’s got ducks on it. It’s a quiet village, Cavendish, it’s a very beautiful village. It’s three times won the Best Kept Village competition of Suffolk. We are a bit remote, but that helps me. If you look at it from the out… forget that. If you look at it from the outside, it looks very peaceful, if you look through the outside gates. But once you come inside you realise that it isn’t, and it’s on the go all day. And often at night, we have to man the telephone at night, we never know quite what’s going to come through on the telephone during the night. Cut.

[recording jumps to next take]

13:25 GLC: Wild track continuation 2.

13:29 GLC: They still bear these scars and the marks of that dreadful time they’ve been through. Some of them, perhaps you wouldn’t notice it, to look at them. But once you get to know them you realise that this memory is always with them, they can’t drive it out of their minds. Some of them help a little, in one way or another. But a number of them are very severely disabled. Two of them can’t really get out of bed. Two of them are in wheelchairs. So, whilst I’m living here, in my home, I feel in a way that I’m still amongst the residents that I know. They come from different nationalities - one is British, but nevertheless, they come from different nationalities. But nevertheless, I feel in the midst of my life and work and so on that I’m still involved with the disabled, and this means a great deal to me. I think this is a great thing about this particular centre, that it’s both administration and it’s living the work of disability.

14:24: Speech ends

14:44: End of recording

End of Transcription