**Leonard Cheshire Resonate Project**

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Start of Transcription

00:01: Sue Ryder: It's a great pleasure to be with you and also to have this opportunity of thanking you. For those who understandably have never heard of the work of this small international foundation, the Sue Ryder Foundation, which works for all age groups, it is perhaps easier if I start this story, or part of it, chronologically.

(00:37) As a child, I had an opportunity of going round very bad housing conditions, literally slum areas, from the age of 6 or 7, with general practitioners, district nurses, and my mother and her friends, visiting those who were living in really terrible conditions. Many didn't have any place to play, the children didn't have a place to play in, and we were trying to clear the slums and to rehouse them. There were those of course who criticised the work, and said 'Well, if you re-house them, they'll put coal in the bath', and I felt that was our fault, or the architect's, because they didn't design a coal-hole.

(1:44) We were also living in rural areas, and therefore sharing the life of the villages, and I can remember many different characters, and many different people; including one lady of nearly a 100 who was house-bound, and enjoyed having visits, and telling us of her experiences in her long life! There was another called Gertrude Kelley who suffered from a kidney disease, and lived up a very steeped staircase, and we used to take her grape fruits, and found out from her and her friends the things that she most liked and needed. And so, it was, from those people that really, I started to take a great and deep insight into the lives of other people.

(2:44) We were also growing up under the shadow of the first World War, when hardly a family in Britain had not been affected. There were terrible casualties, about 37 million people had lost their lives, and the aftermaths was appalling; there were some who talked quite easily and readily of their experiences, and the dreadful casualties and also the peace that the Allies had paid such a high price for. And we felt it was awful, that we were just drifting on, rather irresponsibly towards the 30s, unemployment running very high, depression, and the rising of Nazism which meant literally facing for the second time a great evil! The unleashing by passing racial laws of the persecution of the Jews and anyone else whom they disliked, and the starting of the extermination camps, in 1933, Dachau and Esterwegen. There were some people who took their responsibilities very seriously, and they indeed, actually, assisted in getting people out, but alas there wasn't enough attention given, or enough publicity.

(4:27) At school, we were told a great deal, and every Saturday morning there were current affairs, when we had to prepare ourselves, and be ready to answer questions by one of the founders of what had occurred during that week in the world at large. Moreover, we were aware of violence and its effects upon mankind, what we could and should do to counteract it. Also, I was very interested in History and Economics; and at school too we took part in the community's life in the village and beyond.

(5:09) I had a very strict father who believed that regardless a woman's place in life, she had to learn a trade or profession, such as carpentry and other practical subjects, and that is something which has always stuck; and also I've had the opportunity of seeing other women taking a very full life and following their career right through, once they have learned it.

(5:41) The school was very friendly, and it had an unwritten discipline, but as I've already said we were expected, rightly, to work hard; but we had lots of fun, and games there. Then came the outbreak of the second World War, and I was privileged to join Special Forces. We had to sign an official secrets act, and we worked and trained with the young men and women who had escaped from their own occupied countries: Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia, and who after a very vigorous and difficult training, went back, usually by parachute, into their own countries to become leaders of the resistance.

(6:41) And as we trained and worked with them, and heard of their stories, and when we thought and knew of the missions that they were going out and the work that they were going to do, there grew in my mind, sat the idea, of trying to perpetuate their great courage, and faith and fortitude; all the things that they stood for: their good humour, gaiety, the fact that they as individuals - many of them were in their teens - had come from different walks of life, that they would go away and meet terrible and frightful deaths, or months in solitary confinement, inevitably they were going to be captured, because the missions that they were sent out on were extremely dangerous ones. And so there grew in my mind then, the idea of the living memorial, how to perpetuate them, not just by remembering them by a stone plaque, but of actually going out later, if we ourselves are going to survive, and perpetuating the things that they stood and fought for, as indeed those in the first World War too, and anyone else who suffered through racial persecution; and giving help and assistance to those of all age groups, whoever they might be and where there are gaps in society.

(8:31) And after those very poignant and very difficult years in SOE, which would be very difficult indeed to describe, if not impossible, because of the secrecy and the other things that I've mentioned, I went on to do relief work, and we were working in the ruins, in different parts of Europe. One night, I came across a barn with a nurse, and the barn was illuminated by a hurricane lamp; at the far end of this barn there appeared to be a woman perhaps in her 70s, actually she was only 37, and she was dying of typhus and TB. And during the course of the night, she told me her story, of how before the war she'd been living and working as a teacher in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and then she had joined the resistance, but before then her husband and children had been taken away from her and disappeared. And she had led a great risk to herself, escaping British and Commonwealth prisoners of war to safety at night, a most unenviable task because through the mountains and often at great, great risk. Finally, she'd been caught by the Gestapo, and after under-going frightful interrogations and tortures, she'd survived solitary confinement, and no less than 3 or 4 extermination camps.

(10:41) When I saw her, and as I was trying to care for those in the barn during that night, she told me briefly of her story; and it was quite clear from her great dignity, even her sense of humour and her composure, in those indescribable conditions, of how she had given a great example to those whom she had been with, those in the prisons and in the extermination camps. And so, for me, Anna illustrates the many millions who died, and you have given me this opportunity of mentioning Anna, and all the other “Annas” who remain anonymous.

(11:38) The work has passed through different stages, and after relief work, which was very hard: we had no water - it was awful - very little or no food, no electricity, no public services, no gas, nothing; it was this terrific courage and optimism despite the freezing climates, 20°[C] below zero, and then the contrast of the intense heat of the summers, that really made one feel very privileged indeed to take part and be along side, and with them. And so when other relief organisations withdrew, I decide that I would stay on, and try and do my best, and continue to share those conditions with the men, women and children, in different parts of Europe; and gradually the Foundation came to be born.

(13:04) It's always been a great struggle, and I'm sure that it will always be. We try, in our small way, to look after those with cancer and leukaemia, those with leprosy, and the mentally ill, the elderly and the frail, and others with different disabilities. Perhaps I might mention the girls who live in 2 of the homes in Poland, and their ages are between 9 and 36. The Foundation itself tries to cover, as I've already mentioned, a wide age group, between a few weeks old and I think the eldest at the moment is about 109. But to mention the girls, they have a lovely workshop, when they were first admitted to the homes, many of them in fact could hardly do anything, because they are very disabled, their hands are so deformed because they suffer from different forms of rheumatic diseases; but there's a great spirit in the homes there, something which you notice when you first come in. And these are a few of the things they have with great patience and devotion designed: this is one of the tea towels, these are some of the other tea towels, a tea cosy, a cheese platter; and this doll was made from literally one piece of wire. And they have made and done everything on this doll.

(15:21) We try and encourage work therapy as much as possible, whenever it is possible, for those who live in the homes; some of course are too ill but we try also to make them feel that they belong to the one human family. We often have to renovate an old building completely from being a ruin, or we even build a 10000 ft² building, and so for that we need tradesmen and people who are willing to work on building sites. And we also always need nurses and secretaries; and those who can organise the Sue Ryder shops, find empty premises to convert them, and to collect the clothing in the green shields damps, the bric-a-brac, and all the other things that we sell in the shops.

(16:44) We also sell Greetings and Christmas cards as part of the fundraising, but I would also like to mention that people often are put-off by statistics, and they say 'why doesn't the Government do more?', or 'This is such a huge problem!' if they hear of 8 million leprosy patients in the world, and therefore they think that their only individual contribution is not in fact going to be effective. As a field worker, I'd like to try and assure them that of course it is the one individuals' effort that makes all the difference to the other individuals' lives. So please, continue to pray, to think, to discuss, and to remember those who are sick or disabled, or lonely, or for some other reasons whether it's down the road or round the corner, or further away, overseas, because they are counting upon your thoughts and prayers, and it makes all the difference to their lives.

(18:05) And in a world so sadly divided and where there will probably always be divisions, at least we can remember that we belong to the one human family, that it is in the field of suffering that there's something that we all collectively, or as individuals, can do in the relief of that suffering; and we, therefore, should not be put-off by huge numbers.

(18:45) Now, if I may, I'd like to read you this prayer, because though it was written a long time ago, it may also try to sum up what I've tried very inadequately to mention here today: “We have to prepare for the future, and yet we do not know what it will bring. We have to find a standing ground so firm that nothing unexpected can disturb us, and so broad that it will carry any undertaking that we may have to base upon it, and so satisfying that it will take the place of all other satisfactions. There is only one thing that answers to this, and that is the will of God.”

19:41: Thank you very much indeed for listening.

19:44: End of speech

19:46: End of recording.

End of Transcription