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**Dr John Zorab in interview with Lady Wendy Ball
Oxford, 12th August 1996, Interview I**

WB Dr Zorab, could you tell me when you were born?

JZ Well, yes. I was born on the 16th January, 1929 according to my birth certificate at half past six in the morning.

WB And you were one of a very large family, I believe?

JZ I was. I was the fifth son. I had four elder brothers and a sister who came in-between, as it were, my youngest brother and myself. My mother I think was probably around 42 when I was born and I was often referred to as 'the afterthought'.

WB And you were very late in the family in that there was a big gap between you and your next sibling?

JZ Quite big, yes. My sister was eight years older than me and the youngest of my four brothers was thirteen years older than me and the eldest was twenty years older than me, so they covered quite a big range.

WB And can you tell me about your father? And ... I believe you have quite a medical history, or rather a history of medical...

JZ Yes. My father was an Armenian and an ophthalmic surgeon. His background briefly was that he was in the Indian medical service, his father had been a doctor also in the Indian medical service. He came to England to study medicine at Guy's where he met my mother and married her in 1901.¹ The plan was, and in fact the plan was fulfilled, he took my mother back to India to Calcutta where my eldest brother was born in 1908. My father came back to England, my mother having hated the Calcutta climate, and he studied at Moorfields Eye Hospital and set up in practice in Southampton where he did very well. He was also a very high-class tennis player, and this is perhaps slightly irrelevant, but in 1912² he won the Hampshire tennis Singles. And so my elder two brothers grew up as it were learning a lot about tennis, and they both became quite polished tennis players. And I have one rather treasured photograph of my four brothers and myself, which must have been taken I would guess about 1935, standing at our home in Southampton over Father's prized tennis court. One of my earliest recollections as a child were of what were known as 'clover parties'. Clover parties were an occasion when a number of friends would be invited for an afternoon; the grass tennis court was divided up into strips with pieces of string. And all the guests on their hands and knees were allocated a strip each and they went

¹ The marriage actually took place on 1st February 1907.

² Dr Zorab's father actually won this title in 1921.

down this picking out by hand every piece of clover, long before the days of selective weed-killers or anything like that!

WB And then they played on the finally polished court?

JZ And then they finally played on the polished court.

WB How wonderful.

JZ Curious things one remembers from one's early childhood.

WB Yes indeed. And you were a tennis player as well?

JZ Not so as you would notice. Yes, I enjoyed the occasional casual game, but I was never very good at that or indeed at any ball games.

WB And you didn't know your father very well because he died when you were 5, I think.

JZ Yes, he did. Father died when I was 5 and I had, as it were, surrogate fathers in my elder brothers who played I think probably in retrospect partly quite an important paternal role. My main recollection of that is from much later on when I was at school when I got the occasional cross letter, if you like, from an elder brother because the previous term's report had not been all that might have been wished for. I still have some of those letters written during the war years in fact, where I think they thought it was a bit much for mother to have to deal with this not very bright son!

WB How much of an influence did your mother have on you because she was the only parent you had left?

JZ That's a very difficult question to answer. My early years, like so many other reasonably well to do families I suppose in those days, my life was dominated by Nanny. My nanny came to the family when I was 18 months old and she stayed with the family until her death at the age of 74, I suppose about ten years ago now. But long after she'd ceased as it were to nanny me, she became a holiday nanny to my brother's children and then to my own children. Whenever we went away, we would always import Nanny in to look after the children. After the war, she moved into a house in Winchester that my mother moved to, our Southampton house was destroyed, and she lived with my mother until my mother's death and then she moved in with my sister and she lived with her until her death.

WB That's remarkable.

JZ It was a very long association. She was a splendid girl, lady.

WB So, in fact you really owe as much to her in a way as to your mother?

JZ Yes I do, but in my grown-up years if you like, mother became a very important person in my life. We remained very close and she lived long enough as it

were not only to see me as well as the rest of the family married. My sister never married but all my brothers did, and she lived long enough to see the first two of my four children. But she didn't see the others, she died when she was about 74, I think it was.

WB And your brothers all became medical doctors or dentists or something allied did they not?

JZ Well, we had one dentist. The eldest – just to go through them briefly chronologically – the eldest, Bill, became a general practitioner. For many years, I was due to join him in general practice but that's another story. The second eldest followed in father's footsteps and became an ophthalmic surgeon, also in Southampton and he lived to, 85 I think he was, he died a couple of years ago. The third brother is the one who is still alive, he's now about 82/83, he became a dentist. He was telling me not so long ago when he came to visit me that he felt there were enough doctors in the family in his formative years. And father threw out a few suggestions, none of which he really liked, but he thought dentistry was as good as anything else. It wasn't any tremendous desire on his part to be a dentist, but he felt he had to do something and that filled the bill. And then my youngest brother, Philip, he became... He was a post-war doctor in the sense that when my father died, the elder two had already qualified and the dental brother was at dental school so his future was reasonably secure. But there was no money available to send the youngest of the four to Guy's, and a kindly uncle took him under his wing and got him into the Stock Exchange, which Philip really hated. In 1939, the first of the family to join up was young Philip – he went into the Gunners. He went through the war and we were a very lucky family, there can't be many families who had four sons who were all in the services who all came out. But he went through the war and he took advantage of one of the opportunities that presented after the war to get a grant which enabled him to go as a mature student, as we would now call it, to Guy's. And he went there a couple of years before me, so we did actually spend a bit of time together at Guy's. Indeed, he married one of the ward sisters at Guy's and he had a flat not very far from the hospital and he and I had shared digs for a year. And then after he was married they rented me a room in their flat. So we were very close for a long time.

WB So, the family's solidarity was really quite considerable?

JZ Yes, it was.

WB And you stayed in touch with all your brothers and sister?

JZ I stayed in touch with them all, really quite closely too, including my sister who hated medicine and everything to do with medicine. She became a professional florist, which was much more her mark. No, we were a very close and very happy family and I think we all very much enjoyed our childhood inasmuch as one could enjoy a war, even throughout that we were very lucky and we did very well. Our house was destroyed but we were not there at the time, we were living in a borrowed house down in Somerset, and after the war mother bought a house in Winchester and that became the focus for the family for a long time. And most of us, with the exception of my youngest brother and myself, we became London based, but the

others were Hampshire based.

WB And your mother wasn't involved in medicine herself at all?

JZ No, not in the least. I think she was very proud of her medical brood, but others slightly more remotely connected were involved. Let me just tell you one little story, not perhaps chronologically, but the younger of my four brothers, Philip, was a consultant physician at the Brompton Hospital in London. And I couldn't put an exact date on it but I would guess it was in the early '60s, he went to the hospital one day. And he was met by his house physician who said 'Oh, Dr Zorab, I have a private patient that I've admitted under your name who I would like you to come and meet.' So, my brother Philip went along to a private room at the Brompton and the house physician opened the door with a little bit of a flourish and said 'Dr Zorab, I would like you to meet Mr. Zorab.' And there in bed there was a man who turned out to be a Judge from the Netherlands, and this Judge, retired Judge had spent many, many years researching his family history. And we have a fairly extensive family tree now all researched by this Judge, dating back to the 1500s where he tracked down the first of the Zorabs who had been born in Yerevan in Armenia. And having done all this work he had got as far as discovering that there was an English branch to the family and he had come to England to track them down. And he had had a heart attack in London on his second day and was admitted under the care of my brother.

WB How extraordinary, what a coincidence.

JZ Yes.

WB You all went to Cheltenham, except for your sister obviously.

JZ Yes, we all went to Cheltenham and a selection of our sons have gone to Cheltenham, my oldest son and some of my others. It hasn't been quite as universal as it was, as fees have gradually gone up.

WB But you enjoyed your schooldays?

JZ I enjoyed my schooldays enormously. It was wartime, and despite that I have very many happy memories. I haven't been a great 'old school type', I don't know that I have ever been to an old school reunion. I've written to the occasional person and indeed my housemaster, of whom I was very fond, died I think at the age of 96 quite recently.

WB But did you have any particular interests at school that led you to medicine or did you have totally different interests?

JZ I had no particular interests that led me to medicine, but I can remember the process of career choice if you like quite clearly, somewhat to my surprise. There was a time when I had reached the sort of assumption, if you like, that I would go to Guy's. But there was great uncertainty at this time as to, if I went to Guy's by whom or how the fees would be paid. Clearly, my mother would not be able to afford to do so. My brothers were all in the services and there was no guarantee that they would

survive the war, so I can remember wondering whether there were any alternatives. For a little while I flirted with the idea of going into the services myself. And I can remember very clearly a sort of recruitment drive being made by one of the fancier British regiments – I think it was the Dragoon Guards – and I was very taken by the uniform of the officer who came down. That soon passed. And then I flirted with veterinary science quite seriously. I even got to the stage of buying one or two veterinary books.

WB While you were still at school?

JZ While I was still at school, but that again didn't last very long. And towards the end of my schooldays, probably, I can't remember exactly... After the war was over I became aware of a scheme introduced by the government of the day which was providing grants for people who could show that their career had been interrupted by service in the armed forces. I'm not sure that this ought to go on record, but it's so long ago now it doesn't matter. So I therefore quite deliberately went to do my national service straight after school, having first done the first of my medical school exams, First MB, and I then claimed that the national service had interrupted my medical school training. That seemed to be swallowed and that qualified me for a full grant. So, I fell back into medicine if you like having solved what was probably the only major stumbling block, which was financing it. I think had that anxiety not been there I would have probably just headed for medicine like the rest of the family.

WB Simply out of tradition?

JZ Simply out of tradition, and also I suppose having seen, if you like, thinking back now, having seen the lifestyle that the doctor and the respect that the person had in the community. It seemed to me something that was made for a contented life and why shouldn't I enjoy it as well.

WB So, you had no other burning talents, hobbies, passions at school that might have taken you in any other direction?

JZ No, I really never had any other burning passions and really now, fifty years later or whatever it is, I still don't. Medicine has been my love all my life. I've never been a hobby person, and a lot of my friends and indeed my wife have sort of said 'Well, what are you going to do after you retire?' Well, I've been retired now for six months and I seem to be busier than I was before I retired. So, that hasn't proved a problem.

WB But getting into Guy's was quite a problem, wasn't it? I mean, you applied before you'd taken your School Certificate?

JZ Well, yes. Getting in wasn't too bad. I took my School Certificate; I had to get ... Matric as it was known in those days. I managed that, and I was accepted for... No I didn't manage that, I'm telling you wrong, I failed biology, that's right. And after I... Goodness, my memory's failing me, after I left Guy's, sorry, after I left school, we moved into a rented house in Eastbourne and the only significance of mentioning that was that I had got this problem that I couldn't get into Guy's unless I

had got a credit in biology. I went to the Brighton Polytechnic College which wasn't too far away when we lived in Eastbourne. I studied there. I took what I suppose is the equivalent these days of an A-level in biology and I failed it again. I re-applied for Guy's and I was then accepted to go in as a first year medical student during which I only did biology and that was added on as it were to my physics and chemistry credits from school.

WB Why do you think they allowed that? Were there not lots of applicants at the time? Was it the family name that helped you?

JZ I can't give you an accurate answer, except that admission to medical school was much more interview-based than on academic prowess. Had it been on the latter, I wouldn't be a doctor today, either at Guy's or any other medical school. So, I think it extremely likely that it was largely due to the family connections. And indeed family connections did count for a lot in those days and I'm not entirely sure that it should have been abandoned so completely as it has.

WB And your elder brother was two years ahead of you and acquitting himself well as a model?

JZ Yes. He was acquitting himself very well there. He had a very nice bunch of ex-service friends that he had gone in with. And in fact although I was younger than them we became quite a close-knit group in those early years, although our actual level of studies were different because he was substantially ahead of me by then. Either one or two years, I can't remember exactly. I don't remember as much perhaps as I ought to about those early years because as with school I am not a great reunion person. And recently I gave a valedictory address on my retirement from my hospital and some of my colleagues there for that particular occasion got in touch with Guy's. And somewhat to my amazement, they were able to produce a photograph of my year at Guy's sitting on the steps of the medical school. And it has taken me back as I have seen many of those faces that I haven't thought about for the last fifty years, some of which I can still put names to, rather more than I expected to, in fact.

WB And one or two who you have kept in contact with?

JZ One or two I have kept in contact with. There is one in that photograph, Professor Michael Vickers who was professor of anaesthetics in Cardiff until he retired a year ago, about the same age as I. And our careers have gone along in parallel almost since we were in Guy's except that he spent most of his development time in Birmingham before he went to Cardiff, whereas I was in London and then moved to Bristol. But we've both worked in the European and international scene together over the years.

WB So, you were all set after your year with biology, you passed the biology?

JZ I passed the biology and was duly admitted to the medical school along with, as I see from that photograph, a number of young ladies. And I've been trying to remember whether or not my year was the first year that ladies were admitted to Guy's or whether that had come in one or two years earlier, and I'm honestly not certain.

What I am certain of is at that time there was a quota system and you, the medical school was expected to admit a certain percentage of young ladies, but I don't know what it was.

WB It certainly looks rather low; it looks like something like one in ten!

JZ A little bit thin on the ground are they not?

WB But you thoroughly enjoyed your time at Guy's, didn't you? You found the work rather an intrusion into other forms of life?

JZ Well, I don't know that I'd go quite that far. I have never been a very academically orientated person. As I've told you on another occasion my schooldays were not marked by any particular academic prowess or indeed any particular sporting prowess, with the possible exception of gymnastics at which I was perhaps better than some. And I did once get into the college gym team, but that was about the only thing. When I watched the recent performance of the gymnasts at the Olympics in Atlanta, it makes me realise that I hadn't actually got very far in my schooldays!

WB Nevertheless you competed for Guy's in the gymnastics team?

JZ No, Guy's didn't have a gymnastics team. My only sporting efforts at Guy's were in rugby, which I had always enjoyed. I wasn't particularly good, but in Guy's the ex-service group that I mentioned that gathered around my brother and which included me, although I was just ex-service not war-time, but they formed a Rugby-15 that were known as 'The Tankards'. And the name perhaps gives the game away to some extent. 'The Tankards' was a little bit of a beer-swilling group and it was also at a time when Stephen Potter had introduced the concept of gamesmanship and oneupmanship. And I remember on one match in particular, I don't know who we were playing, but we thought we would try and employ some of the ploys mentioned by Stephen Potter by serving tankards of beer to all the opposing team before the match started. The only trouble was that the home team succumbed to the beer as well and I'm not sure that it actually affected the result.

WB I would just like to come back to Guy's in a moment, but could we go back to your very short national service which took place before you went to Guy's. Did you go to from school or from Brighton Technical College, Polytechnic?

JZ Well, you've taken me back and I'm just having to pause for thought. I went to be medically examined for the services in Brighton, I do remember that very clearly. And I was found to have very flat feet, which I'd known about all my life. Indeed in much earlier years I'd even been sent by my mother to dancing classes to try, on the advice of an orthopaedic surgeon, to try and improve my flat feet. However, my flat feet caused me to be graded B2 and that put a very severe limitation on what aspects of the services I could join. For instance, no infantry regiment at all would have anyone with that grade. I certainly didn't want to go into the Royal Army Medical Corps for the very good reason that I could not have become an officer - and I was always one for the creature comforts - unless I was medically qualified. And in the end of a very limited selection, I opted for the Royal Signals and I was duly

enrolled in that regiment. I was sent up to Catterick for my initial four weeks training that everybody had to do, not a period of huge enjoyment but still one that I survived. And in due course I was labelled as being someone who could be recommended for officer training. So, after that I was sent to Aldershot to what was known as an Officer Cadet Training Unit, OCTU, where I came under the influence of the legendary regimental sergeant major Ronald Brittain, of whom there have been books and I think even a movie made. He was a larger than life man reputed to be enormously severe but in fact, and this was why he was larger than life, he had the proverbial heart of gold. I don't remember any, or I don't remember very many specific instances. But I do remember one on the parade ground at Aldershot where I was lined up with all the others and where I inadvertently dropped my rifle, and I don't think for the purposes of this recording I should repeat the bellowed message from Sergeant Major Brittain. But I was duly doubled off the parade ground between two guards into the cells where I was left for the rest of that particular day. But of course equally he would come out with us all in the evening and have a beer at the pub and was really quite a splendid man. I went through the full 24 week Signals Officer training which was actually quite technical and it's very sad in some ways that anything I might have learnt during that time never stayed with me. I know no more about radios today than anybody else.

WB But you found you enjoyed technical work?

JZ I did I think quite enjoy it at the time, although I think it was also partly a means to an end. I was there, this was the training that I'd sort of got myself into and there wasn't really much option, I had to go through with it. But in I suppose you might say typical army bloody-mindedness at the end of this 24-week training I was sent on a three-week cookery course in the Army Catering Corps. And I actually spent the rest of my time back in Catterick as the catering officer at the headquarters mess.

WB After three weeks you were running the catering?

JZ The officers' mess catering. I mean, they had proper cooks and things, and so on.

WB But you had to organise it all?

JZ I had to organise it all. It wasn't in fact terribly difficult and in fact it was probably the most enjoyable three weeks of the whole of my national service. My national service was very abbreviated. Officially one went in for two years in those days, but there was something called a class B release and you could qualify for a class B release if you were going to university or medical school. In the end I only did fifteen months and I was quite legitimately released to go to Guy's.

WB So, you never left the country?

JZ I never left the country. There was one episode that perhaps might be worth recording whilst I was still at Catterick. The commanding officer there was entertaining some top brass on one occasion. I was asked to make sure that the mess dinner was of a very high standard. That was not a problem. And I was also asked to

provide some entertainment. I put my head together with a particular friend at that time called John Atwell and if John ever sees this video he will recall this very clearly. John Atwell is now senior paediatric surgeon at Southampton Children's Hospital. And he and I acquired two army bicycles and we took them to the workshops and had one or two minor modifications made and using these we then put on a show mimicking the Royal Signals motorcycle display team. We were able to get eight people on each of these bicycles as we pedalled around on the grass after this rather fancy dinner. But the bit I remember most of all was the flaming hoop ... of straw. Exactly as the Royal Signals display team do we had a flaming hoop of straw with a little ramp leading up to this, and pedalling like fury we would ride up this ramp and drive through the flames. This all went down very well and we were duly commended by the commanding officer.

WB Rather different from the sort of pranks you got up to at Guy's.

JZ Well, a bit different from those perhaps but not perhaps something I was supposed to be doing in the army. But nevertheless it was good fun.

WB So, that was your farewell to the army?

JZ That was my farewell to the army and I left there. By that time, my mother had moved from Brighton back to Winchester. Well not *back* to Winchester, she'd moved to Winchester. And I duly went to Guy's to settle down to the second year studies of anatomy and physiology, which I found difficult, shall we say. I have all my life, at least this is my excuse, had an appalling memory. I still have an appalling memory and when people tell me it's because I'm getting old, I can only say in my defence that it has always been so. There was even one occasion at school I remember on a history exam where I succeeded in getting 4 per cent which I believe was an all-time record. But for very similar reasons – the sort of history that we were learning was heavily dependent on memory and that was not my strong point. So, my time in that first couple of years at Guy's, well not first couple of years but the time after my army service I was locked in the dissecting rooms along with everybody else doing my best to memorise this, that and the other. And when the time came to take the exam known as Second MB, which was anatomy, physiology and pathology, I duly failed. There was a parallel exam in the British qualification system called Conjoint and I took that and I also failed that. This pattern was to be repeated at the second attempt at both of them. And at the end of that academic year, having failed two attempts at Second MB and two attempts at the Conjoint, the dean had come to the conclusion that I would be better pursuing an alternative occupation and asked me to leave. Well this, as you can well imagine, was a very bitter blow. It wasn't so much perhaps that I had this burning desire to be a doctor, but I did have a burning desire to have a career. I was already engaged by this time, we're now talking about 1950 I think, and the family and my four surrogate fathers were also bitterly disappointed. They thought I'd no right to be engaged anyhow. So there was a little bit of family discontent. And in due course, a month or two after I'd actually been asked to leave, there was an occasion which happens every two years, which is known as the Guy's biennial dinner. My four brothers decided to go to the biennial dinner and they took me as their guest. And it's an occasion I remember with some embarrassment as I was taken round and introduced to various of the governors of Guy's Hospital at that time, my

brothers making the point that this was somewhat hard at only being allowed two attempts at each exam and then being thrown out as it were. And this was a successful expedition in the sense that a rather reluctant dean, Dr ER Boland, later Sir Rowan Boland, the late Sir Rowan Boland, summoned me and I went up to the medical school to see him. And he said something along the lines that although he wasn't quite sure that it was the right decision, he had been persuaded that I should be allowed back for one more attempt at the Conjoint examination.

WB Can you tell us something about the Conjoint examination because this is not something that now exists, is it?

JZ Yes, it still exists. Very briefly, there are three methods in this country of qualifying as a doctor. One is through a university degree and that is what the Second MB was, that's the second exam in the degree course. To go slightly to the other extreme, one could and still can qualify through the Society of Apothecaries. That's irrelevant for this perhaps. But there is also the Conjoint Board. Conjoint simply refers to the fact that this is a board jointly run between the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians, hence Conjoint. And they do hold an annual examination which is a qualifying examination and this qualifies one as LRCP, MRCS – Licence of the Royal College of Physicians, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons. And this was the one that I was to be allowed one more attempt at. I was not allowed another attempt at the degree examination. By this time I had a considerable incentive to work, for not only did really my hopefully forthcoming marriage depend on passing this exam but also my future career, and on this occasion I was successful. That would have been, I think, in 1952, probably in September of that year. I'm mainly guessing at that date because I know that as soon as I had passed my anatomy and physiology I proceeded with our wedding plans and I married my wife in March 1953, the year of the coronation.

WB Despite having quite a way to go in terms of establishing your career?

JZ Yes. I felt that this was the major hurdle and indeed so it proved to be because clinical medicine... Once I had started my clinical studies, this was what I felt medical training should be. It had much more relevance to me. It was not a memory-based subject as anatomy had been. It was anatomy in particular which was my downfall. I did in fact pass physiology on two or three occasions, but it was always anatomy that was my downfall. And once I had got into the clinical studies as I got towards my finals I began to feel much more confident and apart from another hiccup which is another story, I did in fact pass all my finals without a major problem.

WB So, you had met your wife who is Shirley?

JZ Shirley is my wife. I met her whilst at Guy's during my first two or three years there. She was a secretary in the private wing and although our paths didn't cross at all she actually had got to know another medical student who was a very good friend of mine, and indeed someone I had been at school with as well as being a medical student with. And it wouldn't do to say I pinched her off him but that was actually the means of our meeting, shall we say.

WB She wasn't engaged to him at all?

JZ No, no. Nothing like that. It was all quite honourable in those days.

WB So, she had an income at least.

JZ She had an income and this in fact was a very important point because she actually left Guy's soon after that and acquired a better job, by which I mean a more highly-paid job, working in County Hall for what was then London County Council. And that together with my grant enabled us to live fairly comfortably in a nice little flat that we had managed to get literally a week or so before we married. So we had somewhere to set up home in.

WB So, she went on working and you had three more years, did you not, to qualify?

JZ Yes. She went on working through those three years. I forged ahead as it were qualifying in April 1956, after which I embarked on the long trail of junior hospital posts.

WB But in the meantime at Guy's you'd had, you'd played a rather tremendous prank which got into the news and rather terminated your career for a bit, didn't it?

JZ This was the other hiccup to which I referred. Although I was not a great sporting person myself I was a great supporter of the rugby teams at Guy's and in particular there is the annual event of the Hospitals Cup, rugby cup which was always played at Richmond. And it was quite often if one's hospital was in the final... Whichever hospital one was at, it was quite often that the occasion would be accompanied by some form of rag. And in 1956 I recall sitting in the reading room at Guy's wondering what we might be able to do that would liven up the occasion when St. Mary's and Guy's were due to meet in the final. And we came up with this idea that perhaps we could produce a pseudo-royal party to take to the match, and funny bits of this are crystal clear. The most crystal clear bit was going into the telephone in the porter's lodge, finding the telephone number of the Richmond Rugby Football Club and announcing myself as the secretary to the Princess Christina of Schleswig-Holstein. I might add that it had been several hours of pouring through 'Who's Who' to actually find a title that sounded believable but wasn't in fact a real person, and this was the name we came up with. And to my total astonishment on that occasion, one could almost hear the person on the other end of the phone bowing as they said they would be delighted to have Her Royal Highness visit the Richmond rugby football ground. 'How many would there be in the party?' Something we hadn't even planned on, but one said quite quickly four or five; there would be a couple of private secretaries and a lady-in-waiting. Finding the story had been swallowed hook, line and sinker we then sat down and planned the occasion. We found a very attractive lady dental student to play the part of the princess and she had a friend who she said she'd like as her lady-in-waiting. And I had a particular friend, Paul Jackson, who I have been in touch with not very long ago, who was going to be the private secretary. And so, having got our team together and discussed a few details, we then decided that we really looked far too young to get away with this. So I telephoned my mother

who was 72 at that time, told her what we were doing, asked her if she would like to come along as a sort of dowager countess. And she jumped at the opportunity and indeed indicated she would have been very upset had she been left out. She acquired herself a rather smart hat with a large ostrich feather I remember, and I went back to my flat in West Kensington with one unsolved problem which was how we were going to get the group there. We hadn't, as any other students, much in the way of funds. And I looked down the car hire adverts in the *Evening Standard* and I saw one advertisement for a 1939 Queen Mary style Rolls Royce for hire complete with chauffeur. So I telephoned, I asked how much the hire charges were and the man on the end of the phone told me which put it completely out of our reach. I can't remember the total conversation, but for some reason I told him what we were doing. And he was quite enchanted and he said he would be delighted to make his car available and there would be no charge.

WB How wonderful, wonderful.

JZ So, that was really the final piece that fell into place. I was unable to go to the club with the group because I had already met the president of the Richmond Rugby Football Club. And the last discussion as it were we had as a group was that I guessed the likely thing that would happen was that the president of the Richmond Rugby Football Club, being somewhat in awe perhaps of having a royal party visit there, might well ask the princess if she would present the cup. And the plan was that she would accept graciously and that after she'd made the presentation she would blow the whistle and everybody would hopefully laugh and that would be the end of the occasion. So, we all assembled – I don't think there's anything significant in this – behind the psychiatric clinic at Guy's. And duly off they went on that memorable day, I think it was a Wednesday, and it went more or less according to plan. They were greeted by the president and his minions, they were bowed to and shown out of the car, and initially were put in a not very comfortable row of seats whilst the box – there is a box at the club – was occupied by four senior Guy's consultants. Three of them are worth mentioning by name perhaps. One was Hedley Atkins, later to become Sir Hedley Atkins, president of the Royal College of Surgeons. One was Sam Wass, another surgeon. One was Dr Philip Helliwell, at the time the director of the department of anaesthetics at Guy's. My mother had a flash of inspiration. Sir Hedley Atkins always smoked a pipe and my mother hated pipe smoke and she called on the president of the club saying that she found the seating quite unacceptable and she certainly didn't want to sit in a place where tobacco fumes might be wafted past her. And the four Guy's consultants were then all asked to leave the box, which they did, and the royal party was duly bowed into it.

WB But did they not recognise their students?

JZ We shall never know. I will come back to it. I won't go on with this much longer. But the one bit of the plan that didn't work was that the match was a draw. The princess had been asked to present the cup, but of course the occasion never arose, and at the end of the match they were all bowed back into the car, they drove back to the psychiatric clinic at Guy's where I duly met them. And although we were all very pleased with ourselves and it had all been great fun, nobody knew and this seemed the most dreadful shame. So, my friend, Paul Jackson, and myself the next

day, Thursday, we went down to the offices of *The Evening News* in Fleet Street. We found an editor and said 'We've got a little story that might interest you.' We told him our little story, he was quite taken by this, he took a few notes. And in *The News* and *The Standard* in fact on that day, Thursday afternoon, a very short half-inch report of the occasion appeared. We were well satisfied with this and we thought well, that was all good fun, let's go back and get on with our lives. The next day as I went into Guy's, I went up the steps of the hospital to the porter's lodge where the head porter whose name was Lofty met me there. And he said 'Ah, Dr Zorab, you are wanted in the dean's office,' or Mr. Zorab I was then. I went across the park up the steps to the medical school and the steps were lined by people, I wasn't sure who they were, and the corridor - there was a long corridor down to the dean's office - was absolutely crammed with people. They very soon made it clear who they were. They were representatives from every one of the national daily papers, *The Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The News Chronicle* as it was, *The Daily Sketch* and so on and so forth. And they started asking me questions about the previous day's events. I declined to say anything at that moment and made my way down to the dean's office. The dean had had a complaint from the president of the Richmond Rugby Football Club; they had been made to look fools etc. etc. It didn't seem terribly serious and this was not the sort of behaviour that medical students were expected to indulge in etc. etc. and he was very sorry, he would have to ask me to leave. Well, twice in one's medical school career, it seemed to be getting a bit much, but this was only one month before finals, it was in March '56 and the finals would be in April. So I slightly slunk out with my tail between my legs. I did say a few words to the press, because there was no way one could avoid it. Well, they were still all standing there and it was all over the papers the next day. It occurred at a time shortly after the release of a film, which was called 'The Man Who Never Was' and one particular headline was 'The Princess Who Never Was'. I still have all these newspaper cuttings. However, although I was very depressed by this and my fiancée, well my wife she was then, was not best pleased, the next day I think it was - I forget the timing exactly - I was recalled to the dean's office who said that he had been approached by a number of consultants, the names I mentioned of those consultants in the box; Hedley Atkins, Sam Wass and Philip Helliwell, who are all dead now. But Philip Helliwell later became a very close friend of mine and he did tell me that they had made representations to the dean. Some of them claimed to have recognised - this is why I said I'd come back - one of the students, but went along with it because they thought it was good fun. The newspapers varied in their opinions because they started trying to track down the consultants and one or two of the reports said that they did know and some said that they didn't know. I shall never know. It doesn't really matter. The important part was that thanks to some of those consultants, and Philip Helliwell in particular I suspect, I was allowed back to take my finals with lots of serious undertakings to behave myself and so on and so forth.

WB That was a very generous act in fact.

JZ It was very good of them. I think perhaps Sir Rowan Boland was not blessed with perhaps the best sense of humour in the world.

WB And so you took your finals and passed?

JZ I took my finals and passed and embarked on my career as a doctor, but dined out on that story for quite a long time. In fact, Philip Helliwell at one of the annual dinners of the Association of Anaesthetists when he became president actually told it as his after dinner speech.

WB I think we'll take a short break there and then go on to the next part of your career in a few moments.

JZ Right.

WB Dr Zorab, we've just got to the point where you have qualified at Guy's, but could I take you back for a moment to your wedding in 1953 and ask you how you coped with having a family at that time while being a medical student? Was it very difficult?

JZ Well, I didn't have a family then. We, as you say, were married. My wife was working at County Hall. She had previously been at Guy's when I met her, but she left Guy's, got a job in County Hall. We were living in our flat in West Kensington and my time was more or less fully taken up by my medical studies. But money was tight inevitably, she wasn't earning a princely amount and my grant wasn't very princely either, I forget the figures now. But it was necessary to make a bit extra and so I began to find occasional work as a waiter. This had a few moments, which are worth possibly mentioning briefly. There was a small firm not far from Paddington that had a number of chaps and girls who they would as it were 'rent out' to people giving private parties and so on. Coincidentally, the firm was known as 'John' in Sussex Gardens. I went to one or two parties, usually in private houses, sometimes as a barman and sometimes as a waiter at a dinner. There was one occasion when I went with a friend of mine to a New Years Eve party and we were going both as barmen. We had a little van that we took and we had a sort of trestle bar and all the liquor in the van and we went to this house I suppose at sort of 9-ish in the evening. We were welcomed by a man there who showed us where he wanted the bar set up which we duly did, and then he said he didn't expect his first guests to arrive much before half past eleven. So we really just stood around polishing glasses, opening one or two bottles and so on, filling in time. Then about half past eleven or perhaps just after, somewhat to our astonishment, down the stairs into the room we were came the person – I choose my words carefully – who had let us in. Only this time he was wearing a bright pink full-length satin dress. And we did have some difficulty recognising him because of the wig and the make-up, but it was quite clear that it was the same person and we thought well, well, well. We were, I suppose, fairly young and innocent. About ten minutes to midnight, the doorbell began to start ringing. And it wasn't very long before it was quite clear what sort of party we were at as one after another these beautifully dressed men came in and we were, I think, just amused by the whole thing. And this was fine for the next ten minutes/quarter of an hour or so until we reached midnight when things began to, shall I say, deteriorate slightly and more and more couples, if that's the right term, began going upstairs. By this time we were actually getting a bit horrified by the whole thing. So we helped ourselves to a bottle of gin each, as we put it to ourselves 'in lieu of a tip', and we duly packed up our bar and beat a hasty retreat in our van.

WB So, life was full of surprises!

JZ Life was full of surprises. That was one of the bigger ones. Mostly, they were of a rather more pleasant nature. I mean, there was one I remember where the host came up and said 'Well, you don't sound like a waiter.' And I said 'Oh, well I'm actually a medical student.' 'Oh well, we don't want you dressed up like that then.' I was wearing a tailcoat and a striped waistcoat and a bow tie. And he said 'For goodness sake, take off that monkey suit and here's a pullover.' That I duly put on and I simply became another guest, but poured out a few drinks. And that was an extremely nice evening.

WB And you qualified and were then faced with the future?

JZ I was and the first thing was to get employment. And I didn't get, there were... The sort of system then was you could put your name down for various house jobs in your hospital. I didn't get any of those, but there was quite a good what the Americans I think would call placement system run by the medical school office. And I very quickly was placed in what was a locum house surgeon job in the County Hospital in Hereford. It was a bit of a long way away but nevertheless, at that stage, beggars couldn't be choosers as it were. It was only a three month locum, so I spent I suppose it was May, June and July of '56 in fact in a very nice little job in Hereford, my first job, just beginning to find my feet. When I look back on it now, I am quite horrified at some of the things I was expected to do as a brand new doctor. Not least of which actually was to give anaesthetics in the casualty department for anyone who happened to need a broken wrist setting or whatever it was.

WB Really? And had you had any anaesthetics training at all?

JZ No anaesthetics training at all other than what I had seen as a medical student. This I might add was very common in the '40s and '50s.

WB And what type of anaesthetic treatment was in use?

JZ It was usually putting patients to sleep with thiopentone which of course is still widely used although perhaps less so for the last five years, and then gas oxygen ether. I don't think I did more than two or three; it terrified me at the time. I was also taught by the consultant orthopaedic surgeon there how to pin a fractured hip because he had to come from Oswestry and he wasn't going to come and do those on an emergency basis. So at least two patients, I was left as a new doctor to pin their hips for them.

WB With no supervision at all?

JZ With no supervision at all. But, one of the few things I had been quite good at at school was carpentry, and this bore a very close relationship to carpentry and I actually quite enjoyed doing it. It was about the only little bit of surgery I ever did that I did enjoy. Later when I found myself trying to learn how to take out an appendix I was hopeless and that was not for me, but I could pin a hip or two. But I had a pleasant summer in Hereford, and played a bit of tennis, duly went back to London, and by that time a 'proper' house surgeon's job as opposed to a locum had

become available in Chichester. And we, I can't remember the exact dates but we moved down to Chichester I think it was in the summer of 1956, to St. Richard's Hospital which is certainly still there although very much bigger than it was then. We found a very nice little house, a bungalow in fact, down in Old Bosham Harbour to rent and we settled down for what was a very happy year in there. The house surgeon's job at St. Richard's was followed immediately by a house physician's job at another hospital in the town, at the Royal West Sussex Hospital. So I had two good years in Chichester, after which I thought it was time to return to London. Now, right up to this time, my career plan had been for me to join my eldest brother in general practice – he was a general practitioner in a small village called Overton outside Basingstoke – and I was really rather looking forward to that. He however had thought it would be a very good idea if I were to get at least one year's experience doing obstetrics and hopefully a diploma in obstetrics. So, I started looking for an obstetric job. I went to a number of interviews, none of which were successful, but one of those interviews was at Paddington General Hospital, as it was then, in the Harrow Road. I was interviewed, I was not appointed. I went back into the waiting room along with one or two other disappointed candidates. And the personnel lady came out and said 'I'm very sorry, none of you will be appointed. We do however have a locum post in anaesthetics if any of you are interested.' Well, by that time I was out of work and not only had my wife but our first son was with us, first child.

WB Who was an adopted child?

JZ Who was an adopted child. He'd arrived while we were in Chichester.

WB Why had you...? If I can divert for a moment, why had you decided to adopt?

JZ Simply because we had wanted to start a family, we had failed to do so, and on medical advice we were not likely ever to have a family, and so we thought we would adopt. And so young Peter arrived while we were in Chichester aged I think all of six weeks. Anyhow, I had thought well we had better, I had better take this job. So, I was duly appointed as locum SHO in anaesthetics at Paddington General. We found a rented house to live in in Radlett ... and I started at Paddington General.

WB But still feeling that you hadn't had much experience of anaesthetics?

JZ I hadn't had any experience and it slightly surprised me they were willing to appoint a locum with no experience. But I had a very good teacher there, a lady called Elizabeth Flett and the senior anaesthetist, a Dr Coleman, I think they have both since died. And they looked after me very well. They gave me a good grounding in anaesthetics. I wasn't allowed to work unsupervised for a while at least, I did obviously after a little while, and to my surprise I think I thoroughly enjoyed it. So much so that I thought to myself well, I know what I'll do. After discussing this with Dr Flett and Dr Coleman, instead of just doing this two-week locum, if they'll have me, I'll do it for six months. And then the obstetric job would become vacant again because they were six months posts, and I thought I might then have a better chance of being appointed. And Dr Flett thought this was a good idea so I set about doing this, but after about three or four months I had really fallen in love with anaesthetics to the extent that I thought perhaps I'd rather do this than general practice. There were, or at

least there was one other reason. I thoroughly enjoyed and had done throughout my house surgeon work, working in a hospital. And I can remember quite clearly thinking well, I think I'd actually rather spend my career as a hospital doctor and not as a general practitioner.

WB Was this because of the range of the things you had to cover as a GP?

JZ No, I think it was purely the, I suppose, social side of it. I liked being surrounded by other doctors. I liked the sort of club atmosphere if you like.

WB And can you explain what it was about anaesthetics that appealed to you particularly?

JZ Well, I think there were probably two things, although I might not have crystallised them at that time. One was anaesthetics is quite a technical speciality and I think I probably have a slight technical leaning going back to the carpentry perhaps, and maybe I should have done orthopaedic surgery, but no, I'm not being too serious. There was another aspect to it. It was what these days we would call a sharp end speciality. You had a patient and the results of your administrations to that patient were immediate. In quite a lot of medicine you actually have to wait days, weeks or even months to see the results or even learn whether you have done any good or not. But if you give an injection of thiopentone into a patient in five seconds they are asleep and hopefully awake again fairly soon afterwards, and you never really have the problem of chronic patients. Some people might say this was the disadvantage with anaesthetics that the patient contact is actually somewhat limited, but I don't think I have any great love for ill people particularly and this suited me very well. I could see them beforehand, I could see them afterwards and that was that. And I got sufficiently hooked if you like on anaesthetics to decide not to go for this obstetrics job in six months time. Instead I thought I would seek career advice from someone back at Guy's. And I went back to Guy's to see Dr Philip Helliwell who I've mentioned who was still the director of the department of anaesthetics there and who I knew, although I didn't know him as it were in an anaesthetic context because I'd only come across him as a medical student. But nevertheless I had a long talk with him and told him what I wanted to do. And he, in those days things were a little different and he thought 'Well yes, I think that's just fine, if you'd like to do that then I think we'd better get you a job back here at Guy's.' So, I did six months at Paddington General Hospital at the end of which I returned to Guy's to a post that was then known as senior resident anaesthetist, but in practice an SHO post in today's parlance. And, by that time... I think I've slightly misled you, I didn't just do six months at Paddington General, I did a full year, because at the end of that year I took the Diploma in anaesthetics exam which I passed, and this was helpful in getting the job at Guy's. Once I was back there, Philip Helliwell made it clear to me I would have to settle down to do my Fellowship exam. And perhaps if I'd thought carefully about this beforehand it might have put me off the whole thing because this meant going back to anatomy and physiology. I spent a year at Guy's and although I can't remember too much detail it was a reasonably uneventful year, simply increasing my experience if you like, starting my studies again. And probably, although I can't be certain of this, probably having at least one attempt at what was then known as the Primary FFA, and failing.

WB Why do you think you failed? Was it because of the anatomy again?

JZ I know it was because of the anatomy again.

WB Yes. Just that?

JZ Just that. And, my year at Guy's came to an end... Philip Helliwell also had an appointment as consultant to a group of hospitals known as the 'Three P's'. These were St. Peter's, St. Paul's and St. Philip's, all in and around Covent Garden and he used to do one half-day a week there. They didn't have full-time consultants. They tended to have these sort of one day or half-day sessions. Both in urology, they are all urological hospitals. There was a vacancy there for a registrar, they didn't have SHOs because much of the work was unsupervised, and he thought he could get me in. So, I moved there. By this time we'd left our rented house in Radlett while I was working at Guy's and had moved into a little flat not far from Guy's so we didn't have to move again. And I settled down to work at the 'Three P's', a very, very enjoyable two years. A little bit of security in relative terms as opposed to the six-month/one-year jobs. A little bit more money because I was a registrar rather than an SHO and not a great deal of night duty because it was nearly all elective work at those hospitals, they didn't have a casualty department or an emergency department. And it was back to the books again. And then came I think probably two more failures at the Primary FFA, and by this time I was beginning to get a bit depressed by the whole thing and thought maybe I should have stuck to the idea of going into general practice. I'm not quite sure of the chronology of the events, but I did start looking at general practice again and I do recall going to look at a practice down in Lewes in Sussex where I was interviewed but I wasn't appointed. And as I was coming to the end of my time at the 'Three P's' and I had to do something, and I applied for and was appointed as registrar in anaesthetics to a hospital in Hampshire in a town called Alton. The attraction of this job which I saw advertised in the *BMJ* was that a house was offered and so with now two children...

WB You'd adopted the second one, yes?

JZ We'd adopted the second child by now, my elder daughter Julia. We duly moved down to Alton and I started work as registrar there at the Alton General Hospital and the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital. Alton General Hospital has since closed but Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital is still there and I embarked on what was a two-year appointment there. And it wasn't very far from Southampton. My chief in Alton, a man called Noel Thorpe, a very nice man, very good teacher, suggested that I go over to Southampton and talk to the director of the department there, a really wonderful man, Patrick Shackleton. Pat Shackleton was an enthusiastic medical educationalist, a consultant anaesthetist. And he was particularly keen on postgraduate education and had set up what I think was the first Primary FFA course. They're now two a penny in this country but not then, I'd never had any Primary FFA teaching, I'd had books. What teaching I'd had had all been clinical anaesthetics. And Noel Thorpe suggested that I ask Patrick Shackleton if I could join the course, it was a day release course. Alton were prepared to let me go on every Monday which is the day it was. So for quite a long time I would drive over to Southampton every

Monday and attend the Primary FFA course in Southampton. I'm pretty sure I had one more attempt at the Primary FFA while I was there. It might have been two, I can't remember. But I eventually came to my, what I know was my sixth attempt while I was in that job.

WB Was that a record, do you think?

JZ Well, that I can't answer for. I suspect probably not. I know when I was an examiner, and admittedly this was the Final FFA, I remember having one candidate who was up for the nineteenth time. So I'm not entirely alone at being an examination dunce! But I don't know whether the six was... But I did actually pass my Primary FFA while I was in that job. By this time, against all expectations, or during this time we lived at Alton my wife became pregnant. And it was clear that I needed to find, now that I had got my Primary FFA, a proper job. I don't mean that unkindly to Alton, but it was time to take the next step up. For reasons that I don't really remember I went for an interview for a registrar post at the Westminster Hospital and I didn't get it and I went back to Alton and worked a bit more. While I was still there the time came for me to sit my Final FFA. I did actually take that twice, but I passed on that on the second occasion. And that was within quite a short space of time - I think the exams were only a few months apart. So I was now a Fellow of the Faculty of Anaesthetists as it then was. I then found one or two locum posts because I wasn't learning any more. I'd been at Alton a long time and there wasn't a very wide variety of work to do there. And while I was trying to sort out the next career move, I did a locum job at Harefield Hospital and learnt a little bit about chest anaesthesia, I did a locum job at Hillingdon Hospital and I did a locum job at Winchester County Hospital. Now, a bit before the Winchester job, another registrar job came up at Westminster and I went again and tried. And, I can't remember the exact sequence... After my first failure at the Westminster Dr Organe as he then was, Geoffrey Organe, took me aside in a very kindly manner and said 'You know, you really ought to get your Final FFA if you really want to have a good chance for a registrar job in a London teaching hospital.' After the second time when I had got my Fellowship examination, he again took me aside and said 'You know, you're really too well qualified for a registrar job. Now that you've got your Fellowship, you ought to be looking at a senior registrar job.' Well, I got rather angry at this and I can only time it because I know it was when I was at Winchester because I wrote a rather... What's the word I want? Not quite impassioned but...

WB Intemperate?

JZ Intemperate, exactly right, letter to him saying that I found it very difficult to follow career advice which seemed to be diametrically opposed to that that he had given me previously. I don't remember the words exactly of course, but I wrote this letter and I posted it and regretted it instantly and thought my God, there goes my career! What I do remember is having lunch in the canteen in Winchester County Hospital one day and being called to the telephone. On the telephone was someone who I had never met, a Dr Russell Davies from the Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead. And Dr Russell Davies said to me that he understood from a friend of his at Winchester that I was a somewhat frustrated anaesthetist who was having difficulty in finding a good job or words to that effect. So, I suspect I blushed a bit although he

couldn't see that down the telephone and I confessed that I had indicated my disappointment at the career advice I had received. Russell Davies said that he had got a vacancy for a temporary senior registrar post in East Grinstead and was I interested. Obviously, I was extremely interested and I took myself off to East Grinstead very quickly. I think Russell and I, dare I say it, hit it off almost instantly and we became life-long friends thereafter. I told him a bit about my somewhat disastrous background and he was extremely understanding and very helpful. His senior registrar had gone off to the States for nine months and he was in a bit of a spot. And he'd actually asked Geoffrey Organe if he'd got anyone or knew anyone that could help them out, which was how it had come round to me.

WB But I believe in fact that you had made quite an impression during the oral for your Final FFA with an idea for a device that impressed the examiners.

JZ Yes, perhaps. I don't know to what extent that episode influenced it. But while I'd been at Guy's there was a Guy's consultant, or I think he was a senior registrar actually, called Cecil Bishop who had made a little gadget that electronically counted the patient's pulse, and he had shown me how to make it. And fiddling about in my flat in the Borough of Southwark I sort of expanded it slightly and built a device that would automatically measure blood pressure. During my oral examination on the occasion that I passed I was being examined by Professor Ronnie Woolmer, now deceased. At the time he was the professor of anaesthetics at the Royal College of Surgeons. Sitting next to him was Geoffrey Organe and by pure luck, the sort of luck that gets people through exams, he asked me to tell him a little bit about measuring the blood pressure. I launched forth into a fairly long-winded description of what I had built. We never touched on any other subject. I mean I'm sure Geoffrey Organe asked me other things, but not while I was talking to Professor Woolmer. At the end of this, against all the rules, he then said to me 'What's your name?' And I sort of looked at Geoffrey Organe who nodded because I knew that it was all supposed to be anonymous. I told him my name and so he said could I come round and see him in the research department of anaesthetics at the College the next day. So, despite this meaning a trip down to Alton and back again, I've perhaps always been one to seize opportunities, I said 'Yes.' I duly went round to the College where he said he was interested in what I had built, that he was looking for someone to take up a research fellowship, a Geigy Research Fellowship, was I interested? I said I would like time to think about it and I would let him know and I left his office and went out into what was the laboratory area. There was a young man pouring over a bench who sort of said 'Hello.' 'Hello' he said, 'I'm John Nunn.' And that was the first time I met John Nunn who's been someone else who I have known and been friends with ever since. I told him of this conversation, told him a bit about my background, and John said 'Don't touch it.' He said 'The last thing you want at this stage of your career is a research post. You haven't had a decent teaching post since you started anaesthetics.' Which was perhaps a little unkind, but I knew what he meant. And his recommendation was that I went away and got myself a proper senior registrar post.

WB Which was the right advice.

JZ Which was absolutely the right advice. And it was advice that I duly followed because I wound up at East Grinstead. Which although was only a temporary post did

in fact lead on to what John would call a proper senior registrar post. By now, having become quite friendly with Geoffrey Organe whilst I was at East Grinstead, Russell Davies was an enormous help. He arranged for me to go up to the Westminster one day a week to learn and gain experience in thoracic and cardiac anaesthesia. So, by the end of my nine months in East Grinstead, I was fairly chummy not only with Geoffrey Organe but also with Dr Cyril Scurr who was also extraordinarily helpful to me. And very shortly afterwards, I suppose towards the end of my nine months at East Grinstead, a post was advertised which was a rotating senior registrar post between Southampton and Westminster. Now, Southampton being as it were not only the family home but the place that I had done my Primary from and had had so much help from Pat Shackleton, this was very, very attractive to me. The interviews were actually held at the Westminster for that job which was due to start in Southampton and then rotate up to the Westminster. So, I applied for and was appointed to that job which I suppose was one of the major turning points in my career.

WB So, you were working with two men who were actually very influential to you?

JZ Oh, really three because I have to include Scurr. There was Shackleton and Organe and Scurr, or four if we include Russell Davies. All four of them gave me wonderful support.

WB Could you give me a little indication about each of them, about the sort of support they were giving and their place in the history of anaesthetics?

JZ Yes. They were different in many ways. Patrick Shackleton was very much, I think I can best describe him as a father figure. I could probably say with complete honesty that I don't think I learned any anaesthetics from Pat Shackleton. I have absolutely no doubt that he was a first-class anaesthetist, but he actually ran a super department. He had surrounded himself with first-class teachers from whom I'd learnt; he'd set up this postgraduate course. He was one of the very first to realise the importance of a measure of formality if you like in the training of anaesthetics rather than let it just be haphazard. Really, prior to the '60s you picked anaesthetics up as you went along wherever you were. There were obviously good teachers and less good teachers, but there was no real planning to an anaesthetic training programme. Shackleton actually produced a departmental planning programme and this was hugely influential to me. He also was a great believer in breadth of training and at that time it was not uncommon, and this was particularly so in Southampton, for senior registrars to take a year out which conventionally was almost always spent in the United States. And he discussed this with me and I by that time had got four children...

WB So you'd adopted another child?

JZ We'd adopted one more after our natural child had been born. And he said 'Well, John' he said 'You really ought to think very seriously about some time out and going abroad.' Now, I was a little bit hesitant at the thought of carting my wife and four children across the Atlantic. I had not done much travelling, practically none apart from our honeymoon in Paris. I doubt whether I had left the country at that stage. So, I sort of explained this to Shackleton who said 'Well, there are places closer than America which have a great deal to offer.' And he suggested to me that I

might like to go to either Copenhagen or to Stockholm. I think I hadn't realised at that stage what a wide circle of friends Shackleton had. And the two people that he was really thinking of at that time was a man called Ole Secher in Copenhagen, Professor Secher, and Professor Norlander in Stockholm. And I'm not quite sure what decided me one way or another. Yes, I am quite sure. What we did, he said he would sound them out to see if they would like to make an exchange. And I suppose, although I'm not certain, that Secher was the first to reply or maybe it was Secher who had someone who was interested in coming. But in due course he managed to arrange an exchange with a senior registrar or equivalent in Copenhagen, a lady anaesthetist called Dr Arnfred,³ I forget her first name for the moment. And I was to go to Copenhagen for three months and she would come to Southampton for three months. The reduced period of time was a sort of compromise. It was long enough for me, this was Shackleton's view, for me to gain a considerable widening of my experience and yet not so long that it was unreasonable to leave my family. So, I duly set off for Copenhagen, in 1965 we'd now got to, left my wife and my children in Southampton and spent three months in Secher's department. Now, before I tell you about that, I would just like to go back a little bit to the other people who had influenced me. Russell Davies was a wonderful man, he died two or three years ago now, but he was running a department of anaesthesia in a very specialist unit, the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead. It was primarily concerned with plastic surgery. At the time, and this was one of the reasons I took my days up in London, it was not thought to be a very good idea for a senior registrar to be concentrating too much on one surgical specialty, and indeed the same would apply now. It later had benefits of which I will tell you. I must tell you one slightly amusing moment while I was with Russell Davies. Good friends though we were, he called me into his office one day not long after I'd started there, and he said 'John, I've got a rather difficult point to put to you.' I asked him to enlarge on this and he said 'Well, when you applied for this post and you told me your background, you told me you had your FFA.' So, I said 'Yes, I have.' And he said 'Well, the Faculty have just published the list and your name is not on it.' It actually had an extremely simple explanation. Once one had acquired the exam, one had to pay £50 before actually being given the Diploma! Being a bit short at the time, I had not paid my £50 because you actually wrote the cheque in the, or you had the opportunity to write the cheque in the examination room. I didn't do that and then of course forgot. However, that was not a huge problem and all was well. Geoffrey Organe was a remarkable man in many ways in that many people found it quite difficult to get on with him or at least to get to know him. He perhaps gave the impression of being somewhat aloof but he was a masterly... I nearly said organiser, which isn't quite... Leader is a better word. There was an occasion – I can best illustrate what I mean with an example. When I was doing the Westminster end of my senior registrar post he, soon after I started he said 'Well, John, you are now the senior senior registrar,' the other one having moved on. He said 'It's your job to run the department.' That effectively meant deciding which anaesthetists went to which operating lists on which day. There was a problem then, which I suspect still exists now in many of the London teaching hospitals, where private practice demands on the consultants often conflicted with NHS practice. And there was a consultant there who liked to have two senior registrars with him so that he could actually run two private patients as well as an NHS patient.

³ Dr Ingrid Arnfred.

WB I'm afraid we're coming to the end of this tape, so can we return in a moment?

JZ I can finish that in thirty seconds because the real point I'm going to say was when I said to Geoffrey 'What do I do?' he said 'You're running the department, you decide.'