

Stuart Medway

Born in the UK and left his work in the UK for Rhodesia, with his family, in 1956, to work as a design engineer. His son joined the Rhodesian Army at the age of 18 from 1964 to 1972 before he left Rhodesia for South Africa. Stewart joined the BSAP Reserve and remained in it until around 1982/3. They all left Zimbabwe for the UK when Stuart was aged around 63 in the early 1980s.

This is Dr Sue Onslow talking to Mr and Mrs Medway on Monday, 15 December 2008 in Wimborne. Mr Medway, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to talk to me. I wonder, if you could begin by saying how did you come to be in Southern Rhodesia in the 1960's?

Well, it started off when I was fed up with the job I was doing in the company in England, Murphy Radio. I got as far as I could there, working both as a senior radio designer and a senior television designer but I couldn't see any future. One friend had already emigrated to S. Rhodesia and he said it was a good life there and he was working for a company that developed radios and other equipment. Would I like to consider going out there? I saw an advert offering a job so I applied and was accepted; I went out there as a design engineer and finished up ten years later as Engineering Director. Later there were also factories in Zambia and South Africa and I had design responsibility for the three companies.

So where were you living and working before you left to go to Southern Rhodesia?

In Welwyn Garden City, home of Murphy Radio.

And had you been born there and grown up there?

No. I was born in Teddington in Middlesex.

When did you go then to Southern Rhodesia?

1956

So that was the era of the Central African Federation

Yes.

We were just getting over the difficulties here of rationing etc. which was making life quite difficult for us and it seemed a good opportunity to think of moving somewhere else.

So where did you move to, in Southern Rhodesia when you arrived there?

Well, straight to Bulawayo which is where the factory is.

Yes, and how did you find living there then? Quite a switch from Welwyn Garden City going to Bulawayo.

(00:02:24) Very different. It was a small company then with very few people in the laboratory. I think there were only about four of us, but the company was keen to expand.. At that time transistors, tiny transistors, not complete radios, had just been invented and become available. So I studied them and, went to a few lectures before I left this country to get a better understanding and started developing radios using transistors..

So that was British technology that you were developing?

Well. American technology actually because they were designed, developed by Americans and they produced the first transistors which we had to import from America to build the sets we were making.

So at what point did you start to use, shall we say, home grown design? I mean were you adapting these designs from the stuff...?

Home grown designs? Well, we never used home made components because there were specialised manufacturers overseas with machines producing millions of items. We could never compete with that sort of thing so this was one of my jobs, to find companies that would supply us with the components we needed to build radios and electronic equipment..

So in the late 1950's, where were those companies?

In Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, mostly Far East countries.

Were you travelling a lot at that point?

Yes, about once a year

So at the beginning of the 1960's as the Central African Federation started to unravel, what was your view of what was going on in Southern Rhodesia?

Well, I was very sad that Southern Rhodesia didn't get its independence in the same way as the other countries. Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia but I think at least they deserved theirs

What did you think of African nationalism at the time?

Well, I didn't know much about it then because we hadn't had an awful lot of problems from them. Mugabe hadn't been on the scene very long then and any fighting seemed to be very haphazard and especially down in Bulawayo in Matabeleland, there wasn't as much activity as there was in Mashonaland up north, so I didn't really feel it at all.

What did you think in the run up to UDI?

(00:05:00) Disappointed that Margaret Thatcher hadn't stood up to the Commonwealth who were demanding her not to accept UDI but I couldn't see any other way. In hindsight I realise it was probably the wrong thing to do. It wouldn't help at all and I now think Africa is for Africans. They don't understand democracy because they live in a tribal system.

Did you discuss much of what was going on about the run up to UDI with your business colleagues?

No I don't think so.. It didn't really come into it. We didn't have political discussions or anything like that at all. I think most people probably said "well if it happens, it happens" and we were working hard anyway at our jobs. We were living a good life in Bulawayo so...

Were you living in the city itself or on the outskirts?

I was living in the suburbs.

Did you travel much throughout the country?

Yes, we saw all the sights of course, Livingston Falls and everywhere else, we didn't miss out anything, I think we saw every inch of Zimbabwe.

Did you come back to the UK at all between 1956 and 1965?

Yes we did. My brother lives over here, and we had relations so we used to visit them and my mother as well. I used to and do some recruiting as well.

So where did you feel was "home" at this particular point?

(Mrs Medway) Rhodesia

Rhodesia

Why did you feel it was "home" then?

(Mrs Medway) Yes, Rhodesia, I wouldn't have wanted to leave if things had gone on as they were

So Rhodesia was our "home"

(Mrs Medway) You thought you were going to retire there, didn't you?

Yes

How British did you feel?

(00:07:05) Well, British in a sense didn't we?

(Mrs Medway) Well when we first went over I used to say it was more British over there than it was over here. I mean, if you went to the cinema over there for instance they always played the Queen at the end of a performance and woe betide anybody who didn't stand up.

Very pro British

(Mrs Medway) Very, very pro actually

So this was Britain in Africa for you then?

(Mrs Medway) I don't know that it was really, I fell in very easily with it

We adapted very well I think

(Mrs Medway) Yes we did adapt very well over there

We weren't homesick for Britain

(Mrs Medway) Oh no

It's just that the standards, educational standards had been transferred pretty well the same

How old were your daughters at this point?

(Mrs Medway) Tony, our son, was ten when we went out and Alison was seven and then Anne was born a several years later

So they went to school in Bulawayo?

Yes

(Mrs Medway) Good education

Yes they had quite a good education here

So you felt, at the time that UDI was to a larger degree deserved by Southern Rhodesia. How quickly did sanctions...?

Well independence was earned but I wouldn't say UDI was deserved, Independence was deserved.

How quickly did sanctions start to bite?

(00:08:37) Actually they had the reverse effect, the economy in Zimbabwe increased enormously. Our output went up, we produced more radios, we sold them overseas, the company even sold in Canada, despite sanctions. It didn't stop us exporting our radios..

But that was a deliberate push, wasn't it, from Rhodesian industry?

Well yes because the country needed foreign currency , but I didn't see any slowing down of businesses, generally it seemed to improve.

(Mrs Medway) South Africa used to support us, didn't they, in the way of food? A lot used to come up from South Africa didn't it?

Oh yes

(Mrs Medway) Even mustard, we couldn't get mustard

You couldn't get mustard?

(Mrs Medway) No they used to supply mustard

But in your particular industry, was it a question that there were shortages of those high-tech components arriving from overseas or this was a concerted sanctions busting approach by all levels of Rhodesian industry?

No it wasn't aimed at sanctions busting, it's just mainly go and get the materials. I think some parts I suppose we could have imported from South Africa but not in the high-tech range..

But you weren't trying to develop the machine tool or the engineering capabilities...?

Oh we had machine tools, we did all our own tooling as well. We produced our moulded cabinets and we made our own moulding tools for cabinets and other parts so everything other than the components, resistors and condensers and transistors - we couldn't make these and, we weren't going to try, Nearly everything else we made

Did your profession have a particular connection with the Rhodesian military?

Not directly, no. We produced at later stages a special radio for the police which was a form of easy communication.. We developed and made this for a while, but that was getting near the end of the hostilities, if you like to call it that. But otherwise we had no direct connection with the Army..

But yours was a protected profession?

(00:10:55) Protected profession?

I mean, were you conscripted into the armed services?

No, I wasn't, and nor were most of the people working in the factory because this was regarded as a necessary industry for supporting the country.

That's what I mean by protected profession

I suppose it was, yes. We all had to sign an agreement not to disclose certain information. We were quite a forward company, we ran a special canteen. We helped with housing for black Africans that worked for us and we had a free medical service for them.

What do you mean a special canteen?

Well a canteen for the African workers.

But this was not a multi-racial canteen?

It couldn't be because their meals were completely different from ours. It was sudza (ground maize) and what was the meat they used to have?

(Mrs Medway) Well I used to supply goat's meat for our own employees.

Yes, sudza but the meals weren't just comparable at all. We did employ some Africans more senior, one of them in the laboratory who then became a senior draughtsman for us. He was well educated of course.

We also provided further education for a coloured African to Senior Certificate level.

..

We were later ordered by the Mugabe government to release two senior Africans from our laboratory. One of them was made head of the telephone network.

(Mrs Medway) Went to Salisbury didn't he I think?

Was there a, shall we say, concerted drive among you and your colleagues in your company to encourage a transference of skills to Africans?

I don't think there was a specific transfer, no I can't think of a way of answering that question.

(00:13:05) (Mrs Medway) They were gradually coming on, the Africans, weren't they? I mean you used to go into the bank and you'd see a coloured or black there...

Oh well yes from that point, you were thinking from the company point of view were you?

Yes

Yes, well not particular training as such, training on the jobs I mean they were given inspection jobs to do with checking for faulty assembly of components and they gained experience that way. It was more of a learning curve rather than a training method.

But I'm just wondering about, if given the opportunity would you actively recruit skilled or African technicians, draughtsmen?

I wouldn't have objected at all because if I'd had anybody that had an inkling of electronics or radiol engineering, I would have employed him straight away. Trying to think of anybody we had like that, other than this African who started off as a tea boy really in the drawing office, wound up as being in charge. When I left, he was in charge of the drawing office.

How did you address this question then of technical skill shortages? Were you recruiting within the Rhodesian youth community or from outside Rhodesia?

Yes, I used to come over here and recruit a few. Yes we even had some from my old company that I worked for in Murphy's in Welwyn Garden City. He came over to take over our coil winding shop where we used to produce transformers etc. and then we had somebody from the drawing office who came over and joined us and Joan remembered him from her school days didn't you?

(Mrs Medway) Yes

But how would you recruit? Did you just put adverts in the paper?

Yes, we'd advertise in the Telegraph.

The Thursday Telegraph you were advertising for people to come to, shall we say, "an internationally illegitimate regime"?

No, I don't think we'd have said Rhodesia then, I think it must have been, no it must have been South Africa, we advertised in South Africa. But some of it was done through agents over here and of course they would get in touch with people that they knew were looking for jobs and now I'm guessing, I don't remember..

So it implies a degree of head hunting and out sourcing?

(00:15:28) Yes, exactly how the head hunting started I don't remember but I know I interviewed a few people over here.

Did your job continue to involve travel to the Far East after 1965?

After '65? What's critical about '65

That was when UDI was declared

Oh yes, that was specifically then, that was the main purpose of it then. Right up until Mugabe came along in, what was it? '82 or something, no later than that

1980 he was elected

Right up until that time I was travelling

So you would travel through South Africa and then...?

Oh yes through South Africa

On a Rhodesian passport?

No, British passport

And did you ever encounter any difficulties with sourcing your high-tech components?

No, no everyone was very helpful

Very helpful indeed?

They knew where the goods had to go to, South Africa and most of them knew it was Zimbabwe, I didn't keep it a secret from them and I thought I told you about so many prepared to put on a "Made in England" name on some of the products they were making for us.

I'm just wondering if, because that was Taiwan, if that was another pariah nation and so people were thinking well there's a degree of solidarity?

Well apparently I think the Japanese and the Chinese were just as helpful in Hong Kong and Japan. Japan I went to several times actually, they were very helpful indeed.

And so you didn't have any problems sourcing markets for your goods?

Well that was more difficult, marketing, especially overseas I mean local markets, countries round the bottom of Africa, that was fairly easy because our products were designed specifically for that type of market. They were all

(00:17:29) battery operated because there was no mains in the bush areas so that was our necessary design, battery operated, even battery operated radiograms. I can show you a picture of one later on. (Shows pictures) that was President Banana, they used to love visiting the factory and you see that's quite a large radiogram. They are all battery operated.

That's a sizeable construction

Yes, we had a big cabinet working factory, we made all the cabinets ourselves.

So that is about three feet tall, about eighteen inches in depth and about twenty four inches across and that was battery operated?

They could carry those

Is that about a car battery size that would have powered that?

No. it wasn't a car battery, it was one of these large, long nine volt batteries, not re-chargeable

And those were made in Rhodesia?

No, South Africa

It's an elegant construction

Well, as I said, we had all the various presidents and people from Mugabe's government come to see us because they liked to see the factory and I would show them round. They would get a free radio, .President Banana was offered a portable radio and he said "no I don't want a portable, I want a radiogram" so we know why they come.

How much help or how much assistance or guidance did you get from the Rhodesian government in your work of sourcing components and identifying markets?

Well I think it's mainly financial, I wasn't so much involved in that side of things.

When did you start becoming aware of the war in Rhodesia?

I think when my son got more and more involved

And when would that have been?

Well, at the age of eighteen in December '64 to December '72 he was serving in the Army. Six weeks on, six weeks off and he made a sergeant at the end (00:20:23) and was made a medic, He trained while working with the medical troops

So what element of the armed services was he in? Was he in the police?

No, no this was the Army, call up. They told him to do a tour of six weeks at a time and I think there were special sections, I don't know that much about it I'm afraid.

Did you talk to him much about it?

No, we didn't talk much about it at all

(Mrs Medway) He used to go and assist particularly on a Saturday evening at the local hospital when he was with the medics

Yes, that's right, he would train at the hospital, African hospital, learned how to give injections

Did you feel that you were part of a war or did you feel that you were quite separate from it?

(Mrs Medway) Oh no because there were several young chaps who were killed and injured

Yes, I think you were aware there was a war certainly

What did you think you were fighting against?

Well that's a very difficult question isn't it? We were fighting to protect those people that we knew and liked, that's really what we were fighting for I'm sure. It wasn't so much against, it's for.

So what were you fighting for? Not just the protection of your friends and family?

Yes

Did it go beyond that?

As I say, I wasn't fighting so it's not a fair question. What we thought about it?

Yes

Well I never thought much about it at that time, I really can't cast my mind back there. It was an inconvenience more than anything I think, that's how we regarded it. We weren't aware of much activity because we didn't see any fighting, the fighting didn't come near us. I used to patrol with the special police carrying a 303 but I don't think I had any bullets in it anyway so I (00:23:02) couldn't have done much with it, it was just to give security to the residents living in the suburbs.

So you were part of the reserve police?

That's right, the reserve police

And how long did you do stints of that or was it a sort of volunteer basis of part time...?

Well it was voluntary but right from the beginning when they introduced it.

Right the way through to 1979/1980

Well until Mugabe, that was '82 I think, until it was disbanded in '82 and they were quite a well organised bunch. I kept some souvenirs actually, I've got the armband I used to wear.

So how many of you would go out wearing a special police armband?

(Mrs Medway) Oh quite a few wasn't there?

Oh I had a special police armband, yes and black dungarees, dark dungarees, that's what I had to hand back after they closed down (shows paper to Sue)

The following equipment has been brought in by Stuart A Medway, 44a Cecil Avenue, one baton, one whistle and ramyard, one overall, one street hat, one belt and one raincoat

That's right, that was the equipment I was given

Well you were all given, so did you go out on patrol in pairs or were there four of you?

In pairs usually, that was the number. Divided up into areas, we lived in this area here (points to map) So this was our patrolling area.

So this is a map of the City of Bulawayo, delimitation of civil defence zones

Divided into patrol areas

So you were in Donnington patrol area 27?

No that's where my son-in-law was

Right and then there's Hillside Central

That's right, that's where we were

(00:24:59) **And that's area 21?**

And those were the various people in that particular area on the patrol so there's quite a few of us

So the warden was Elsie How

My name's right down the bottom

Does that mean that you were at the bottom of the list? It's in alphabetical order. So there are approximately twenty of you?

Yes

So these are really your relatively close neighbours?

Yes

There are four of you from Cecil Avenue alone. So you did that every month?

(Mrs Medway) Oh more often than that weren't you?

Oh yes, every week we did about two hours at a time I think

And did you ever encounter any, I suppose, political protest?

I think once or twice we saw some Africans climbing over a fence so we chased them away but apart from that

(Mrs Medway) I think a lot of the women were very relieved weren't they?

Yes

(Mrs Medway) That their husbands were in the war

That was the main purpose of this to give some feeling of security to these women that had been left at home with their husbands serving in the Army. Whether it worked I don't know .

Mrs Medway, did you ever talk to anyone about how they felt about these police patrols? Did it give them a greater sense of security?

(Mrs Medway) Oh I think so, yes. I think a lot of the women who were on their own definitely, yes.

So in a way it's also part of a morale boosting exercise?

Yes I should think so

(00:26:45) **So through the 1970's then did you have a growing awareness of the fighting? The bush war?**

Only what you read in the newspapers but no, I wasn't aware of much fighting

(Mrs Medway) We did hear quite a bit I mean when Robin was injured for instance

When we heard that the Army had, or the Air Force had carried out an attack in adjoining territory or something like that, that we would hear about.

So what were your sources of information? Would it be the Bulawayo Chronicle?

Mainly I should think, yes that and the radio

Did you listen to any external radio like the BBC?

Not a lot, no, South Africa I suppose radio we'd listen to. Occasionally we'd listen to England. Reception wasn't very good anyway there

Was it not?

No

Was it jammed do you think?

No, no it wasn't jammed no, it was just short wave reception, not very reliable anyway, I mean it was quite a long way from England.

Do you remember by any chance Ian Smith's television announcement in September of 1976 saying there would be majority rule in two years?

No I don't remember that

(Mrs Medway) I can remember him on the TV

What did you think of him as a war leader? As a political leader?

(Mrs Medway) He was ok wasn't he?

He seemed to hold the country together I think

How much do you think the war itself created a sense of Rhodesian togetherness?

Oh it had a lot to do with it. I think there were a lot of people who disagreed wholeheartedly with the whole thing but the majority of people we knew I think (00:28:45) were closer together because of it. Not necessarily all approving but working together more closely.

So do you think actually the war created a sense of Rhodesian patriotism or that had existed before?

I should think so. What do you think Joan?

(Mrs Medway) Yes I do think so

Yes Rhodesia was the country, wasn't it, so we were building that up

What, to you, made a good Rhodesian?

(Mrs Medway) That's a difficult one

Well what makes a good Englishman? (laughs)

Seriously, it's something that we don't actually think about

No we don't, no. I could say what makes a perfect man but I mean

Ok well what, to you, would make a perfect man?

Oh one that thinks a lot about other people and what affect you have on them

So consideration, courtesy

I mean we used to consider our Africans at home for instance very well. We made sure they had a decent place to live, electricity put on immediately and the heating to do their own cooking. A natural thing, it didn't happen in many places but a lot of these kias as they were called, little houses, were lit by candles and candlelight so we did make improvements there. We made sure they had plenty of food of the type they liked and I think...we're talking about personnel at home now. I think you got on very well with your house servant.

(Mrs Medway) There's always a joke there that when the African went out on a Sunday which was usually his day off, he went out looking a lot smarter than the boss because he wore his lounge suit and tie whereas the boss would just be wearing an old sort of bush shirt and shorts.

How important do you think religion was in helping keeping the white Rhodesian community going?

Well we weren't religious, very religious at all, no

(Mrs Medway) Well I think there was quite a strong...

(00:31:06) We were married in church and we did belong to a church for quite a while but I'm afraid we drifted away didn't we Joan?

(Mrs Medway) There were a lot of churches weren't there. There were all the different churches, different denominations of churches.

We went to weddings, we went to an African wedding when our black in the drawing office was married. That was quite an eye opener, they've got a

completely different sort of system altogether. We committed a faux pas, the whole of the laboratory went with us as well, and we sat in the church and waited for the bride to arrive and we should have actually followed the bride in, not sat in the church waiting for her.

(Mrs Medway) And then you gave him his gift before the wedding and you're supposed to wait until the reception and then you bring all your gifts to hand them over.

And they were recorded there,.

(Mrs Medway) And we sat on the stage

Well the reception was at a local hall, and they had some dancing and we sat on the stage in the hall, the whole laboratory arrived and it was all very embarrassing because this was going to go on all night and we didn't want to stop all night there, but the afternoon until about six o'clock. It was beginning to get a bit dark so we thought "how do we get out of this?" so the bride and groom were there and we took it in turns and got up and walked out and shook hands with the bride and groom, in front on the stage, and walked off otherwise we'd be there all night. We enjoyed seeing them married like that.

I used to take the staff out for a meal for Christmas Eve lunch and the restaurant's policy was difficult so I used to tell the owner there's twelve of us, one's black, if you don't want my service then I'll go elsewhere and mostly they'd say "oh ok, if he works with you, it's ok to have a blackie in"

So you're saying that in fact there were restaurants in Bulawayo that wouldn't allow blacks casually to come in?

This is fairly select restaurants I'm talking about, not the sort of walk in off the street, but ones where you'd reserve a seat but things gradually got better. I think some restaurants weren't happy to have Africans though because they didn't know whether they knew how to behave or use the correct utensils and so forth, but Elijah who was in the drawing office, married to a nursing sister and they were fairly well up in the educated class so there was no difficulty there but the bare fact he was black did put off some hotel keepers.

Really?

(00:34:17) Well, it was there. I mean, how many black friends do people have in this country if they're white? Only occasional ones.

I think it depends very much on your circumstances. I think in rural areas where they're much more of a homogenous group. There's one Kenyan who lives in my Dorset village and she's very unusual; however, in London I have an awful lot of friends from different communities. So I think it does depend on your circumstances and I think on your generation as well.

Also it depends on their education and standards too doesn't it? I mean you wouldn't have an African who'd been living in a mud hut in the street and come round and say entertain them at home. It just wouldn't work, you'd both be embarrassed in fact.

How sizeable was the African middle class, the emerging middle class in Bulawayo? Were you aware of a professional...?

They were mostly in Harare because they were members of parliament, black members of parliament lived in Harare. You see we didn't meet many blacks in the normal run of things did we?

(Mrs Medway) I don't think so

Other than at work where I got on very well with them there. I had expected a reasonable standard of inspection, inspectors inspecting the work where the radios were made, they were doing very well.

The area you lived in Bulawayo was a designated white area, wasn't it? Residentially?

That's white, designated. There was Indians living next door to us but basically a white area, yes

Was there a sizeable Indian and coloured community in Bulawayo when you lived there?

Well quite a rich Indian community there, yes they ran quite a big business

(Mrs Medway) They ran half the Bulawayo town I think in retail

Oh it was quite good

As far as the Rhodesian white community was concerned, was it very egalitarian and open or were there quite strict lines, class divisions?

(Mrs Medway) Oh no, not as much as there are here

So you felt it was markedly different from the UK and class divisions?

(00:36:39) (Mrs Medway) Yes, I don't like this class division: I don't like middle class, working class, upper class

No there wasn't any class within the whites like that at all

(Mrs Medway) No, it wasn't like that, was it?

No

(Mrs Medway) You were all one class really. I mean, there were Africans and there were Whites. That's what it was.

How much do you think there was also, in what was going on in Rhodesia in the sixties and seventies, a strong echo back to the Second World War?

I don't quite follow the question

Well, in that many of those who had come to Rhodesia were ex-servicemen who'd fought in the Second World War and there was a degree of, shall we say, a blitz spirit of pulling together? How much in fact was the war in Rhodesia, although very different circumstances and a very different time, an echo of "we'll pull together" again, an element of can-do initiative, "we have to stay together to fight an enemy, a Churchillian war leader?

Would you know?

(Mrs Medway) I would think so, yes

We didn't know many soldiers who did the fighting did we?

(Mrs Medway) Oh we knew quite a few of the young men who went didn't we?

I really can't say what I think their attitude was

No I'm asking you about how you felt it was because it seems to me from this distance that what went on in Rhodesia was actually a total war. It wasn't just the young men at the front in the bush. It wasn't just the police, it affected everybody. You make reference to young men you knew who were injured or those who were killed. Your particular profession was a protected profession which was intended to keep the Rhodesian economy going. There was a sense of being in it together.

(Mrs Medway) Oh yes

You think so, Joan?

(Mrs Medway) Oh definitely, yes

(00:38:42) It wasn't a war that was just fought at the front

(Mrs Medway) No

Well, you're putting it in terms of war content. I wasn't in the war anyway. I was in a reserved occupation all during the war so the only activity I saw was when I used to do fire watching so I wasn't fighting. One of my brothers was in the Army

But you were doing your bit?

Oh I was doing my bit but you're talking about attitudes of war and camaraderie and war and I didn't have that situation, it didn't apply to me so it's difficult to answer the question.

Did you feel at any point in the 1970's, the writing's on the wall here, this is not going to work, there needs to be change?

Well no, not until much later of course about a few years before we decided to leave, don't you think Joan? Then we might have been a bit worried about it

(Mrs Medway) Yes

What did you think of the Muzorewa interlude, the internal settlement?

Well that was a hope I think. Yes it certainly was

And South Africa?

Well South Africa, I suppose they had their troubles as well so they couldn't go on supporting us and still expect to get on with the rest of Europe. I think they were pressurised into not supporting Rhodesia.

How did you feel with the run up to independence in 1980?

As I say, I think you asked me that at the beginning, I said I thought that the run up to the independence was obvious and had to happen because the British government failed to do anything to satisfy people. I won't just say government, people in Zimbabwe or Rhodesia

I'm talking about Zimbabwean independence in 1980, not 1965

Oh I see, oh I beg your pardon. Well I think like most people I was worried that this was going to happen and then when it happened, Mugabe seemed to be very fair and sensible about the whole thing for two years.

Had many of your friends left by that point?

(00:41:33) I don't think so, no because I think we had a chap who's a rancher and he was carrying on alright in business there. Fred was doing very well with two ranches wasn't he?

(Mrs Medway) Oh yes, I think he's still there

In fact he's only just left but no, I don't think people were particularly worried at first. It wasn't until he started taking over the farms of course that it really begins to sink home that things aren't going to work out

So when did you decide to leave?

Well we're getting near retirement age, I was 63 I think anyway and could retire at 65, I could have retired earlier but the rate of exchange was dropping, things were getting difficult for people to take goods out of the country, we could see what was coming so I thought as we were going to leave anyway because things are going bad financially among other reasons, we'd better go now. Our daughters were over here anyway and our son was in South Africa so what's the point in staying.

When had he left for South Africa?

He worked in South Africa because that's where he joined the breweries...

(Mrs Medway) When did he leave Stuart?

After he came out of the Army

So in the late seventies?

Yes

How did you feel about leaving?

Very sad, how did you feel Joan?

(Mrs Medway) Well yes, it was very sad

Funnily enough it was an extremely hot summer there, we were feeling very over heated

(Mrs Medway) Yes it was, the heat was getting a bit much

And my wife, as you can see, is a very keen gardener but she had a lot of help

A lady after my own heart

We had an acre of garden so she had to have some help with that

(00:43:30) **How did you find coming back to this country?**

(Mrs Medway) Well I didn't like it at first, I was homesick then for Zimbabwe, if somebody had given me my ticket to fly back I think I would have done.

Did you feel you were coming "home"?

(Mrs Medway) No because I'd made up my mind that Rhodesia was my "home" or "our home" and I was hoping that Stuart would retire there.

Did you have any other family besides your two daughters who were back here?

No, just the two daughters here and the son, he's in Dar es Salaam

Mr Medway, how did you feel on coming back to the UK?

I didn't like leaving Rhodesia for the reason I was so happy there but I can accept more easily than my wife can I think, where I live is where I am We've changed houses only once since we came back here which is down loading or whatever you call it

Down sizing

Down sizing for financial reasons but I'm quite happy wherever I live as long as I've got my wife with me and my physical abilities, I can still get around. My memory's going but apart from that.

Mr Medway, did you feel you were coming "home"?

No I don't think I did, no more than my wife did. I was just transferring to another place. I don't attach any importance to a particular place, I liked the type of life in Rhodesia and our home and I wasn't looking forward to the crowded in life here and I knew I couldn't have the sort of country life I would have liked here so I suppose in a way I wasn't all that happy about it.

(Mrs Medway) I think the thing I miss the most was sitting out in the evening in the garden and looking up at the sky because it's a black dome out there isn't it with millions of stars and I missed that terribly when I came here. You just see street lights out there.

That's something I'm very lucky, living just that wee bit further into the rural areas that I have the stars again and I know just what you mean

(Mrs Medway) Yes it's a lovely feeling and then we had the swimming pool and the big house and it was lovely swimming when it was dark

How had you found Britain to have changed?

(00:46:32) Since we came back or while we've been back?

(Mrs Medway) Immensely

In what way? I must ask you this

(Mrs Medway) well in the countryside really I mean when we lived here before the kids could walk and ride bikes across the fields and you knew they would come back. Fields are closed off and farms. I was very disappointed

And it's the freedom you missed too didn't you Joan?

(Mrs Medway) Footpaths .you can only use here

Because living in Welwyn Garden City you used to go into the woods there, there's some lovely woods there. You used to be free to walk there but you couldn't do it when you came back, it wasn't safe.

(Mrs Medway) Well true enough

Not for children anyway

(Mrs Medway) I mean over there people used to say to me "oh is it alright living in Rhodesia, is it safe?" but the children used to go out all day, I never knew where they were.

It was quite safe

(Mrs Medway) It was perfectly safe

We wouldn't do that over here when we came back

(Mrs Medway) Tony used to go off camping in the bush didn't he?

He used to go off to a dam with a friend and camp near a dam somewhere, nobody else there, all on his own

That's my son's idea of bliss, he disappears to go camping in the north of Scotland. Do you feel yourselves to be Rhodesian? Or do you feel yourselves to be British?

I'm British now I think

(Mrs Medway) Yes I think I am now, it took a long while

Well Rhodesia doesn't exist any more anyway so we can only dream of what it might have been.

(00:48:44) Looking back, a number of your son-in-law's colleagues and I asked Tony this, have said they can divide their friends into those who feel the struggle was worth it. The UDI years were definitely worth it to try and build a new country and to fight to build that and others who say "no it wasn't worth it". Would you put yourselves in either category?

Well I don't think you can say it was worth it because look what's happened to it so how can it be worth it? If you had hindsight, you would have said "well let's all get out and leave them to it". We had a neighbour who's a vet and he was going down to South Africa with a view to getting a move to Canada and he said "it's no good stopping here, Africa is for the Africans" and I'm beginning to think he was probably right.

One last question, do you feel in any way that what you and your colleagues, your friends, acquaintances were trying to do in Rhodesia

was part of Empire? Was part of Britain going out and trying to make other parts of the world a better place?

No I don't think so, I think it was all personal, Joan what do you think?

(Mrs Medway) Yes the style of living, yes

Joan didn't have any high ideals there as far as Empire was concerned

It was to find a better life?

Yes that's right, I was disappointed with the break up of the Empire and the Commonwealth not working very well but that wasn't the main...

Did you feel in Rhodesia you were trying to swim against the tide of history? After all there was all that de-colonisation that was taking place in Africa and yet Rhodesia was trying to do something very different.

I was just making a living, I wasn't thinking about it like you're mentioning now, I was down to earth very much. What about you Joan?

(Mrs Medway) I don't know, I was just thinking about the old boy when I was crossing the road in town and of course when Mugabe got in their staple diet, their mealy meal was very difficult to get hold of and it was just before Christmas and they always used to go home, as you probably know, to their villages and taking their great bags of mealy meal and there'd been this long, long queue outside Haddons and I counted them and I said "you'll have to go, there will not be enough left for you" and this old boy was crossing the road with me and he said "Madam, why did you get rid of Mr Smith? When he was in, we were all happy and had plenty to eat" and that really says it all.

That was when? In the early eighties that person said that?

(Mrs Medway) Yes it must have been in the early eighties, probably

(00:52:08) We had a shortage of food, well he'd sold most of the farms and given away all the food to the adjoining countries, he got rid of it.

(Mrs Medway) It was pitiful

He had a big stack of mealy meal didn't he and then supplied the adjoining nations with it, Sold to them and of course then we had a drought next year and nothing--so short supply for the locals

Did your friends leave at much the same time as you or did most of them try to stay?

(Mrs Medway) There were quite a few who left about the same time

Yes, quite a few, there was a motel that we were...what was it known as?

(Mrs Medway) Transit Hotel they called it

Transit Hotel, yes

(Mrs Medway) We all used to stop there

If you gave up your job you could stop there for a couple of months while you were waiting for all the documents to go through to be sorted out, income tax and everything else sorted out

(Mrs Medway) It was a good time

We had a good time there, it was comfortable and there was a swimming pool there.

Have you tried to stay in touch with former friends, colleagues, acquaintances from Rhodesia?

Yes I have a couple of friends who e-mail. One who's in New Zealand who we keep in touch with him very regularly by e-mail

(Mrs Medway) Several in Australia

Several in Australia, yes, one who had a ranch and I recently sent all the photographs I took when he was doing a compilation of his activities in Zimbabwe. Also friends that worked with me in the laboratory, a couple of those, Willie Van Niekerk and three or four of them exchange e-mail with me.

So that's really how you...through e-mail networks?

(Mrs Medway) Yes mostly

(00:53:58) Have we had any more Christmas cards arrive Joan?

(Mrs Medway) I still write letters, I love letters

Joan won't have anything to do with e-mails

(Mrs Medway) There's nothing like a letter, I don't care how badly it's written She won't touch it. You happen to be a short-hand typist and you can type on a computer like that but no, you won't

There's something about handwriting

(Mrs Medway) Isn't there?

It's the extra effort that went into it

(Mrs Medway) Yes it's the trouble you go to

There is about my handwriting, you can't read it

Mr and Mrs Medway thank you very much indeed for talking to me

End of interview