

Frank Taylor

Born and grew up in the UK. Emigrated to Southern Rhodesia in 1951, having completed National Service with the RAF. Was recruited into the Rhodesian civil service. Eventually started working in the Ministry of Native Affairs, later known as Internal Affairs. Married his wife who was from the UK, while on leave in the UK in 1956 and they returned together. Left Internal Affairs in 1986. Left Zimbabwe for the UK in 1991.

This is Dr Sue Onslow talking to Mr Frank Taylor in Hornsea on Wednesday 14th October 2009. Frank, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to be interviewed by me. I wonder if you could begin by saying please, when, or rather how, did you come to be in Rhodesia during the insurgency? Were you born in England? Did you emigrate?

I was born in England. I emigrated in 1951 to Southern Rhodesia as it (then) was. I left school and went straight into national service with the RAF with no particular idea of what my future career would be. During my period in the RAF which was two years service, my mother brought to my attention when I went on leave one day, this notice in the Yorkshire Post. It was an advert asking people to apply for work with the Southern Rhodesian civil service. So I applied for that, went down to London to Rhodesia House, had an interview there and because I still had another six months to serve, they said "well we won't do anything now, get in touch with us when you leave". So I left the RAF in October 1951, went down to Rhodesia House again and they sent me straight out to the medical centre, what's that street in London where they...?

You mean Harley Street?

Harley Street. They sent me down to Harley Street where all the eminent physicians live. Had the medical and they said "right, when can you go? We've got a berth in a few weeks time, would you like to go then?"

But Frank, what was your family background? Did you have any links already with Southern Rhodesia?

No links whatsoever. It was quite strange because during the war period when I lived in York, there was a lot of Air Force bases in the vicinity and we used to see a lot of ex-colonial airmen in the area and I always particularly noted the ones who had Southern Rhodesia on their shoulders. I collected stamps as well and Southern Rhodesia was probably my favourite group of stamps. So it had a little attraction in that way but basically it was employment. I didn't want to go into teaching in this country, that was one reason why I maybe had gone on with my schooling, to grammar school, to be a teacher but it just didn't appeal. I didn't really know what I wanted to do and this just seemed a little bit of an adventure.

So your family had lived in York for a while, so you're originally from York?

Originally from Leeds. My father was called up into the army before the Second World War started, a month or two, well a few months before. He was a coal merchant before that and he went over to France but was brought back to the UK because he was ill. He was transferred to Fulford Barracks in York and that's when we moved from Leeds to York; (00:03:41) which would be I think 1940, probably early 1940, mid 1940. So no, no real connection with Southern Rhodesia but I was always interested in geography and it just sounded somewhere interesting.

So no other family connections with empire?

No, once my father had been over to the Far East during the war, at least, when he was in the army first of all, in the late 1920's. He did a stint in Hong Kong and Shanghai and he always talked about this and I thought it rather interesting to go to some of these exotic places. So when I was in the RAF, they asked me, they gave us a choice of "where would you like to go?" and I volunteered for the Far East. They sent me to Spurn Point which is just south of Hornsea, which is the farthest east you can get in the UK I think.

Sounds typical British civil service! How did you get out to Rhodesia?

By boat

And had you signed up for a three year contract or this was permanent employment?

No, it was a three year contract but with the opportunity to stay on. That was expected if you really settled, that you would stay on.

Did you go out in a group of you that were joining the Southern Rhodesian civil service?

There were a few of us yes. I can't remember exactly how many. I know I shared a cabin going out with another chap who was joining the civil service. When we arrived in Salisbury, we were taken to the public services head quarters, not really knowing what was on offer but they told us about the various ministries and the Department of Native Affairs, as it was called then, sounded the most interesting. All the others you could have done that in the UK but this I felt was getting out into the countryside and seeing the people of the country.

So what were your initial responsibilities on joining the Department of Native Affairs?

The initial responsibilities were really the office secretary and accountant to some extent. I had no experience of typing, I had no experience of accountancy but the books were there and I had to learn from looking at what had gone on in the past, with a little bit of help and advice.

So you were based in Salisbury? Or were you seconded out or posted

out into the other areas?

I went initially to Salisbury. I arrived there on 18th December 1951 and they said “ We shall send you out to a district but we can hardly send you out (00:06:41) just before Christmas so you can stay in Salisbury for Christmas”. So I went to the Native Commissioner’s office, in Salisbury in Market Square for about two weeks and he very kindly invited me home for Christmas with his family.

I was going to ask you where you spent Christmas

Which was fantastic because we were staying in Mount Hampden in a transit camp for new immigrants in temporary accommodation. It was ex-RAF camp which was rather grotty. It was about twelve miles outside Salisbury and so this was a wonderful opportunity to spend some time with an old pioneer family.

It was a treat

It was a real treat

What did you make of Salisbury on first arriving?

I rather enjoyed it. It was a little bit of a cowboy town I suppose really in a way.

In what way?

Wide open streets and a bit dusty and hot but some lovely areas as well.

The white residential population then must have been quite small in early 1950’s. I think the real acceleration...

Was later, yes. I suppose it would be, I never really gave it a thought but it was still fairly widespread. The towns in Rhodesia were widespread, with large plots for individual houses. In the UK you may find ten houses in an area which would accommodate one house in Rhodesia.

Did you have a sense of arriving in a little piece of England in any way? Just the architecture, the familiarity of...

Not really. I never looked at it in that light but the people were very British in their manners and outlook. I think most were very British in outlook.

In what way?

The Southern Rhodesians felt we were part of the British Empire and we had very close ties with Britain. We wanted to maintain those and uphold them, the traditions of the British Empire and the British people. It was not long after the 2nd World War and the country had given tremendous support to the war

effort.

After you'd had your two weeks stint then in Salisbury, you were posted out?

I was posted Chibi in the Victoria Province, about forty miles south of Fort Victoria, over the Tokwe River and then west into the small settlement.

(00:09:29) So what were you doing there? I mean, you weren't still doing office accountancy?

Well, this is what I was doing there among many other duties. (NOTE 1)

Oh right, I see

Yes, in Salisbury I was signing passes and doing odd jobs around the office.

Signing passes, what do you mean?

Well, the Africans in those days had to have a registration certificate to carry around, kind of an identity card but it was almost an A4 size and so they came in their swarms to the office to either renew their registration certificate because they had lost it or because they were new applicants.

Was this to do with their residential status as well; to enable them to stay in Salisbury?

This certificate gave details of their home district, their kraal where they lived and the chief and their headman, but it was required to be shown.

Were they allowed to live in the environs of Salisbury at that point?

Only in established townships or if they were employed by some private person as a cook, garden, house person, then they could live on that property. There'd be a small house at the bottom of the garden where they would live.

Would that be marked on their papers, of that as their place of residence and employment?

Yes, because on the centre of this form, there were about six sections where the employer signed them on and then at the end, signed them off. So it was always a record of where they were employed, whether it be in commerce, industry or privately as a gardener or whatever, in private employment.

So going out to Chibi, was this part of the TTL's?

Yes it was, we called them native reserves in those days, but it's what developed into TTL's or communal areas.

So how big was the station that you moved to?

Small, tiny: the native commissioner and his wife, assistant native commissioner, myself and one other clerk in the office. We were called clerks in those days, not cadets and one field officer and one agricultural officer. (00:12:14) Then a small police camp with probably half a dozen white police people and that was it.

And how often did you, I hesitate to use the word, “escape” from there?

I didn't have transport so not all that often. Escape we did but we had a very pleasant time there. The police had a tennis court where we often played, especially over the weekend. During my stay there, I was only there two years, we built a swimming pool with help from the state lottery. We received £50 from the state lottery and using local resources and prison labour, we built the swimming pool.

Prison labour? So there was a prison at Chibi?

The convicts were kept at the police camp. There wasn't a prison as such. The police held the 'bandits' as they were called serving short sentences and on remand in the police cells. Some were sent out to the local residents to help keep the gardens neat and tidy and they very kindly allowed us to have some to...

To dig your swimming pool

To dig our swimming pool and then we employed a local builder.

So how much knowledge or awareness did you have of wider Rhodesian society at that point?

Not a great deal but I suppose the people I worked with were fairly representative of the white population. Police chaps seemed to be either South African or British, from England, from the UK and my boss, the native commissioner, was Irish. I think the field officer was Rhodesian and the agricultural officer, I'm not quite sure.

After two years at Chibi, then where were you posted?

Is was transferred to Sinoia, a small town N.W. of Salisbury. The Assistant N.C. felt that I needed to move to a larger office to gain more experience and maybe buckle down to passing the exams required for promotion. This same man, Colin Loades, we met on a visit to Zimbabwe last year. He is now 90 years old and living in a frail care home.

So in Sinoia? When was this?

This was 1954 when I went to Sinoia

So did in anyway the Central African Federation impinge upon your awareness of what was going on, or on your job?

It didn't impinge on the job at all. Obviously we were all aware of it but I never really took a great deal of interest in politics. I just wanted to get on (00:15:16) with my life and the job. I knew it was happening but whether it was a good thing or bad, I never really made a judgement.

Was there much connection between people working in the Department of Native Affairs and wider Rhodesian society? I mean obviously you were aware of the white farming community?

Yes. In Sinoia we lived in the centre of a large white farming community.

I'm very struck by people who've talked of the egalitarian nature of white Rhodesian society. That it didn't have the English stratified class divisions?

No it didn't. We were very, very much part of the wider community.

But were there still social divisions between old Rhodesian families, the sort of pioneer...?

The pioneers were always very proud of the fact that they were pioneer families and they always felt themselves somewhat different from the rest of us who'd come into the country. They were very proud of their heritage but it did not affect our relationships.

How about the lower artisanal element who were living in town, who were involved in the railways, the sort of minor level clerks etc. Did you have much to do with that strata of society?

Not initially, only when I went to Sinoia, I suppose we had more connection there. There was a railway running through Sinoia. I can't remember who worked on the railway and a lot of our social intercourse was in the club, the sporting club and there were all kinds in the sports club. I know in Sinoia I was still quite new to the country but the people I lived with had been there for some while. I lived in the mess with other people from Native Affairs and the chap who was the foreman in charge of the Public Works Department and we all got on very well together. We knew people from all stratas in the town, the people who had businesses in the town and people who worked in the businesses, hotel keepers and we all mixed pretty well. You did know about , farmers who owned large estates and they were always regarded with a certain amount of awe as the people who'd made their mark on the country. Some were wealthy as civil servants never were but they were fine; you got on with them as well.

What did you think at that point of African Nationalism in the late fifties? Such as the emergence of the Capricorn Society with the agitation elsewhere in Federation for accelerated black political and economic rights? Did this impinge on your consciousness in any way?

(00:18:26) Thinking back, probably not. I was aware of it, that it was going on

at the time but didn't think too much about it. Life seemed to go on and...

You were just very far removed from anything like...?

Yes far removed from it. I think the Rhodesian civil service was always very much aware that we had no political connection in that we were not allowed to be members of political parties. Obviously some people had political leanings and felt very strongly about what was going on. Myself, I never had a real interest in politics and so it never really formed a part of my thoughts or actions really. It was made clear to me from that start that the civil service was apolitical

Where did you feel was "home" at this point? Did you still regard Britain as "home"?

By that time I felt I was going to stay in Rhodesia so that was going to be my home, but I still had strong ties with the UK.

Did your family come out and visit? How did you stay in touch?

I first went back on holiday in 1955 and those were the days when we could take long leave. We accumulated long leave up to, I think, I maximum of six months and I came back to the U.K. on long leave..

How did you find it?

Fine. I came back and had four months here. I used up all my leave entitlement and that's when I met my wife or re-met her. I did know her before I went out because her aunt and uncle lived next door to my parents in York, so we'd met as youngsters when she came over from Hull to visit them. I met her when on leave and we became engaged.

In four months?

In four months, yes and she was going to come out with me. Her grandmother said "this is rather quick. If I pay for Frank to come back here next year to get married in 1956, how would that suit you?". So we said "Right fine, we'll do it that way". So I went back for another nine or ten months and then came back in '56 to the UK and we were married.

And then she came back out to Rhodesia?

And then she came back out with me, yes

To Sinoia?

No, when I returned to Rhodesia after my leave, I was posted to a little outpost called Miami, which was near Karoi. All that was there was a Post Office the Native Department and the Police. Very shortly after I left Miami, the whole station moved to (00:21:34) Karoi on the main road to Chirundu.

Miami was on the old pioneer road going up to Chirundu on the Zambezi and Northern Rhodesia. So we were just a kind of a hangover from the old days and I was there for nine months.

In what capacity?

Also working office work, I had passed some exams by then so...

I was going to ask, what civil service exams did you have to do?

Yes, we had to do Law Parts one and two, Native Customs and Administration, and Language. When I went up to Miami I was doing the same, working in the office, filing, typing, vehicle licensing, anything to do with cash, temporary deposits, money which came in for the black African people in the tribal trust lands which would be sent to the native commissioner's office from around the country and the recipients would come in and collect the money. It was a free cash transfer service for the black population.

What was the relationship in the years since you arrived, between '51 to '56, between native affairs and the chiefs in the reserves, as you called them? Was there manifest tension at this point? Was there agitation, growing agitation and dissatisfaction about land that you picked up on, anything like that?

No, it all seemed very calm and peaceful in those days. I didn't get out a great deal being more or less office bound and so I didn't see much of that side of the work at that particular time. But from what I can remember, it seemed pretty amicable and I think the people like (Joshua) Nkomo and the others who were agitating in those days, were rather isolated from the general population. They weren't widespread in their influence outside the urban areas.

So from Karoi, then where?

Then I returned to the UK, we were married, flew back to Rhodesia and we were posted to Rusape.

This all seems a very tranquil existence of office work and a great deal of outside enjoyment?

Indeed it was

In actually a very isolated European community

Yes. Sinoia was of course quite a thriving little town in Rhodesia. There was a great deal of social activity. It was very pleasant. It was very enjoyable and I don't think we'd have had the same experience in the UK if I'd stayed here and found work in England.

Did that enjoyment and sense of pleasure in being increasingly a

Rhodesian, enjoying the Rhodesian way of life, start to alter in the 1960's? I'm just thinking the breakup of Federation, you may have been (00:25:07) apolitical but surely there would have been discussion about the fragmentation of the CAF?

I think people accepted it, that it had been tried and it hadn't worked and it was all going back to...

So you felt yourself fundamentally divorced from the political situation of Rhodesia in the run up to UDI?

I did, yes

This is coming across very, very strongly.

Is it?

Yes. So what did you think of UDI?

Now, different story here. UDI, by this stage we'd been in Rusape for four years where two of our children were born. We were newly married so we hadn't socialised a great deal there because we couldn't afford it and we were also trying to save for a holiday in the UK. Helped once more by Joan's grandmother because the fares for two children and two adults was quite expensive. We were on holiday roughly three months, then returned to Rhodesia and we were sent to Bulawayo. Bulawayo, I actually hated it, we were there for six weeks, three weeks were spent in hotels because we had to find accommodation. In the districts, we were provided with housing. In Bulawayo, we had to find a house. We rented a house and I had to travel into work, six or seven miles every day and back again. I sat in an office and all I saw all day were crowds of Africans who would sit outside my office and were ushered in half a dozen at a time by the messenger. They had complaints about their employer, they had complaints about all manner of things and I had to listen to all this, write letters and try and sort it out. I think it was the most dreadful job I've ever had in my life. It was absolutely boring and frustrating. I just didn't enjoy it but luckily we'd only been there six weeks when I was contacted by Head Office. I was invited to return to Mashonaland, to Marandellas. So we went to Marandellas in 1960, towards the end of 1960. There I had more work in the reserves. I was by then acting assistant native commissioner. I visited the reserves and I was chairman of the local council in that particular reserve. That is when I first really came into touch with African politicians. It was quite highly motivated, that African area, politically, there was Isaac Samuriwo who later became a member of parliament and one or two others. They had great internal feuds amongst themselves. Half my time at the council meetings was spent trying to keep the peace between these groups that were fighting and struggling with each other. At that time, we were trying to get them to take responsibility for their own affairs at local council level. I was able to arrange for the council to appoint its own chairman. Then I could sit on the sidelines as a mediator in their deliberations. Part of my duty was to work with the (00:29:09) council secretary, to supervise and

guide him in his duties.

So what were the responsibilities of the council?

Education to some extent, they were taking over responsibility for new schools, their own beer gardens, roads, council tax. You know, thinking back I find it difficult to remember what their real responsibilities were at that particular council in that day and age. They didn't run the dip tanks. We still ran those. Water supplies, the building and operation of wells and boreholes.

Health clinics? I'm just trying to think

There were health clinics but they were still being run by the Ministry of Health. The councils were their infancy and finding their feet. Later, I had far more to do with councils. The formation of councils became increasingly part of Government policy but that's further on in the story. But apart from that, in the office in Marandellas, I presided over civil cases between African parties, and general duties around the office.

It's interesting that this frame of thought about Marandellas has triggered and come through when I asked about UDI. Are you identifying this growing political agitation back to that point?

I had been aware of growing political agitation from my days in Rusape. St. Faiths Mission was in that district. Guy Clutton Brock together with the Mutasa family, who farmed on the Mission property, were quite politically active at that time. Then, when we returned from leave in the UK there was increasing violent activity in the African townships in the larger cities. When we arrived in Marandellas, there had been agitation building up over the previous two or three years in Marandellas...there were problems in Marandellas in the township with a few agitators, a few people

What form did it take? Can you remember?

I think just general political unrest, probably one or two little...

I mean, are we talking about urban violence? Are we talking about demonstrations? Are we talking about public rallies which were...?

Demonstrations more than rallies, nothing as great as that in those days I don't think. But in other parts of the country, Bulawayo particularly, where Joshua Nkomo was active, it had obviously been bubbling up there very strongly and now you're bringing back memories I'd forgotten about. When we arrived in Marandellas, generally speaking, in the larger towns and probably even in the smaller towns, there was a lot of political agitation and demonstrations. Much of the agitation and violence was black on black, with differing political groupings fighting for domination over the others.

(00:33:00) Were you monitoring black newspapers?

No

Nothing like that?

No, it may have been taking place in the main towns where the papers were published. I'm not aware of any black newspapers outside Salisbury/Bulawayo but yes, I remember, we got back to Marandellas and we were unsettled. I was unsettled, partially because of my inability to pass my final exam which was the Shona oral exam. I have never been a linguist and probably a bit shy about talking in a different language. I passed the written part of the exam no trouble at all and we had a young clerk in the office who'd been born and bred in Rhodesia who spoke fluently but he couldn't pass the written part of the exam and I had the same problem in reverse. I just felt I wasn't going to get anywhere after taking the exam five times. So we did think of returning to the UK then and I actually contacted the teacher training college in York and had been accepted. We were almost sure we were coming back but I just couldn't bring myself to leave the country, I just couldn't.

How did Joan feel? Was she quite happy to return?

She would have been I think. Yes, she would have been but she was quite happy to stay with me as well.

So what tipped it for you to stay?

I think just the fact that largely I felt I couldn't...I didn't know what, apart from teaching, I could do in the UK and I wasn't all that enthused by the thought of teaching and the countryside in Zimbabwe, like Marandellas was beautiful. The skies were blue, you could drive along the roads and enjoy just the general area. It was just a kind of a love for the country I suppose that kept me there.

It's a sort of romantic attachment

Yes

So how did you get over not being able to speak fluent Shona?

Well I battled on with it and I actually resigned from native affairs. I had to give three months notice. I wasn't particularly happy at the thought of leaving because I did enjoy the work. I was considering working for an insurance company that I'd had discussion with when I received a call from the Provincial Commissioner who said "wouldn't you like to give the exam a final go, another go?" So I thought, sounds promising, yes I will.

And you did

(00:36:07) Yes, so I did and I sailed through it.

Congratulations! Where were you at UDI?

Well, this is why I started telling you the story about going to these various stations because we were only in Marandellas for about a year or so. Then we were transferred to Fort Victoria. I was doing another one of those tiresome duties which cropped up in internal affairs. My primary responsibility there was care of African deceased estates because no one in the commercial world, in the solicitors, in the legal world were prepared to take them on because they were usually fairly small and involved a knowledge of African custom sort them out and knowing who was due to inherit, if there was anything to inherit. I spent most of my days doing this which was desk bound, I hardly got out of the office at all in Fort Victoria. After we'd been there for nine months, I was asked if (I'd like to move). I was transferred to Selukwe. I had already shown interest in a new concept of community development which was introduced as part of the ministry's duties.

What did you understand "community development" to mean?

Working with the community to help them help themselves to become involved in developing and working and building things and improving things for the way that they wanted to go, rather than the way the government felt they should do it, in their own local affairs.

Did you feel in any way that this was a version of apartheid?

I didn't think so, no.

I'm just thinking of the comparison of "separate development" compared to "community development".

I just felt it was the opportunity for the rural areas to develop and for them to take responsibility for it and participate in that. To help themselves improve their life.

So did this involve any degree of taxed revenue, of administration, or was it simply the point of view of input in policy choices at the local level?

It was more input in policy choices at local level. I had shown an interest in the concept. A group of native commissioners or district commissioners they would be by then, had gone over to the United States and had a six month course in community development, over in California I believe. They came back with American advisors to help establish a community development policy within the ministry.

So this was a pilot scheme that you were running?

(00:39:24) Yes. When I first went, the district commissioner wasn't part of it but one of them was posted to Selukwe, who'd been on a course in the United States and so I worked very closely with him and learnt from him more about

the concept. We had with the local people, through the tribal system, through the chiefs, and headmen. I worked with community development agents who the Ministry employed. African people in their own areas.

Were they seen though as government stooges, because you're talking about them being government employees?

They were government employees and their task was to talk to the local communities and explain the policies to them. What they could do and how they could work together and how we could help them with government input and limited finance. Build dams, improve agriculture, small scale education schemes, things of that nature. It was very exploratory in those days.

Was this being funded or supported by local politicians? I'm just thinking obviously Selukwe was Ian Smith's region.

Oh yes, it was. Yes, it was a political initiative approved by the government. Please delete the following section. (But at that time, it wasn't the Rhodesian Front, when we first went to Selukwe. It was probably Winston Field who was the Prime Minister, who was generally perceived as being ultra liberal and then he was removed from position and Ian Smith came in.) The day that UDI was declared, I was actually in the TTL with the district commissioner - Roddy Maclean. We were there for some meetings. We knew the broadcast by Ian Smith was coming on air at 12.00 .

So you had advance warning of what was coming?

It had been widely advertised Ian Smith would be addressing the nation on radio at 12.00 that particular day and Roddy had taken his portable radio with him, a little...

Transistor?

I don't think there were transistors in those days. It was what we called a saucepan radio because it was built in a saucepan with a hole in the middle for the speaker. We set it up in the Landrover when we were having a bite to eat, a sandwich at lunchtime. I think virtually everybody expected UDI to be declared and that is what he did announce. Personally I wasn't too happy because I still regarded myself as British in those days but I didn't make my feelings known. I just kept them very much to myself.

So you didn't even tell Roddy Maclean?

(00:42:58) I didn't even tell Roddy Maclean, no.

Did he admit to you how he felt about it?

Oh he was very enthusiastic

Oh right, well if you were having reservations then that was not the

audience you would wish to admit that you were...

No, it wasn't. He was very enthusiastic and I was a bit ambivalent about the whole thing.

Did you see it as a betrayal of the Queen?

Not of the Queen, but of Great Britain

But you felt yourself to be Rhodesian and home

Yes, but I've always been a very great fan of the royalty. I hold them in very high esteem and regard.

Well, there was a very strong monarchist feeling in Rhodesia at the time

Very strong, yes. I think we tended to think of the monarchy as separate to the British Government and there was no argument with the monarchy but there was with the British Government and their outlook. For a while I just felt a little bit uneasy and then...

Did you admit your misgivings to Joan?

Probably not

Why not?

I don't know, I very much kept it to myself. I may have mentioned it but we didn't discuss politics a great deal. Then eventually, I think, Harold Wilson recommended that the Rhodesian civil servants should remain in their posts to maintain Law and Order. That seemed to make the position a little bit easier and so that is when I first heard about UDI.

Was there any agitation in your area?

There was, in the African townships. There were people in the urban areas who were obviously unhappy about it.

What form did their unhappiness take?

It was a continuation of political unrest. There were rallies and violence. We didn't have any real problems. We still went out and nobody accosted us as we went about our duties in the TTLs'. But when we had meetings to discuss developments, there were one or two (00:45:26) who were asking probably very pertinent questions about it but they wanted to discuss the political side of things rather than the development of the rural areas.

But the two were connected

They were connected, yes, but their ambition was political advancement,

They weren't able to be part of the government and they did not want, something at a lower level. They wanted to be part of central government. They were not even on the voter's roll, with a few exceptions. So there was no way of satisfying their ambitions.

Their aspirations for a greater political influence

Yes

How did you feel about the standard required to get on the electoral roll at the African B roll level, because obviously it had to be education and property?

It had to be education, I think we all felt, well I felt in those days that possibly it was a fair way for them to start, to make a start and to show their own political acumen by working at it through this way and gradually build up to a greater involvement.

That's a very paternalistic approach

It is, yes, we were probably very paternalistic in those days weren't we?

Very

Very

This is treating Rhodesia/Zimbabwe rather as England in the Great Reform Act of the 1830's

Yes, probably

Yes, it's not surprising that a steam of African desire for satisfaction for their aspirations built up, given what was happening elsewhere in Africa.

Yes, oh well yes, particularly that. The white population of Rhodesia was really disturbed about what was happening in the rest of Africa and I don't know...

Had you paid attention to the Congo crisis? Had you paid attention to what was going on in Northern Rhodesia, Zambia?

Oh yes, we watched that with increasing gloom really because it was obviously going to affect us in our everyday life and the whole, well, everything to do with the country was going to, there were obviously going to (00:47:59) be people who were following this and seeking succour from these people outside who had come to, most of them, had come to power themselves through uprising really.

Oh yes, agitation

Agitation, yes

Militancy

Militancy, especially in Kenya and places like that.

Yes, well Malawi as well

Malawi yes, with Banda there, yes. Ghana but I think the general feeling in Rhodesia in those days, that it was inevitable that if African people took over the government that it would bring ruination to the country involved, which in many cases I think it has.

I don't think it was inevitable that the current state of Zimbabwe has come ineluctably from African black majority rule.

Don't you think so?

No, I don't. Frank, at what point were you aware of the onset of an insurgency, the onset of a war, a bush war?

There was always the township problems from 1960 or '59 where there were riots and other events but coming from outside the country it would be when I was in my first position as district commissioner in Mtoko in Mashonaland East. We went there in 1967 and when we went in 1967, it was a very calm, very peaceful district, very pleasant people to work with. I felt an immediate rapport with the tribal leaders and most of the African population I came into contact with. I was assisted in this by the fact that my parents came out to visit us shortly after we arrived in Mtoko. My father was always a very gregarious person who could talk to anybody and we took him and my mother to one or two gatherings in the African area, to the TTL and one was with Chief Mtoko at his village. My father and Chief Mtoko seemed to strike up a friendship so easily although they didn't speak the same language, they just seemed to get on very well.

How did they communicate?

Well, through interpreters. I think the chief spoke a little English occasionally, but mostly through interpretation, to the extent that when my parents left after spending three months with us, Chief Mtoko presented my father with a bull

Did he?

(00:51:23) Which was a great honour

A great honour

And the bull was promptly named "Harold Wilson"

What happened to the bull? I'm just curious about that particular detail?

We had three sons at the time. The district commissioner's house had a paddock, it had a surrounding area of twenty acres, so the bull lived in this area together with a donkey and a few goats came into it as well. One of my messengers occasionally kept his cattle in there and we kept Harold in there for a few months. Then Joan became pregnant and my parents said "why don't you sell Harold and buy a pram?" because our youngest son by this time was nine years old, so we didn't have any prams or cots or any baby requirements left. And so we sold Harold for slaughter, unfortunately for poor old Harold.

But that was a sign of wealth, the gesture of a great honour that the chief gave to your father

Yes and when my parents got back, they sent him a big parcel of blankets and so there was, it was always this, almost an introduction to the African hierarchy, the tribal hierarchy through...I would have had it anyway but probably not as closely and so we were always very closely connected to Chief Mtoko and the other tribal leaders in Mtoko district. But I forget what brought all this on now, where were we?

I was asking when you started to be aware of a bush war?

We were aware that there was training going on in Zambia and Tanzania.

How did you know? This is information that's coming through...

Information that's coming through...

...press or is it coming through the government?

No, through government sources, through security sources

So are you getting briefings at this point from the police?

Yes we're getting briefings from the police. I think we had the first incursion into the country in the Mtoko district. Most of the early incursions were in the Mount Darwin area but we had one in the Mtoko district before that. I was at the Mtoko Club one evening, we were having a social function. The member in charge of the police came down, called me out and said that a group of terrorists had been found in the district. At that time the Mtoko district stretched from the Murewa District to Mocambique. It (00:54:33) included white European commercial farmers, a group of African purchase area farms and then a huge swathe of tribal trustland all the way from Mtoko village right through to the border with Mozambique. It was a large area about the size of Yorkshire. In the eastern portion of the district was the Ngarwe tribal trust land. We already had our messengers patrolling in those areas, looking for signs of infiltration unusual activity.

Your messengers?

Yes, district assistants, they called them in later days but they called them messengers originally.

But this is unarmed?

Unarmed, yes, completely unarmed yes. In fact the only firearm we had in the office was a 303 rifle from the Second World War. My two messengers, who were on patrol in Ngarwe TTL. They were in a store, a general dealer's store and this messenger noticed an African there, a young African with a Togarev pistol sticking out his pocket. The handle was protruding out of his pocket. So with great bravery and no thought for his own safety, he just went up to the young man and arrested him. The D.A's contacted the police and it turned out that there was a group Ct's, about half a dozen in the hills near the village. A of them were ill. They weren't too fit at all and this chap had gone to the store to try and get them some assistance when he was apprehended. So the security forces opened what was probably the first JOC in Rhodesia. It was some distance from Mtoko in the area that became the Mudzi district. That is when we were really aware that the problem was imminent, that it was within us. It was quickly cleared up, I think it was called Operation Tempest and because we were a somewhat remote from the area where the police set up their headquarters for the operation, we didn't have a great deal to do with it and virtually just carried on with our work.

So when did it start to impinge again upon your consciousness?

It escalated from there because there were numerous incursions into the Mount Darwin, Sipolilo areas to the north. Attacks on farms started so it all escalated rather rapidly from there. Our provincial commissioner took a few D.C's up there to Centenary, which was a new district which was formed there in the commercial farming area, just to see how they were dealing with the problem. They were talking then about establishing protected villages and making a start on it in that area. My colleague in the next district, Murewa, started the first protected villages in our province, in his district but at that stage we didn't have any in Mtoko and we had none while I was there.

Was that because of your personal resistance to PV's?

Well, I wasn't happy about the concept

Why not?

(00:58:55) I just felt that it was isolating people and concentrating them into groups which could be easily bypassed by the terrorists groups.

What was the thinking behind protected villages?

That the protected villages kept the local inhabitants in one particular spot where they could be overseen whereas if you left them in their own environment, the terrorist groups would go to the villages, seek sustenance...

OK and seep to the kraals. So in other words you corralled people so that you can identify incomers?

Yes

So the first protected villages, in your view, how well were they established? Were they provided with the infrastructure necessary for, after all, moving substantial numbers of people? That must have caused huge resentment, separation from land?

The people were still allowed out during the day to cultivate their lands. The P.V. opened in the morning, they had to be back in the evening and suppose it was a no-go area outside the P.V. after that.

How well protected were they from the point of view of fencing or actual guarding?

Yes, there was fencing around them to keep people in and keep others out. The P.V. was protected by the Guard Force and elements of Internal Affairs staff

But didn't that vary very much from protected village to protected village?

Probably did, I never actually had a protected village in my district so I'd only...

Was that your deliberate choice not to have one?

No, it was financial considerations rather than anything else. We were at one time asked to submit a report on our views on protected villages. I put forward my views that I felt that they weren't really the solution to the problem because they would just provide open areas where people could move through without hindrance and infiltrate further into the country.

In your view, how well prepared was the approach to protected villages? Was it a rapid "Let's assemble all these people in one area"? I'm just thinking of the need to provide infrastructure, housing, water, schooling, health clinics.

(01:01:14) It was a difficult task. It went ahead rather rapidly but given the constraints of finance and time, the district commissioners who dealt with it did quite a good job.

Were local Sangoma invited to assist with this process? I'm just thinking of the cultural rupture from land and physical moving.

I don't think there was a great deal of consultation. Obviously it would have been discussed with the tribal elders to explain to them what was happening but...

Just to me it would seem culturally and politically sensitive and astute to go precisely that route but to your knowledge, that didn't happen?

Well there must have been discussion. The tribal elders must have been told and deadlines set for the move and people were helped I know, there was transport to get their belongings but they still had to build their own houses in these areas.

Sorry, to me, looking back across the Balkans war in the 90s, this smacks a little bit of, I know it wasn't intended to be, of ethnic cleansing, this forcible moving of people.

It certainly was not ethnic cleansing because it was not dividing people from another race, it wasn't dividing them from the white people because the white people were mostly in the towns and they were already divided. This was just a population movement within an African tribal trust land who were moved into various points within that area.

And this was seen as a short term temporary measure?

Presumably for as long as it was needed to deal with the problem.

What did you think at this point that you were organising against? You use the word "terrorist"?

Yes, you'd use "freedom fighters"?

Not necessarily. I'm asking you your terminology, what did you think you were fighting against? Was this criminal activity?

Yes, fighting against Communist Terrorists (C.Ts.) infiltrating into the villages, subverting the population and starting up their own areas of influence as it were or having bases within the country where they could fight against the forces of the country.

Did you see them as being politically motivated or criminally motivated?

The incursionists, the terrorists?

Yes

(01:03:52) Definitely politically motivated, not at all criminally motivated. It was a criminal activity but I didn't regard them as coming in to commit petty criminal offences, you know, to become criminals in that aspect.

It was against the laws of the country, you felt that these were attacks upon a Rhodesian population?

Yes

Other members of the BSAP have described it as criminal deviant activity. They saw it as criminal, they were prosecuted through the criminal code

They were, yes

They were not prosecuted through the traditional or civil courts and so in that sense, they saw this as an alien arrival. Now would you agree with that?

It was an alien arrival in that it wasn't part of the tradition of the country or the way the country had worked in the past,. They were infiltrating with the intention to destroy the government through their activities. To spread alarm, despondency, subvert the thoughts of the local people and from the African areas, possibly move into the farming areas. Which they were doing of course in Darwin and Sipolilo, where they were attacking farmers and causing a great deal of anxiety amongst the farming population. Of course farming was one of the mainstays of the economy of Rhodesia.

Did you see them though to be principally politically motivated for a cause? You've described about spreading despondency, about being destructive, those are all very negative conations that you've just attached to their activities.

But isn't this the essence of communist takeover? That they destroy to build up?

But this is, if you think that they're fighting for something, they were fighting for something and you're fighting against something. So I'm just wondering how much importance did you attach to communism as being a motivating factor behind their activity?

Oh very much so. We felt that when they were being trained by the communist governments in China and Russia and ostensibly they were Marxists intent in taking over the country to put us all in a communist system within a communist state.

So you didn't see them as principally African nationalists who were using communist backing for their own agenda?

No, that's a difficult one for me to answer, I don't know why it should be. The thought at the time, I think, was that...or my thoughts were that they were (01:06:55) coming in to overthrow an existing government and replace it with a government of their choice which would have a Marxist leaning.

Ok, so that implies you saw it as a battle about power?

Yes

But you're also suggesting by your hesitation that you saw them being

manipulated and controlled by external forces, communist forces?

Oh very much so, yes. I felt that they were being manipulated and controlled by their leaders. The rank and file of the terrorist groups were, in many cases youngsters who were forcibly taken out of the country.

Did that happen in your area?

Yes, it happened in all the districts along the Eastern border of the country.

That there were forcible abductions?

Yes there were

How did you counter that? I mean, were you embarking on propaganda campaigns to try to “steady” the local population to build up a hearts and minds campaign to bolster its resistance to such incursions and subversion?

We had meetings, yes. We tried but I don't think it was possible to do it with the whole population. Eventually it was not possible to hold meetings in the tribal areas. In Mtoko, where this first started, we had a very good understanding with the local tribal hierarchy. With the support of the tribal leaders, I developed the district from no local government authorities in the African areas at all, until we had the whole area covered by African councils. Through them, I was aiming for a settled local government system which gave some outlet for aspirations of the local people.

So that's relying on traditional African power structures?

Yes

An elaboration which...

Yes, because the councils were aligned to tribal boundaries.

And also channelling the pre-colonial hierarchical structures

Yes

Going down from headman, sub-headman, kraal head

(01:09:18) That's right, yes

So established hierarchies of decision making within African communities

Yes

And of course the incursionists were directly challenging that power

structure

Yes but I don't know that they felt...I got the impression the terrorists themselves were coming in to create as much murder and mayhem and disruption as they could.

Did you have firsthand experience of, as you put it, that murder and mayhem?

In the Umtali district, yes. Not in Mtoko. I left there before the situation really developed and went to Umtali in 1974 before the incursions started in that area. When I was in Mtoko, it was peaceful and calm. We formed a LIONS club in Mtoko/Murewa, mostly farmers, white farmers in the area plus one or two civil servants like myself and we actually took a group of children out from Salisbury who were chosen by a Salisbury Lions Clubs. We took them out into the TTL for three or four nights, just to give them an introduction into the African way of life, how people live in the African areas because we felt that the children in towns particularly had no conception, no clue at all of what life was like for the African people. The people who worked for them in their houses, what their rural homes were like and what their life was like out there where their families were living.

So in your observation then, there was an extraordinary urban/rural divide?

Yes, yes there was in that respect. In the Mtoko district, we took these children out into the tribal areas with no qualms about their safety. Then in '74 I was moved to Umtali and I did a similar thing in Umtali. Not staying overnight. I arranged to take a group of children out to the tribal trustland to look at an African village and see how the village was laid out and the various tasks the people in the village carried out in their daily lives. The different work done by the women and the men folk.

Did you do this in collaboration with the kraal head?

Oh yes, it was all arranged in advance, they knew we were coming. I must admit there were reservations about the Umtali visit. There were feelings that there could be problems cropping up from incursions but we took a chance and took the children out to the TTL. The gentleman who helped with this was a chap who worked in my office who had been a Catholic Priest, named Adolph Gmuer and he had left (01:12:37) the priesthood to marry a Mrs Mutasa who was a white lady who had married one of the Mutasa family in Rusape.

How unusual was that?

Extremely unusual in those days, extremely.

Had she been socially ostracised for her first marriage?

She would have been if she'd come into much contact with the white population in the towns or the settlements.

Well, she was quite a rebel if she married, first into the Mutasa family and then she married a lapsed Catholic Priest

Yes, well he was a practising priest when he met her and I think she sought a little bit of solace in his support and she was finding it very hard, the life she had to lead with the Mutasas I think. She had children.

Was she a Rhodesian born and bred?

No, she was from Lincolnshire I think, yes, definitely Lincolnshire, from Scunthorpe.

Goodness

Where she lives now. I think for her own safety, eventually she had to leave Mutasa and Adolph decided it was worth giving up the priesthood to marry her and care for the children.

Give up his vocation for her

Give up his vocation for her, which is a big thing I think, from a Catholic Priest

A very, very big thing

But he was a fluent Shona speaker, he'd lived at missions in Rusape, Inyanga area and he knew more about village life than any other white man I came across. He was the one who led these children around and spoke to the villagers and explained the layout of the huts for the various wives and what happened in each hut. He was quite wonderful.

At this point, what did you think you were fighting for? That you were striving to defend?

I felt that we were fighting to maintain a decent civilised way of life. I felt we would lose this if there was a takeover by people who were unversed in ruling a country in government. I just felt that it would lead to the collapse of the country.

(01:15:31) Were these specifically European civilised values?

Yes, for myself and my family.

Or were these also traditional African civilisation values?

No, not African civilisation values, but values which I felt they were coming to adopt because education, health, matters like that, the amenities, electricity, water, all very alien to the African in his own area and I think in the towns they

really enjoyed these facilities.

What were your sources of information about the war? Were you getting regular briefings from the police? Were you relying on particularly the Rhodesian media?

No, it was through the police and the army, particularly the police.

What was the relationship in your area, in your district between the police and also with the army?

Relationship with the police was excellent. We got on very well together. I have in all my districts enjoyed a very good relationship with the police. I didn't come into contact with the army at all until I went to Umtali and I found the army more difficult than the police.

How so?

Well I didn't find the police difficult at all. I think it was the army training, I found that the army, not all the army guys, in particular the territorial's were alright because they were used to civilian life but I think a lot of the career army officers were very well trained, very confident, almost to the point of arrogance

I was going to say the word "arrogance" pops into my head

Very sure of themselves, felt they had all the answers and wanted to do everything their way and as this is going into army records, I don't know whether...

No, but not everyone has been, shall we say, wholeheartedly praising of the behaviour of individual army units, individual army regiments because it's fair to admit that there were tensions within the structures of the Rhodesian state

Yes

And the army would be the first to admit it. So you're suggesting then a disquiet, more than a disquiet at the attitude and I'm going to suggest perhaps the behaviour of the army in individual cases?

(01:18:19) Yes to some extent though behaviour, the attitude largely

Why?

Because that was what affected me

Right, why? Because they seemed to be seeking military solutions to political problems or was it because of their style of going in, shooting terrorists, as many as possible, focusing on a body count and let's face

it, also executing captured terrorists or the process of interrogation?

No, I didn't know much about the interrogation side of things and if I did think of interrogation at all I thought of it as coming through the police and I am aware that they probably were somewhat rough at times.

Was this common knowledge?

Never discussed it but I'm sure it must have been because there were so many people from the ordinary civilian life who were members of the police reserve who had to do their stints of duty. So it must have been common knowledge throughout the country. Similarly with the army that there were so many people from the civilian life who were in the army so they must have known. To some extent I suppose I felt that a certain amount of heavy-handedness was inevitable in obtaining information.

But say activities such as the Selous Scouts and psyops, what did you make of those?

I had a great respect for the Selous Scouts, for their bravery and what they were doing. I wasn't at all sure how they operated amongst the local population except that they did infiltrate into the local population and could almost become part of the scene of an area.

But you weren't made aware of what was going on?

No

So if they were moving into your area, there wasn't a case of warning you that this was happening?

No

It sounds like a pretty fragmented picture to me, native affairs and internal affairs preoccupied with the administration and the army fighting a very different...

Well we had daily meetings at the JOC when the JOCs were established when the infiltrations became particularly heavy. We had daily contact and we discussed what was happening and administration virtually became impossible. We couldn't really do much administrative work in the TTLs. (01:20:57) Schools were closing and cattle dipping was closing down. We built, in my district four secure bases, "keeps" we called them which were fortified, well they were fortified in that they had concrete roofs, bunkers, things like that, where we would go to keep a presence in the area. From where our staff could patrol throughout the area. They couldn't do much when they went out, apart from let people see they were there and still around and actually when the army stopped going to the southern part of my district, the area where I think there is now that diamond field.

Yes, by Marange

Marange, yes, we had a base there called Mutsago. The army and the police had pulled out of the area completely, we were the only government presence in the area. The army and the police said it was impossible for them to maintain a presence in that remote area. They couldn't do anything about that area. Eventually we had to give it up because it was just too dangerous for our people to operate there. We believe as we moved out, the local people and the terrorist groups moved in and made great play of the fact that they'd overthrown INTAF in the area.

I just want to go back to the manner of violence because I'm particularly struck that the Rhodesian Bush War was a particularly brutal war for many in the civilian population; the level of atrocities which were committed by both sides.

Yes

I'm not suggesting that the Rhodesian forces necessarily behaved in exactly the same way as either ZIPRA or ZANLA fighters but all of your former security force colleagues have commented upon the terror, the mutilations, the particularly violent ways of death or intimidation that were used.

By the terrorist groups?

By the terrorist groups. I'm wondering, did you ever think how could people behave like this? Why are they behaving like this? How could human beings treat each other in such a way?

I felt that it was the way they'd been trained. That they'd been trained to become immune to it.

So you associated then, these terrorists with communist techniques?

Yes very much so

So to you then, that becomes a short leap, that communism equals bestial behaviour?

Yes I think that is probably the clearest way to look at it

(01:24:12) **But it is antithetical to every human value to which you held?**

Yes it certainly is. By the time the terrorist activity in the Umtali district really started, after the collapse of Mozambique, was when we really started to feel the impact of it. Of course, the whole of the eastern district border was opened up to infiltration and it became impossible for the security forces to control it. There were known access points but because of the hilly nature of the country, it couldn't really be policed or militarily maintained.

Did you have discussions with the chiefs and sub-chiefs about the level and type of violence that was being used?

The chiefs came in for meetings and we spoke to them then about the fact that we felt that these people were trying to take over the country and would change their whole way of life and that we must not allow this to happen if we could possibly avoid it. I don't think we really spoke much about violence but I did talk about the loss of educational facilities and freedom of movement.

Because having spoken to former members of ZANLA and indeed former Soviet military advisors, their emphasis was very much, 'This is armed struggle, this is violence as a political language.'

Yes

It is upping the stakes of terror to persuade the population that they should fear and respect their forces more than the government. So this was a highly deliberate strategy but it, of course, took in some cases a particularly atrocious and bestial form

Yes, I entirely agree that was their strategy.

And I was just wondering whether there had ever been any thoughts, analysis about the types of violence or was it just so off your mental map?

It was probably a little bit off the mental map and I think by the time it arrived in the district, in the Umtali district, it probably wasn't as severe because the people were more accepting of it and prepared to go...

So there's a political education that's been going on, because it's being reported elsewhere, because of the pamphlets that have been put out.

Well, by the people who came along. Fair enough, I think a lot of them had to go, well virtually the whole population in the tribal areas had to attend these Pungwes that the terrorists held. I don't think they did it happily but they probably did it fairly willingly because they knew if they didn't, there would be repercussions against them. The word had got around by (01:27:18) then of the extent to which violence would be used against them if they did not comply with the terrorists demands. The extent, the real terror of it was impossible to withstand by people living in remote rural areas.

Were there mission stations in your tribal trustland areas?

There was one. It wasn't actually a mission, it was a school in Marange, very close to one of our bases and when I moved to Umtali, I used to visit it frequently and in fact I took...my mother came on a visit and Joan's parents came and we took them all out to this mission school complex and Father Williams ran it and it was a very good set up.

You didn't have any qualms about the "reliability" of the mission school? Because I do know that certain missions, that staff at certain missions, were in sympathetic support of...

Oh yes, I think it had closed down by the time, or he'd moved out by this time I think and we had no other missions in the area. I can't even remember discussing it with Father Williams but his attitude seemed to me to be that he wanted peaceful progress in his school and I don't think he would have been particularly inclined to assist groups of terrorists but I don't think it ever arose while he was there.

One thing I haven't asked you in connection with the protected villages is what did you make of Guard Force?

Never really had any... That was something I noticed about Guard Force and I was trying to rack my brains and think what was Guard Force? Now, did Guard Force eventually take over the running of the protected villages?

Yes

I never had them in my district, I never came across them.

Well they obviously didn't make much of an impact if you're racking your brains about it!

No they didn't. I knew about Guard Force but then my recollection of protected villages is Internal Affairs, our own staff operating them and I know two of my sons were involved in this when they were called up after they finished school but not in my district.

To act as what?

To work in the protected villages and not with Guard Force but with Internal Affairs

And what were their responsibilities?

Just doing whatever had to be done within the protected village.

(01:30:32) Ok, so they weren't being conscripted into the Rhodesian Army?

No, they were conscripted into Internal Affairs, they were trained by Internal Affairs staff at Chikurubi training camp and my eldest son Mike, the one who eventually became a pilot actually was controlling a number of protected villages in the Chiweshi area. He built up quite a good reputation for himself amongst the Internal Affairs hierarchy for the way he was running it and training his own African staff in the running of these protected villages.

Another question, did you have much dealings, awareness, knowledge

of spirit mediums? I'm just wondering if Internal Affairs ever thought to, shall we say, devote attention and sensitivity to the potential role of spirit mediums in the war? Or was that something that you just don't tangle with?

It was something I didn't particularly tangle with at the spirit medium level. I would think it would have been rather difficult to make contact with them. In Mtoko, I had good contact with chieftainess Charewa. She was not a spirit medium but as chosen by the spirits to be the chieftainess. She was connected with Chief Mtoko who was responsible for choosing her through their own traditional tribal customs and contact with spirit mediums. Obviously we were aware that there were spirit mediums around.

And shrines

Yes but I was never aware of any particular significance in my district.

That they hadn't acted as a... the shrines of particular spirit mediums acted as a magnet for incoming guerrillas?

No

How much do you think during all of this, the war, helped to create a sense of Rhodesian identity?

In the beginning, I think it had a strong influence on people working together, pulling together.

That actually transcended race? It wasn't just simply pulling the white community together?

No, well I was thinking then basically of the white community but obviously as you say, many members of the African community were working with us and certainly on the surface appeared to be giving us their full support.

Did you ever have political discussions with any of the African leaders at various levels in your district?

No, no we didn't do that at all

(01:33:47) **What did you think of people who left?**

Who left the country?

Yes, the so-called "taking the chicken run"

At that stage, although we had no thoughts of leaving ourselves, I felt that that was their choice and if they saw the situation so dire, well good luck to them elsewhere. I wasn't particularly upset, I didn't find them offensive or anything like that.

So there wasn't this, you weren't one of those who felt that they were the rats leaving the sinking ship? That in fact that they should stay and fight and defend their country?

No, I didn't. There was a lot of that around but I felt that they made their choice, fair enough. If they stayed in the country with those thoughts, they wouldn't have been much use to the country anyway so they may as well go and find a new life elsewhere. We were involved in those days a great deal with the white population, far more than we had in the previous years, through civil defence and regular meetings in the various farming areas with different civil defence groups. Most of the people in those groupings were there for the duration as it were. They felt that they were staying, it was their country, their farms, they were defending their homes and we did what we could to help them, particularly with financing the protection of their homesteads.

I'm very struck though that the bush war, it's very paradoxical because the brunt of it particularly has been borne by the rural areas, the farming community and yet there is that urban/rural divide. People living in the other major urban centres were not aware of the reality of the war fought outside and yet the young men who were conscripted were being taken out into the rural areas and indeed exposed to way of life that they had not been exposed to before. So you've got all sorts of contradictory trends that are going on here.

Yes but of course you had many of the farming families who had to go and do their stint in the army or the police reserve as well and operate with the local police station in their area, so they were well aware of the...they were used to the African population working on their farms. So it was only those really from Salisbury, Bulawayo maybe, Umtali town, Gwelo that didn't know something about the African way of life. But probably not all of them appreciated the African outlook, the way they think, the way they work and the way they do things.

I'm also going to ask you about racialistic attitudes? We referred to them as 'paternalistic attitudes' earlier but how far do you think there was also a case of the urban white female community being something of a bastion or a secluded group that didn't have, let's face it, the social (01:37:04) immediate contact with wider African society whereas men would have had more contact in forms, with their professions, with a broader African community. So in fact you've got, to a degree, racialistic habits of mind coming with that settled female population? Or is that a completely false construct?

There were many of the white female population who were interested in what was happening in African areas and through women's clubs participated in helping African women's clubs, either in the towns or in the rural areas.

What sort of women's clubs?

Better get Joan in on this I think because she used to help as well, but

women's clubs like you get WI's. There were also women's clubs for Black women through the various churches in the towns,

Making jam and cakes

Making jam and cakes and sewing and making things to earn a little bit of money and how to keep clean, their cleanliness, that kind of thing.

Sounds like 19th century missionary work

Yes almost. Except that the missionary work would have the prime objective of converting the women to Christianity.

How receptive was the African female population to this?

Well I think those who were interested were very receptive to it. We had women community development agents who were responsible for promoting the clubs in the tribal trust lands. White women would go out to the TTL's and support them in their efforts. This was noticeable when we were in Selukwe which was in 1964. I think we went to Selukwe, '63/'64 and Roddy McLean's wife Joy was very active in this. She enrolled many of ladies in the Selukwe area, village and on the mines into helping out in the African areas to spread the word about women's clubs and get a whole series of them going.

By the end of the struggle, so in the late 1970's, how did you see the bush war? Did you see it as a tribal war? Did you see it as an ideological war? I mean for some, they've described it as a hate war.

I never, in those days thought of it much as a tribal war. I think that developed, in my perception, later, after power was handed over. I suppose it was to some extent a hate war because there were many of the hierarchy of ZANU-PF and ZAPU who were very virulent anti-white and still are of course.

So there was a black patriotic agenda?

Yes, amongst the hierarchy and certainly the leaders...

But then on the other side, there was also a white patriotism

(01:40:38) Yes

"Patriotic whiteness", I've heard it described

Very patriotic I think, yes

Did you still feel yourself to be British at this point or were you Rhodesian?

I was a Rhodesian British man. I've never lost my Britishness, I always felt British but felt maybe the British weren't as British as they used to be.

Ok, so you were being left behind by your country?

Oh yes

Did you feel betrayed by Britain?

I felt they could have handled things better, that they could have taken more heed of what we were offering. Maybe Rhodesians weren't prepared to give enough, I felt that at times as well, it was the happy medium which nobody could strive...because I think we felt let down, I did, by Harold Wilson and all those efforts to negotiate.

But hang on a minute, you were also let down by, let's face it, the far right on the Rhodesian Front with their complete antipathy to amending the Land Tenure Act.

Yes, once again, my political naivety may come into this. I never really gave it a great deal of thought from that aspect. It just felt that something could have been worked out between the political parties in the UK and in Rhodesia. It's a difficult one this you know because we, as you say, I was working in Selukwe where Ian Smith was appointed Prime Minister and I can remember on one occasion seeing him standing outside my office talking to the member in charge of police and thinking "my gosh, if I had a rifle, I could shoot that gun just now, there's no protection for him at all". He was absolutely open to assassination here in Selukwe and we knew his mother, knew his wife. We felt that we were part of them, although I was never totally committed to Rhodesian Front in thought.

And this is the great irony, that this is an apolitical civil service serving the political projects of a regime that's in defiance of not just Britain but the international community?

Yes, we just felt Britain didn't stand up for us in the international community.

You didn't think that perhaps you should accommodate your attitude rather than everybody else coming round to you?

(01:43:42) Well I think there were probably concessions that weren't prepared to be made but it was difficult in those days because there was a tremendous reluctance amongst the white population to have black mass population living amongst them, that must be said, I think.

Based on what - antipathy or fear?

Antipathy largely, but a fear that the two cultures did not mix.

So African culture had to be changed?

If it came to live amongst the white community, yes.

And yet the whites were outnumbered 25 to 1

Yes

There's a certain racial arrogance there

Oh yes

Cultural arrogance

Yes

Speaking of racial/cultural arrogances, what were your views of South Africa?

South Africa was a place we enjoyed going to for holidays. I was never particularly enamoured with the South African system or what we perceived as the way they treated the population down there. I always felt that our system was not as severe, not as the South African system, that we didn't regard ourselves as quite the rulers as opposed to the subservient, black people. I think I felt we were more there to help the African to grow in his life, in his political life, in his everyday life, in his commercial life, economic life.

You've got a cultural myth there of David Livingstone

Probably

Rather than the cultural myth of Cecil Rhodes

Probably that's what drew me to go out there in the first place because I can remember going on the train from Cape Town in 1951 and looking out at the South African countryside and seeing in the very remote areas what looked like very well constructed brick buildings and thinking, have I got to Africa too late? They don't live in mud huts anymore? But when I got to Rhodesia it was different, we got into Chibi and places like that, it was very rural, very.

(01:46:26) So it was the Africa you had constructed in your head?

Yes

Were you also trying to keep it like that?

It would have been nice, yes, it would have been very pleasant to keep it like that but of course it wouldn't meet the aspirations of the...

Well no but I'm just thinking of, after all, community development is about, to a degree, looked at most positively, African empowerment. It's also about maintaining traditional structures and not disrupting African life and yet through education, the young were being educated, their horizons being expanded beyond that of their elders

Yes and we were encouraging education

And you were encouraging education which meant that you were feeding the cause, the political and economic and employment aspirations which couldn't be satisfied through the structures of the Rhodesian economy.

Yes

Did you ever spot these paradoxes?

Probably, if I had given voice to my own thoughts, I would have felt that there was more that could be done to bring the African population into our lives. Not particularly on a social basis but to give them the perceived benefits of our way of life.

What did you think of the black African MP's? Did you pay much attention to them?

We had one in Mtoko and I got on extremely well with him. He was very pleasant, he was a businessman, in fact I got a letter from him upstairs which he wrote to me when I left Mtoko thanking me for all the work I'd done there and he was fine. There were one or two others I met and on the whole they were alright. I found Isaac Samuriwa insufferably arrogant and an awful person I thought. But I still did invite him to lunch at our home in Mtoko where we had to host Clifford DuPont, the president and we'd only been in Mtoko for a few months when this was thrown at us. "The president wishes to come and spend three nights in your district. Would you please host him and make arrangements for him to meet various local dignitaries, communities". The first thing I did was organise a lunch or rather Joan organised the lunch at our house at which I invited Isaac Samuriwa as he was MP then for that particular area. He covered a far larger area than when the local man became MP and I had known him in Marandellas. So I invited him and local dignitaries, the police chief, the chairman of the local council, a few prominent farmers, farmers' association people and I don't think it did my reputation (01:50:03) amongst the local population, some of them, any good, having an African gentleman there.

Why, because you were letting down social standards?

It just wasn't done, that you invite them along to a social event like this. You met them in their own surroundings but did not bring them into white social activities.

You don't invite them into your own social space?

This was the feeling I had. I took the President to the Nyadiri Mission, which was United Methodist, the American Methodist group and we also took him to meet Chief Mtoko and had a small gathering at Chief Mtoko's kraal. My parents were there at the same time. I was saying about my father being able

to converse with people from all strata's. I always remember him sitting down and having a conversation of about two hours, sitting down on the settee with Clifford DuPont for a couple of hours, talking to the president whereas the day before he'd been talking to the Chief in the tribal area and having a very meaningful, it sounded like...

An animated conversation

Animated conversation

Frank, was there a time in the latter part of the war where you thought "the writings on the wall, we need to leave"?

I was always hopeful that things could work out. I realised at the latter part of the war who was going to win the election.

When did you realise this?

I realised that when they started negotiating. Every month we had to submit a report to Head Office, in the run up to the election.

You're talking about the February/March 1980?

Yes, 1980 election. We had to write district commissioner's reports every month giving our assessment of how we felt the voting would go.

So all district commissioners were doing that?

Were doing that, yes and...

And were you aware what other people were saying?

No I wasn't

I just wondered if there was a general pooling of intelligence

(01:52:27) No, strangely enough we never did, no. Or I never did but my assessment from what feedback I was getting from the tribal trustlands through our patrols going out there was that there was no-one out there politicising but ZANU-PF. I was reporting that ZANU-PF were going to win hands down. Two or three months before the election, I was forecasting this.

You didn't have any assembly points in your area?

No

So just the word was coming back? Did people give an explanation of why they were going to vote for ZANU-PF?

No, not particularly

I'm just wondering if there was an identified sense that "we have to vote for ZANU-PF because then the war will stop. If we don't, the war will continue".

I think there was a sense that ZANU-PF were the preferred party but my feeling was that the other parties were too frightened to go out and therefore they weren't putting over their side and encouraging voting for themselves.

But there was no level of political intimidation going on in your area, that you were aware of? Violence against rival political candidates?

There was no...there may have been in the township but I wasn't particularly aware of it, but there was nothing in the tribal areas because they were completely subverted by the terrorist groups. There was nobody else out there talking to them but ZANU-PF so there was no need for...

So ZAPU didn't come into your area?

ZAPU didn't, no

And Muzorewa's political supporters were also not out? Or Sithole's?

No, it would have been Muzorewa in my particular area They started off campaigning but they soon fled from the rural areas so there was political intimidation in effect, that they felt that they could not operate in those areas. To some extent I probably felt that if they want to become politicians they'd better get out there and do some really hard...they were looking after their own skins of course.

Well, there were atrocities against political activists at that particular point.

Yes

I remember one particular unfortunate ZAPU activist who was murdered. At least one I can think of. So when the election announcement (01:54:53) was made, that didn't come as a huge and horrid shock for you?

Not at all, it's what I fully expected

Were you anticipating any sort of coup by South Africa? Any violence from the white dominated community who were not expecting it.

No, I didn't feel that at all. I just felt that there was no strength in any possible white movement to stand against what was happening and I don't think any help would have come from South Africa because they'd already ditched us before that.

Well, in fact there was the South African military and their intelligence,

the NIA were recruiting former white Selous Scouts, SAS and intelligence officers and trying to launch, in fact, an attack on the Independence Day parades.

Were they?

Yes they were, they'd smuggled in high explosives. They were going to blow up Rufaro Stadium. They were intending to attack the motorcade. I mean, this is all planning - and they also had rocket propelled grenades with which to shoot down aircraft taking off from Salisbury Airport and those nationalists who were fleeing the mayhem. The idea was that this would produce a backlash, a bloodbath against the residual Rhodesian white community and South Africa would then have the opportunity and the entitlement to intervene to restore order. That was the thinking. What a crackpot idea! Fortunately one of the Rhodesian plotters told a member of Rhodesian Special Branch who scotched it. I've spoken to the guy who heard about the coup and managed to stop it.

Oh that would have been chaos, absolute...

It would have been disastrous

It would

Totally disastrous

Yes, I would not have like to have lived through that, or tried to live through it.

The person who spilled the beans was very worried because his mother was living in Harare, well Salisbury, and he was terrified that she'd be caught up in this.

Yes, completely harebrained

Yes, oh this was not rational thinking

(01:57:10) No because they couldn't have sustained it

No, of course not. I mean, the idea of South African military intervention at that particular point which would completely counter what the South African department of foreign affairs were saying. So there were huge tensions within the South African government.

Yes, there must have been

Lots of infighting

Because my perception, and I think it was a general feeling, was that South Africa let us down by withdrawing support and in any case, those members of their Special Branch or police who came up from RSA, that I met, didn't really

impress me at all.

Why not?

I don't know. They just felt as though they were not really a professional crowd of people. I don't know, maybe they had their own ways of looking at things but...

So you felt no cultural affinity with Afrikaners?

No cultural affinity at all, not with those Afrikaners, if they were Afrikaners at all. I would say I knew many Afrikaners in Rhodesia, in fact our friends in Karoi, they were Afrikaners. Jimmy Flight, he was Afrikaans from an Afrikaans family in the Free State many years previously, Orange Free State.

Well, Afrikaners who came to Rhodesia could have been again following up pioneer settlement, land and business opportunities but also there were those who disliked apartheid post 1948.

Yes, well maybe

Break in interview

Part two talking to Mr Frank Taylor in Hull

Frank, please, in the run up to independence, how much did the Department of Internal Affairs alter in the internal settlement time of 1978 to 1979?

It altered quite a lot in those times. Just prior to that we started employing white female officers which had never happened before and then we started taking on African black staff as officers of the service, rather than just the clerks and messengers. In my office in Umtali, I had two black cadets who became district officers and they continued after independence but I don't think they progressed very far because they were probably of the wrong political persuasion.

(01:59:50) **So what entrance exam did they have to take and pass?**

I'm not sure that they would have had to take any entrance exam. It probably went on their educational qualifications.

So at that point, it's been opened up to Rhodesian applicants?

Yes

So multi-racial Rhodesians?

Multi-racial, yes

How about the coloureds? Would they apply to internal affairs?

Didn't come across any myself

Would you say that internal affairs was a relatively conservative bureaucratic establishment?

Oh yes I think so, very much so

So unlike other ministries that might be a little bit more outward looking, the department of foreign affairs perhaps, the police perhaps, yours tended to be, well, driven by a different ethos?

I think it was people who were interested in African advancement but... it's difficult to answer, we certainly looked at the African areas in a different light to other ministries and I think other ministries just didn't worry. Well, I'm wrong here, education were very, very active, African education.

How about health?

Health, to some extent yes. They were involved but they didn't have the same numbers as the education ministry although a lot of the education was run by missions of course. There was a certain amount of government activity as well. No, I think the people in education, African education, probably thought along the same lines as ourselves to a great extent. The police, some were interested, some were not. Some were just purely people who liked, who felt their job was crime and crime prevention and crime solving and I don't think the African way of life particularly impinged on their thoughts. They just had a job to do and they got on with it.

Were you involved in any way in population policies?

Population control policies?

Yes

(02:02:41) Not as a ministry, I didn't find this but the ministry of health were and they tried to run various (programmes.) . They called it family planning initially, then they changed it to something else. In fact we had a very amusing situation in Mtoko, we had monthly district team meetings and there would be representatives from all the other ministries, or as many as attended it, from other ministries who worked in the district. So we'd have somebody from health, education, agriculture, roads, you name it, they usually came along. They were quite good meetings and the Ministry of Health representative, Mr Fourie was a white man who lived in Marandellas. He was the provincial health worker. He was the man who oversaw the health workers in our district and other districts in the vicinity and he had a Sister Carruthers working for him. Sister Carruthers was tasked with starting a family planning programme in the district and she came along to see me and I said "Fine, you can go ahead with this when I've had the opportunity to speak to the chiefs

when they come in for their monthly meeting, but please, not before". And lo and behold, a week or two later, I heard she'd been down to a very remote area near the border with Mozambique and she'd been talking about it because the chief came in and he was highly incensed. Anyway, we had our district team meeting and Mr Fourie, a very dour Afrikaans gentleman came along to the meeting. He didn't know I knew about what had happened and he said "Mr Taylor, there's something I've got to tell you" and this was in the meeting, he said "Sister Carruthers' family planning programme has gone off at half cock".

Did he realise what he said?

So I capped that by saying "she's not pregnant is she?" and he said "oh Mr Taylor no".

But did he understand the eruption of laughter around the table?

I think somebody whispered to him

Well yes! But on a more general level, what resistance was there to family planning programmes, that you were aware of?

I don't think they were particularly liked by the African population as such. I think the ladies probably appreciated it, the African women more. The men were totally opposed to it generally speaking.

Yes it infringed upon all sorts of cultural and social taboos

Oh yes

Yes, could be seen as a means of white manipulation of black population

Of course, yes

Which of course it was

(02:06:10) Well, this of course was spread out by the, well, I don't think it ever controlled the population. It never reduced and never a hope of it but it was used as a tool by the opposition to say that "this is what the white man's tried to do. He's trying to reduce your population."

Well, it has to be said that talk of the ratio did permeate discussion, a sense of, we have to keep up white numbers, that was certainly true. I've read a PHD moving to a book recently and I wanted to ask you about that. Frank, when independence came, you and Joan decided to stay?

Yes we did

Did you decide to stay with the ministry or were you not able to do that?

No, stayed with the ministry and it seemed quite reassuring at first after independence, it wasn't quite the disaster that it would have appeared to be beforehand. It was rather difficult dealing with some the ex-terrorists who came into the ministry, particularly the ones they sent out to work in the district, I forget what they call them now (Local Government Promotion Officers - LGPOs) but they were only in minor positions but they felt that they would rule everything.

Oh they were the liberation victors

They were the liberation victors and we had one called Gora which means blood, Gora something. Anyway, he was very demanding, I had to take him round the district and show him around and he expected to be fed.

Ah, he was a Chimurenga fighter, wasn't he?

Chimurenga fighter, yes and he started stirring up the local population against the district commissioner and the assistant district commissioner.

Who was a black Zimbabwean?

No, it was me

Oh right

He went out eventually, we used to spare him a vehicle occasionally, he went out until he wrote the vehicle off and then I said "you can get out on your feet if you want to do anything". He went round rabble rousing amongst the local population in the TTLs and persuaded some of them to come to the office one day. They held a demonstration outside the office where they were shouting and screaming and carrying on.

Carrying on what?

Yelling and the usual slogans and "Taylor must go" and "Brown (my D.O.) must go". During this disturbance there was a 'phone call from Head Office, (02:08:58) which had already become aware of his activities. They weren't too enamoured with it. This was equally Chimurenga people working in Head Office by that stage and this guy asked me, he said "what's Gora doing at the moment?" I said "well if you listen, you can hear the noise in the background, that's Gora running his rally outside my office complaining about me and the D.O. here" and this bloke said "ah, ah, alright Mr Taylor, leave it to me". Shortly after that, it was all sorted out. Someone came down and stopped the rioting and somebody came down from the police and stopped it all and he went on his way. He was transferred elsewhere. It wasn't pleasant dealing with those people but there was the possibility of returning to some kind of normality. There was also the restoration of various activities in the communal areas and money became available so we were able to go out and build roads, rebuild dip tanks and rebuild bridges.

Surely, it wasn't simply the return of that Chimurenga fighter, you had the returning guerrillas who'd been in the camps who were probably poorly educated, with disrupted education, coming back in with a lack of educational opportunities or employment prospects, that posed problems of transition?

Yes, United Nations ran a camp just over the hills from us in the old Umtali area and they brought quite a few youngsters back over from the other side. I think, not necessarily those who'd been fully into the terrorist activities but needed rehabilitation.

More mujibas?

Mujiba type but they had definitely been out of the country. This was run by a woman from the United Nations organisation. She did come to us for help on occasions, I can't remember quite what for but she didn't get on with my assistant district commissioner because he had a very hard line attitude to everything and eventually pushed off and went to Australia. But apart from that, I didn't really come into much contact with the ex...

Were you aware of what was going on down in Matabeleland after '82/'83?

Not particularly

In Gukuruhundi?

No

So when did you hear about it?

I don't know. I suppose it must have filtered through. Maybe I just blocked it out of my mind or didn't realise the extent to which it had gone on until it became public knowledge internationally. It made us think twice that, well, is it just against the Matabeles or is it against anyone who is opposition but we were able to go about our work although the political side of ZANU-PF (02:12:39) climbed into the councils. We had an African council who had meetings in my office although they had their own council offices. They demanded this, because they thought they were taking over my office as well.

Yes, the structures and trappings of power

So they insisted on having meetings in my office and I attended some of them, if not all of them and they were quite difficult because they wanted to frequently make use of our District Development Fund lorries, which were doing reconstruction work, to take people to funerals. You see, "people had died so we must have the lorry. You've got the lorry. This is for the people." The people of course concerned were all political adherents of the councillors. So this went to one or two confrontations but I stood my ground on that score. If I had permitted the use of our lorries for these purposes they would not

have been covered by insurance. The consequences flowing from an accident could have been quite serious

When did you leave the ministry?

I didn't leave until 1986. I was in Umtali for two years after independence and as I said, things started working again and we were able to do a lot of reconstruction work. It was quite interesting times really and in our part of the country, it seemed to be quite settled and quite secure.

Did you travel much through the rest of Zimbabwe at this time?

No, up to Harare and back, that would be all. I might have gone up to Karoi but certainly didn't go down to Matabeleland.

Where were your children living at this time?

Well, Michael and David were in Internal Affairs and then Mike pulled out of Internal Affairs, he was able to get a payment for his four years service and he put that into flying lessons. That's when he started flying and he joined our ministry's air wing. We had a district development funded aircraft to fly people around the districts to various jobs or just having a look round their districts. He was our provincial pilot in Umtali for a year and the only time he'd been home since he was about twelve years old, because he'd been at boarding school. So he was at home for a while and then he joined Air Zimbabwe and lived in Harare. David started work after he left Internal Affairs after independence, in Harare in the Farmers co-op. He's the one who later married and became a farmer. Then the youngest, Andrew was in the police. They still had to do national service and so he was in the police after independence and he'd only been in for a few months. He went on to the motorbike squad, that's where he got his interest in motorcycles and he was in the first display squad after independence; then after that he was in Marandellas for a while and our daughter was at home because she was still the youngster at school.

After you'd left the ministry and before you left, were you occupied in other work?

(02:16:43) I was transferred from Umtali/Mutare to Harare in 1982 on promotion. It would have been provincial commissioner post but those posts were more or less abandoned and it was as an under-secretary. The provincial, the under-secretary's post in Umtali/Mutare was taken over by an African gent who had come in from the struggle and with a very different outlook on the work to be done to what we had. It seemed to be that political indoctrination of the people was the main cause in those days. I went to head office as an under-secretary and went into the section dealing with the ex-terrorists, freedom fighters whatever, who were working in the district as local government promotion officers. That was Gora's appointment, he was a local government promotion officer. So I ended up with a couple of other under-secretaries controlling their work throughout the country. We were looking

after their activities and the work they were doing and so we then started visiting various parts of the country.

So we're talking about effectively political commissars, aren't we?

Yes in a way, yes. They didn't do anything to improve the lot of the people but their main tasks seemed to them to look at the work that was being done by the district administrators...we were district commissioners and we were replaced by district administrators who were all black but there was great enmity between the LGPO's and the district administrators because the district administrators felt they were being spied upon by these people, which they were and the LGPO's felt the district administrators weren't doing their job properly and didn't hesitate to tell them. So there was quite a lot of conflict going on and allegations of all kinds of skulduggery between the DA's and the LGPO's. I was in head office until 1986 and it was of course the time when we had overseas advisors coming in. The Swedish people were coming in with aid and we had local government advisors amongst them who we worked very closely with and went out to training courses. Also the British government sent out local government experts, people who'd worked for councils in the UK, to help, advise and train new officers in the complexities of local government institutions.

Why did you decide to leave in 1991?

Leave Zimbabwe or leave government?

Well both, leave government and then leave Zimbabwe?

Well, I left government in '86 and worked for five years

As?

As administrator or bursar at a public school in Harare. It was a girl's boarding and day scholar school. We decided to leave at that time because although we had thought of leaving when I retired from government, our daughter was only fourteen. We thought we might come over (02:21:00) to the UK then which would have been a good move because I could have brought my commutation and pension. Well, I still could when I left but my commutation had dropped in value from about £32,000 to £12,000 by the time we left. However Lynne said to us "please don't take me to England and make me go to school in England" she just couldn't face the thought of it. I was extremely fortunate that this job came along as administrator at the school. The terms of employment included free education for Lynne and a free house at the school. So we stayed on for five years and by then I was sixty. Lynne had finished her education and Joan and I had had enough of working and living at the school. Things were becoming very run down in the country, you could see the way things were going were not good and Joan was very unhappy there. So we decided that was the time to leave Zimbabwe. By that time Michael was a pilot with Cathay Pacific, living in Hong Kong. He bought this house which enabled us to make the move to Hornsea

So how much were you able to take out with you, of home, of your effects?

We brought quite a lot of our furniture, kitchen utensils and personal belongings, although we didn't bring dining room furniture but...

You didn't think of going down to South Africa?

No, we considered that the situation in South Africa was too volatile. There was too much crime there and we weren't really attuned to South African people. They're not like Rhodesians. There's a very big difference. A number of our friends moved there and made a good life for themselves but I don't think we could have fitted in down there.

Not even with the South African English community?

Maybe to some extent, doing what, I don't know.

Why did you come back to this area, around Hull?

Because Joan's parents were living here in Hornsea and her sister. My mother was living in Leeds. We wanted to live in one place or the other and not in between. So we decided that Hornsea would be the most suitable place for us to settle.

How did you find your return to England?

I found it very difficult to start off with. Joan didn't. She settled into it immediately we came over. We didn't have a great deal of money and at sixty, no matter what you've done in the past, it doesn't help to find employment in this country at that age, even younger. So we had a pension from Zimbabwe but the value of the Zimbabwe Dollar had dropped drastically only two days before we left. So my commutation over the five years from me leaving the government service to when we came back, had dropped in value from £32,000 to £12,000 and my pension which I had anticipated would be about £600-£700 a month was probably round about £300 when we came over. But we'd committed ourselves and so we came and (02:24:36) I couldn't find any meaningful employment here. I tried in the general area and eventually finished up driving a private hire car which I thoroughly enjoyed, for three or four years.

How did you find English people?

Alright

Did you feel you were coming home in any way?

Not particularly coming home because things had changed a great deal since I left. Particularly the freedom which we seemed to have in the 1940's, after the war, or even during the war, as youngsters, to move around, there seems

to be a lot of restrictions in this country.

In what way? Other former Rhodesian colleagues of yours have commented about the laxity, the freedom that is given to the young.

Here?

Yes

Well, I don't know, when I think about my early years, how we were able to go around from an early age with our friends, walking round the lanes and the countryside, going off on cycles, going off youth hostelling. Now, particularly in recent years, children are not allowed to do anything really, health and safety and checks on people and abuse and things like that. It seems to be rife and so you see the parents arriving at this school who can't be coming all that far with children, dropping them off by car or walking with them. My parents never walked with me to school although I had to go about a mile to my school in York, that was the junior school. When I went to senior school, I had to cycle about four miles there and four miles back, four times a day.

Any other differences that have really struck you?

There is the economic situation in this country. People seem far more affluent than they were when I left in 1951 and commercialisation of everything changed a lot.

Well, you'd also been through, let's face it, some austerity in Rhodesia

Well, we had you see. Yes, it was like a follow on from the war time, the post war years and that was noticeable. One thing that strikes me and still strikes me is the way people in this country complain about things. Complain particularly about the health service and other services and that they expect to receive from the state. We had been brought up to work for what we wanted or needed. ,

And your community, your family would support you.

(02:27:53) Yes, you had to rely on them for support. In those days, it was a big slur for a young lady, a young girl to have a baby out of wedlock and it was a big...the family were very aghast really if it happened but nowadays it seems to be the accepted thing.

I wouldn't say it's accepted

Don't you think so?

It certainly hasn't the social stigma of before

It hasn't got the social stigma at all, I don't think there's any social stigma in it at all is there?

I think it depends on the family

Do you think so?

Yes I do. How different did you feel from British society? You said you found it difficult to fit back in. That you found it difficult, obviously your pension wasn't at the level that you had hoped. You found it very difficult to get employment but then you were able to drive a private mini cab. Did you feel different from British citizens?

Not really no. A lot of people I met were intrigued to learn about Rhodesia or Zimbabwe and what had happened there and there was a lot of sympathy for the downfall of the country. Many people here thought it was a dreadful state and Mugabe was a dreadful person and that feeling still exists, far more than I thought it would. I can't recall one person coming along and saying that "you people were the destroyers of that country, that you colonists were the people who ruined the country". They all say "God, look what's happening now, what a bloody crowd of so and so's that run the country now".

Frank, I'm very struck because, again other people have said how they felt insulted. They felt so strange, and they'd been accused of being racists

Really

They felt fundamentally misunderstood and strangers in a strange land. This is obviously not your sense at all.

No, not my sense at all, no

Do you think it's possibly because you've come back to a piece of little England?

Well it could well be if we'd gone to live in Leeds or somewhere like that

(02:30:10) And you're living in Hornsea, which let's face it, in the Humber Estuary is an isolated predominately white British community

It is

It's predominately a retirement area and so in a way

This has made a difference

You've locked back into the value system of your generation that grew up during the War...

To a large extent, yes

And that in fact has eased your reintegration back here in Britain

Yes and even this taxi, the private hire people I worked for, they had three/four cabs there were four drivers. I got on very well with them and they were very polite when I first started because I very rarely swear. They're typical British, I had never heard so much swearing before I came back to live here.

The range of adjectives used is rather narrow

Yes and for about two weeks, nobody said a word and then one guy let rip one day and then everything...and they saw well, although I didn't use it myself, well I had to accept it as part of their life and so I got on with them very well. We had a great time together and the chap who ran the firm as well, he was a little bit of a scallywag you might say and he went bust eventually.

It got you out and meeting people, that was for sure. Looking back Frank, do you think the struggle in Rhodesia was worth it, in the late sixties and the seventies?

I would rather have seen a gradual peaceful development of the country.

Yes but in a way, your paternalistic attitudes prevented that

Yes maybe it did, it could well have done. We didn't realise it at the time of course, you live in the age that you're in and the feelings at that time and the place you're in. It probably did, I wouldn't have chosen to go that course, in the long run. I don't think it's made a great deal of difference. I think the country would have collapsed sooner if we hadn't have fought for Rhodesia but I don't think even if we had handed over power then, it would have been any better now than it is. Well, it might have been somewhat better but certainly not the country it was when it was Rhodesia. There was a tremendous amount of development that went on in that country and even now. We went to a Lion's Club meeting this week. One of our members has got a project he's trying to encourage (02:33:11) us and other clubs to involve themselves in, in Ghana at a school there. He put a photograph on the wall and he said to people "what do you think this is, a pigsty?" and it was a school and it looked like a pigsty. Now that was almost, buildings like that were unknown when I was working in Rhodesia in the 1967/1970's. The schools that were being built there were proper schools, properly equipped and the roads were being built and there was very little foreign aid coming into the country. There was really quite a lot of work going on developing the country and the infrastructure that was handed over at independence was very good for a country of that background

That was second only to South Africa in the region

Yes and one of the British advisors, was an electrical engineer. He was helping the Harare council with their electrical systems, production and distribution of electricity. Now this would be 1983 probably so it was not all that long after independence. He said to me one day "you people in this country are living on borrowed time as far as your electrical system is

concerned” he said “because there’s nothing being done to improve or even to maintain this system as it is at the moment”. He said “it’s only going to go down one way when it gets to that stage that it needs something doing to it” he said “there’s just no planning for the future”.

Frank, also, looking back now, do you think you can see Rhodesia as part of an empire building project? A country building project? You were talking about development, you used words like “bringing on Africans”. You’ve talked about Rhodesian identities. Did you feel you were building a country?

That was the hope yes. We were people who ... we were not expats coming in to help, just do a job for a year or two and then push off back to their own country. We were making that our home and so therefore we wanted to make it the best we could for all inhabitants.

Frank, where’s home now? Are you still...

Home is here

You’re not Rhodesian/Zimbabwean?

No, I’ve many happy and good thoughts and memories about the past and a lot of bitter ones as well but we don’t look back on it, Rhodesia. We had good years there, that’s behind us now.

The past is another country

The past is another country, yes

Frank, thanks very much indeed for this interview.

End of interview

Additional notes by Frank Taylor

Reading through and amending the notes of the interview, I am struck by how often I have avoided a direct answer to many of the questions. Particularly those asking about Terrorist brutality and intimidation of the African population.

I can only surmise that this is a case of selective amnesia. My mind avoiding many of the very unpleasant experiences which I encountered, especially when stationed in the Umtali (Mutare) district.

Most notable of these was the murder of 11 missionaries and their children at Elim Mission, situated in the Vumba (Bvumba) mountains, barely 20 miles from Umtali.

This was a most brutal and horrific act, definitely perpetrated by a Terrorist group and not by the Selous Scouts or any other branch of the Rhodesian armed forces. Particularly poignant was the funeral service, held in the Queens Hall, Umtali attended by hundreds of local people and visiting dignitaries. The humility and dignity of the surviving missionary families and the sense of forgiveness and Christian love is an unforgettable memory of a very moving experience. The sight of smaller coffins, bearing the bodies of the murdered children was particularly heartbreaking. Remarkable then that the service was one of celebration of the lives of the deceased and full of love and forgiveness.

During the final period of the war years there were constant attacks on farms and convoys. Not only were the white farmers targeted but also their African workers, who in number, far exceeded those of the white population who were murdered and injured. There was also the almost daily casevac helicopters bringing injured soldiers, police and civilian casualties to the Umtali hospital, which was situated very close to our home.

Umtali itself was under attack a few times. Firstly by artillery fire from Mocambique near the Forbes border post. Later by rocket at night from the hills overlooking the city. Some of the rockets fell close by, near to the hospital and a primary school. Fortunately they fell in open ground, causing no damage to property or injury to people.

During 1978/79 normal administration duties in the TTL's became impossible to perform. Visiting these areas was impossible without armed escort and the risk of encountering landmines was always present. Despite extensive patrolling by the military forces, contact with the terrorist groups was minimal and massive intimidation of the African population in these areas by the CT's was rife.

Generally, my insight into events of those dying days of the Rhodesian regime appears to be remarkably depleted. I can only hope that there may be some snippets hidden away that may be of interests to future students of those days.