

## Roy Jackson

[00:00:00]

**PARTICIPANT:** My name is Roy Jackson, I am 62 years young although I don't feel it today. I've been doing quite a lot of changing around and I'm getting too old for all this, but that's another matter entirely. I'm originally from Edinburgh and I came down to Manchester to go to university in the early 70s and stayed here, and I've been down here apart from one year ever since. I've have a chequered career in terms of what I've done. When I left university, I started off in supermarket management, and then I found that exceptionally boring, so I moved into advertising and got a post as an account exec in an advertising practice here in Manchester city centre.

And one of the clients we picked up was a client called Metro Rod, which was at that stage a two-van operation out of Macclesfield. So, the guy who ran it had aspirations to turn it into a national company. And I was the account exec dealing with that particular company. And things went so well that I ended up with a friend setting up our own advertising agency. And Metro Rod was obviously our main accounts but we had one or two others. From there, after two years running their advertising account, and they had probably about 25 to 30 franchisees at that stage, and working so closely with them, I ended up taking a franchise because I could see how much money they were making, and once they were operating out of south Manchester and you get north Manchester from sales, I actually bought the north Manchester franchise area and set up my own drainage company. So, from my shop kitting to drainage was quite an interesting job. After trading for a couple of years as a franchisee, the big 25% royalties on a monthly basis I thought was too much and so I managed to advise my solicitor to find a loophole in the contract, and broke away from Metro Rod and set up my own company called Jet Rod and run that for a couple of years and then I started franchising.

And then by 1990, I had 18 franchisees from Aberdeen down to Cardiff and unfortunately it was in 1990 that I was tested HIV positive and I was told that I had one to three years to live, and it was suggested that I put my affairs in order, financially, so I sold the business, which gave me money to do as I pleased, basically. And gave me the time to do what I was best at, just basically selling. And the idea of fundraising for HIV was a decision that came naturally to me. I'm not the sort of person that could work at somewhere like GHT and be, "There, there, there," you know, "everything will be all right," that's not really the sort of person that I am, so I never really got involved in Body Positive North West and George House Trust, which well, I think it was, I think it wasn't George House Trust then, I think it was something else, I can't remember. And so it was the summer of 1990, and for the last two or three years prior to that, Manchester's response to HIV and AIDS in terms of fundraising was to set up bring and buy stalls and on the Monday afternoon. That was really all they ever did. I recall that after the market finished, which was probably about 6 o'clock at night, there was myself, Paul Orton [00:06:21] [?] [spelling?] who was the chair of Clone Zone at the time, Peter Beswick, who owned The Rembrandt Hotel, and a guy called Jeff [00:06:31] [spelling?] Carson, who was a banker, was sitting there, and saying, what an abysmal effort that we, Manchester was making, and even Birmingham was doing a lot more in terms of fundraising and helping people living with HIV than we were, and so we thought, "Right, let's see if we can

put a charity together," and see if we can make a real difference in terms of making money to support the organisations that were supporting the people living with HIV and AIDS. Here in the North West and the regions convened in November 1991. And it was agreed to form a charity officially and trustees were elected. I think there was ten trustees elected initially and away we went and we designed it that the August bank holiday was where we wanted to start, and rather than just have a one-day event, which is what they had in Birmingham, they had their day of fun on the Bank Holiday Monday, we thought in Manchester we can and we should do a lot better and then from day one we decided we wanted to do a four-day event starting from Friday night and finishing with a vigil and firework display on the Monday night. And that concept and the layout of the event is exactly the same today in terms of the approximate running of the event, finishing with a vigil as the most important part of the process. Because I wasn't working and I was probably the only trustee that didn't have a full-time job, I end up being the secretary of the trustees and doing most of the work. And then the charity was for the first couple of years run out of my back bedroom. That roughly takes us to sort of 1993, 1994. And quite a lot of different things started happening around that sort of time. And it's difficult to sort of put them in order and prioritise them.

[00:09:57]

**INTERVIEWER:** Don't worry too much about getting it all in perfect order, we just want to know about the story.

**PARTICIPANT:** Oh right, yeah. And well, one of the most fun initiatives that I must admit I don't - it wasn't one of mine - it was the introduction of The Village Showgirls. And the intention of that was again, as a fundraising effort for the Village Charity. And to be a member of The Village Showgirls, the only criteria was you had to have a beard or a 'tache. And as such, we used to go to Blackpool and do all the pubs and clubs in Manchester, and for three years running we went down to London Pride, and we appeared in the Crusaid health tent and in fact in one year, we actually finished up on the Main Stage as an introduction to [00:11:09] [?] inviting everyone to come up to Manchester for the August Bank Holiday weekend, so that was one of our claims to fame, appearing in London Pride main stage. And there was about 12 of us and we were so uncoordinated it was just a joke, and none of us were [00:11:35] [?] at the time, it was one of those things because it was so bad, it was quite good and we went down quite well. And that was quite fun. Another thing that happened around that time was the instigation of the AIDS Funders' Forum. Down in London. It was a collaboration of fund-givers down in London and you're talking about the Elton John Foundation, the Sainsbury's Trust and later on it was the Diana Memorial Trust and the Mercury Phoenix Trust and because we were a fundraiser and not a provider of services, we were the only organisation outside of London that was invited to attend these quarterly meetings and again, I wasn't working, I was the one that went down to these AIDS Funders' Forum meetings. It was really through that connection that I was able to then get funding for what is now Street Cars offices in the basement on Richmond Street.

And it was just derelict and it was falling to bits and I had to get it tanked and adjust the water ingress and things like that. And so, we managed to get the money to renovate that and also provide the money for a chief exec and funding for three years for a chief exec and a secretary for the charity. Had we not been part of the Funders' Forum, it's probably unlikely that we would have got that additional help in funding. In '94, I don't know whether I was getting bored or what, but it was starting, being four years since I'd been diagnosed HIV, and I hadn't got any worse, I hadn't been in hospital, I hadn't had any problems, and I started to think then, "What's going wrong?" or, "What's going right?" and I think it was the last stage when my uncle died and I got left some money, and I thought, "What shall I do with it?" And I decided that I'd try and launch a lager to compete with Red Stripe and Breaker. In those days, the only thing people drank in the bars and the clubs was Breaker and Red Stripe. I don't know what's happened to Breaker. Red Stripe's still going, but you very rarely see Breaker. And we ended up getting The Divine David to do some promotion work on that. [Showing photos] That's The Divine David in our warehouse, one of many pictures that-

[00:15:49]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Could you hold it up again?

**PARTICIPANT:** Oh, I'm sorry, yeah.

[00:16:01]

**INTERVIEWER:** He's all wrapped up in clingfilm.

**PARTICIPANT:** Oh, only in that. We'll talk about that. That's probably a more interesting picture of the promotion that David helped with, I don't know if you're aware of The Divine David. Yep. There's any more here.

[00:16:35]

**INTERVIEWER:** [inaudible]

**PARTICIPANT:** There's one on Canal Street.

[00:16:40]

**INTERVIEWER:** When was this one taken?

**PARTICIPANT:** We actually started in- it was 1994. I'd gone 'round the country to various different breweries and asked for samples of their lager and on the August Bank Holiday that year, I did blind taste-testing of these, of three different lagers and then the lager that was chosen, that was the most popular one. It's actually brewed down in Devon and the cans were made up in Carlisle and then transported down to Devon to get filled and transported back to Manchester where I had a [00:17:41] [?] and used to distribute them to all the bars and clubs from Birmingham up to Edinburgh and Glasgow. And GL Lager, which was produced by the Pride brewing company, hence my email address is glpride@sky.com. That ran for two years and it

was while we were applying for a patent for the name 'GL Lager' that I got a nasty letter from Bulmers saying I was infringing their copyright because they had a cider called GL Cider and I wasn't quite big enough to be in a position to take them on. And they very graciously allowed me to sell out the remaining stock. And that was the end of GL Lager and that was in 1996.

[00:18:56]

**INTERVIEWER:** [inaudible]

**PARTICIPANT:** It doesn't matter, it's not that I know I suppose, maybe that was possibly something that made me start thinking about the project.

[00:19:11]

**INTERVIEWER:** Was that the Beacon of Hope?

**PARTICIPANT:** No, no, that was before the Beacon of Hope. This is the Sackville Park Community Action Group where we were looking at funding to actually redesign the park. [Unfolding paper] Get a better look at it there. And that was quite a large undertaking, and unfortunately I think it was just a little bit too big, and the necessary funding we weren't able to secure. That's one I was always really wanting at the back of my mind, was a memorial to those who had been lost to HIV and also those living with the virus. And so in 1997, we had a design contest. We sent out a simple brief to 20 or 30 architects throughout the North West, asking if they had any of their [00:20:43] [?] offices or whatever who would like to put forward a proposal free of charge because we didn't have any funds and - to do this, and well, I think we got about five responses back of which three were seen as feasible and these were put to a public meeting. And I've got a picture of that somewhere in here. [Looking through photos]

[00:21:28]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Is it one of those ones?

**PARTICIPANT:** No, I think it's one of these. No, I think it's probably the first one's the best one.

[00:21:39]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** This one. This one?

**PARTICIPANT:** That one, yeah. And the resulting design that was chosen was this particular design of a boat on a journey and what you can't see there is that behind that there is three plinths which start at the beacon, sorry, the Tree of Life and lead towards the beacon, indicating the metaphorical journey through life to the actual beacon itself. Oh, I remember the closure of the Village Charity, and we need to go back onto the Beacon.

[00:23:00]

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you need a break or anything?

**PARTICIPANT:** If I have a drink, then I'll make things worse. [00:23:08.19] [Break] And the other major thing that was to happen in 1997, which we believe was done deliberately and done unfairly on the charity was that after getting in place the sponsorship and funding to actually run the event for the four days, so that all the money raised went to HIV and AIDS charities, and with two to three months before the event, the council and the police turned round and said that we had to have physical security 'round the Village and that we had to have professional paid security staff and not volunteers as we had in the past. If we'd been given six to nine months' notice we could have possibly budgeted for that. And being so close to the actual weekend, it meant that all the money that was raised that year went on covering the costs of staging the event, and I recall a very stormy and angry trustee meeting after the August bank holiday, anger at the lack of time we were given, and the timing and whether it was deliberate or not or whether it was purely accidental. And I think there was possibly maybe a bit of charity fatigue as well, but it was felt that as we hadn't fulfilled our remit in terms of raising money for the likes of LGBT, GHT, Body Positive North West, which was still going in those days. It was felt that we were no longer in a position to run the event, and it was quite apparent that the council were wanting to take over the event, and they actually did take over the event for the following two years. Having said that, after all the assets had been realised and split up, as I recall there was something like, £66,000 that was still distributed between the various HIV and AIDS groups from the disillusionment [sic] of the Village Charity. And so we were as fair as we possibly could be in terms of that.

[00:27:00]

So one of my pet projects which I had been hoping to do through the Village Charity was an HIV and AIDS memorial, which I mentioned previously, and after a public meeting, the design that is currently there was chosen and costed out and it was £56,000, the cost to build it, and so that money was raised and the beacon was officially opened and launched on World AIDS Day 2000. Unfortunately, since then, it was originally handed over to Body Positive North West, together with I think it was £5,000 for ongoing maintenance, but of course Body Positive, when they packed in, no-one picked up the reins on it, the beacon just seemed to get lost in there, in the ether, and no-one seemed to take it on board, myself included. I was aware that no-one was looking after it and I kept on meaning to do something about it, and then I never got 'round to it, with one thing or another, having had four councillors in the process and how it matters, as far as that was concerned. But we're now in a situation in 2017 where the last plaque [going through ephemera] there was a plaque produced for every single year which was just one word and a statement. We summed up what was relevant in that particular year with relation to HIV and AIDS and the last one that was produced was in 2011 and nothing's been done since then.

[00:29:34]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** What does it say on the plaque? Could you read it, the plaque?

**PARTICIPANT:** That one? The actual line itself?

[00:29:47]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Yeah, is it a memorial, on that one?

[00:29:54]

**INTERVIEWER:** Is there another year [inaudible]?

**PARTICIPANT:** The most interesting one is possibly if we go back to the earlier ones.

[00:30:02]

**INTERVIEWER** and **INTERVIEWER 2:** Yeah.

**PARTICIPANT:** [00:30:05] [Break] [Going through photos] Yes, as I say there was a plaque produced for every year, this ran a lot on the barrier, what showed the history of HIV and AIDS. And it was meant to be a social documentary of the virus and also our response to it. Some examples of that in 1981, the starting word is 'rumour' and then it goes on, 'the first signs of the epidemic in the USA in New York. Press reports on a kind of cancer. And [00:31:22] [?] politics, even like the west coast of America as the US Center for Disease Control published the first paper on a sentence that is shattering the gay community. Elsewhere in the world, people are yet to face the reality of a major health threat.' And that was the plaque from 1991.

[00:31:49]

**INTERVIEWER:** So, that was the first plaque?

**PARTICIPANT:** That was the very first plaque. And then if we go on to the second one in 1992, the main word is 'Beginnings' and this says, 'Gay-related immune deficiency disease becomes Acquired Immune Deficiency Disease, in other words, AIDS, as symptoms are reported beyond the gay community. Doctors continue to investigate but the public remain ill-informed and frightened. A gay man called Terrence Higgins - Terry Higgins - dies of AIDS in a London hospital. His friends start up a fund in his name to start the fight against the disease.' And there is plaque like that for every year leading up to 2011. And so there are six years missing.

There were various lighting elements like there was the text that [00:33:05] [?] with from Canal Street, explaining what the Beacon is, that the longer words, and basically it just says, 'HIV and AIDS: it's not over'. And so various lighting elements that need to be addressed. And then there was also the beacon was designed with two means of access: one by steps and one by a ramp. [Going through photos] And on the ramp side there was a handrail to help disabled people and that's no longer there. So I had a meeting literally last week with the deputy chief exec of LGF and the chief exec of George House Trust and the hope is that this year's World AIDS

day is gonna be used to re-launch and repair the beacon and bring back up to what it should be.

[00:34:27]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. So that's sort of the charity aspects of your work, but could I ask about your impressions about maybe like your personal history with the community? And about being gay in general, if that would be okay?

**PARTICIPANT:** [Draws in breath] Yeah. In terms of a personal situation, I was quite fortunate that although I was diagnosed as HIV-positive in 1990, I'd been going in a steady relationship since 1987. And that continued right through to 2005, when unfortunately, we drifted apart. So there was a social network there for me that allowed me to do the things, the work that I wanted to do. And whether or not I would have done as much, and had that support not been there, I don't know. And no-one will ever be able to answer that question.

[00:35:45]

**INTERVIEWER:** Could you tell me a bit about what the gay community was like in Manchester when you moved down for the first time? I imagine it was really different to the way that it is now.

**PARTICIPANT:** Oh, the gay community was very much in the closet. The main bar and club were on Deansgate and just off Deansgate. The Barbins [00:36:11] [spelling?], Slingsby's, [00:36:14] [name?] being the bar and the club being Slingsby. But all run by a gentleman by Bernard Slingsby. Napoleon's still was there, The New Union was still there and The Rembrandt was still there, run by a gentleman called Reg Kilduff and sometimes it was gay and sometimes it wasn't, but that was about it. Then all the bars, the windows were also blacked up and the entrances were 'round corners, and very much in the closet, and now I'm sure I'm not the only one that's told you that. It was a shame and it wasn't 'til the mid-nineties that things started to change. And I like to think that we as a charity played our part by holding such a popular event which people were happy to come out and enjoy and when the parade was held, to see the support from the general public to the parade and the gay community. I think that I helped allow the person Carol Ainscow, who had Manto's opened, Manto's, had the clear windows and opened things up to the public, I think we did our bit to help make the situation feasible for to make that ground-breaking move. Other than that...[trails off]

[00:38:26]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Do you need a break or...?

**PARTICIPANT:** I don't know so much more that you want.

[00:38:34]

**INTERVIEWER:** Maybe a little bit more about HIV maybe when you first became aware of it on the scene and how that changed your experiences and things like that in the years leading up to when you were diagnosed.

**PARTICIPANT:** How did I find out I was HIV-positive?

[00:39:02]

**INTERVIEWER:** It was more about what sort of impact did the disease, before you were diagnosed, just knowing that it existed, did it change the way, the way your life was orientated? [Participant talks over Interviewer] [00:39:16] [?]

**PARTICIPANT:** If I can answer that question this way. In the years before I was tested, in the two years where they held the bring and buy stall, I and my partner, we both co-operated and we both always took stuff to the bring and buy stall, so in a way we supported the movement or what little there was. Then I found out that I had all this softness on the side of my tongue and I brushed and brushed and it wouldn't go away, so I ended up going to see a friend who was a doctor, and he took one look at it, and said, "That's leukoplakia." And [00:40:23] [?] "you need to speak to..." [trails off], and he set up an appointment to see a consultant at a hospital who confirmed that I was HIV-positive and it was a strain, I won't deny it. It was difficult at first. It was difficult to explain it to my boyfriend Richard at the time. And obviously I didn't know whether he'd given it to me or whether I'd given it to him or...it was all up in the air. It would be fair to say that in the eighties and nineties, sorry, the seventies and eighties, I was really promiscuous. I won't try and deny that. As it turned out, Richard was negative and as he was the top and I was always the bottom, the odds of transmission to him were obviously a lot lower, because the normal means of transmission is normally from the top to the bottom and not the other way around. However, over time, it probably took us six months, we got over the worst of it and just accepted the status quo. And we started having safe sex, except I know when a few times when we got a bit pissed on holiday, we kind of forgot about the safe sex bit a few times. But all in all, it was mainly safe sex from 1990 onwards. And I'm happy to report that when we split up in 2005, he was still negative. Not really sure what else I can add to that.

[00:43:07]

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you. Do you think that HIV is becoming more of a problem again in the community? Because rates are up, aren't they?

**PARTICIPANT:** To be honest, I don't know the answer to that question. I've only just really in the past, two or three months started coming back into the gay community. I went through a period of about ten years where I abstained from the community, abstained from everything. I became a bit of a hermit, I didn't go out. I was just coming to care terms with different cancers, as I say, the laryngeal cancer I've just now, was the fourth cancer I've had and dealing with that has been more of an issue than worrying about what's happening in the gay community.

And it's probably about time that I did because the beacon is a disgrace, and I have every intention of doing something about it. And if I didn't do anything about it, then it would probably sit there for another seven years without anything happening, so again, I'm putting my fundraising hat on, as opposed to my caring and sharing hat. There are plenty of people in your organisation, in GHT, that can do the caring and sharing, it's not something I'm particularly good at. And I don't know that it's, having something to do, get my teeth into is probably quite positive. It's helped me come out of myself, come out of my shell, and it was about time that I had.

[00:45:54]

**INTERVIEWER:** So, is the community very different from when you left ten years ago? Are there any big changes that you can see?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yes, I, very rarely when I go out on a Sunday afternoon, apart from a few faces, I don't recognise many people. I think one of the problems that's not really discussed in terms of HIV and AIDS is that in the early days, when the only treatment was AZT, the virus was allowed to transmit across the barrier in the brain. And I was asked if I wanted to join a memory group at north Manchester, which met for ten sessions, to talk about changes that people had felt or seen as long-term survivors, and one thing I wasn't aware of was that, until the new drugs that came out in '96, which couldn't cross the barrier into the brain, memory loss is an issue for long-term survivors and I was told my brain is about the size of a seventy-year-old. And no, I'm not 69, I'm only 62, so it's shrunk a bit more than it should have done and it does explain why I - the number of times I can't find anything and then the next day it's on the desk staring at me and how I haven't seen it, I don't know. I just can't describe it. It's something I wasn't aware of and wasn't prepared for, like anything else, you have to just put up with it, accept it and get on with life. There's no point in moaning about it or crying about it, life is what you make it. And I never anticipated living past 40. And as I say, I'm 62 now. Two years ago, I took myself off for three months and I had a month in Thailand, and a month in Australia and a month in South Africa and it was the trip of a lifetime. And bugger, I'm gonna do it again next year.

[00:49:30]

**INTERVIEWER:** Make the most of life?

**PARTICIPANT:** Absolutely, absolutely. And I suppose I'm quite fortunate in as much as my family will be there to help me do this, which I think it would be fair to say, a lot of people don't have such a support mechanism and as far as that's concerned, I'm very, very, very lucky and it gives me an impetus to do the sort of things that I like doing. I am absolutely knackered now, I've been up 'til four o'clock in the morning, the last two days running, getting this paperwork prepared for bar and clubs so that I can shame them into raising some money.

[00:50:40]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Right.

**PARTICIPANT:** And that is mine [00:50:49] [?]. And hopefully by World AIDS day, at least the electrics will be fixed, and the rest will be fixed shortly afterwards.

**[00:51:00] End of transcript.**