



Caroline Chokr/Jim Orr, Farnham

Recorded as part of The Moving Prefab Museum and Archive Project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

PRM00044_Caroline_Chokr...Farnham.mp3

3/7/16

Rural Life Centre, Tilford, Surrey

Interview by Elisabeth Blanchet with Caroline Chokr and Jim Orr

Transcribed by Sonia Zhuravlyova March 2018

Elisabeth: Could both of you give me your names first?

My name is Caroline Chokr [CC].

And my name is Jim Orr [JO].

So you're brother and sister?

CC: Yes.

When did you arrive in your prefab?

CC: We went, I was about 10 months old we went December 1950, we moved in to the post was prefab.

And how old were you at the time?

CC: I was about 10 months.

And you not born yet?

JO: I wasn't born yet.

CC: He was actually born in the prefab, actually born in the prefab.

Wow..

So why did your parents get the prefab?

CC: I presume, it's my father had been in the air force. Left the air force, you know after the war, came back, my mother came from Farnham, came back to Farnham. And I think they were servicemen were probably given



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priority I imagine. I think that is the reason why we got it. And also we needed somewhere to live!

Did your parents tell you their first impression when they got the prefab, were they disappointed by the type of house or they didn't like it?

CC: I was very tiny so I wouldn't remember that, but I would say they were highly delighted with it. It had a fridge, it had a built in boiler you know for your clothes with gas underneath it.

JO: And it also had a heated towel rail in the bathroom, which was avant-garde!

CC: And we had an indoor toilet we had a bathroom which, a lot of people in those days did not have an indoor toilet. And we had an emersion heater. Obviously you lit your fire for the back boiler, but in the summer if you wanted hot water we had an emersion heater, but I doubt if we used it much, because my mother would have been watching the pennies on the meter. But I am sure in emergency it was used.

So you stayed till 19...

CC: October '59 we moved, because Jim was five by then. My sister and I had one bedroom and they needed extra bedroom. So we moved.

Woman's voice: So it wasn't that they were knocking it down then?

CC: No, no, they didn't knock em down till 1970. I don't think anyone ever occupied it again. I think it was just left as far as I know.

JO: I went back when I was 14. Had a look around. It had been vandalised then it was actually empty then. It had been vandalised quite badly. I went in there with my dad one night.

So what are your memories of living in the prefab, did you like it?

JO: It was great.

CC: I loved it! I thought I actually thought we were the cream of the cream living in this prefab. It wasn't till I got older that I realised that oh perhaps, you know. But I loved it. We had the biggest garden, do you remember the garden?



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JO: Yeah.

CC: I means dad's vegetable garden was as big as a field, wasn't?

JO: Yeah, it was huge.

CC: I loved everything about it! it was, I mean I realise know there were probably things wrong. At the time it was great we loved it didn't we.

Woman's voice: could it have been cold in the winter at all?

JO: No.

CC: Only as cold as everybody was in those days, we were all cold, all the time weren't we in the winter that was, getting up in the morning scraping ice of the inside of the windows was normal practice in the 50s and 60s, we weren't like to today where we need our heating and everything.

JO: No, I think that was the best out of the houses I've live in, the best one the best fun, really good fun.

What about yours was number 100, how many were they?

JO: Forty.

CC: I would say about 40, it wasn't big, it had the ordinary brick house council estate at the end of it, which is still there today and it looks very nice because of course its all be bought up. But where ours were they are blocks of flats now, awww sad.

JO: Yeah, great times.

Was there a sense of community within prefab residents?

JO: Very much so, it was all very safe 1950s community.

CC: Yeah it was, we live on a cul-de-sac, and I mean this would be forbidden nowadays, but I remember the grown-ups, not the children, actually building for bonfire night building a bonfire in the cul-de-sac in the road. It would be totally against the law now. But only one person had a car, unfortunately the one person who had a car, also had no children. So



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he must have been in despair we used to play and forage. It was lovely it was a great childhood.

JO: No, it was great times.

Have you kept friends from that era?

CC: No, not really because after people started to move away, we moved to different parts of Farnham, some people went to different schools, you did sort of lose touch. My sisters kept one friend, Jane.

Woman's voice: Where is she from, Roman Way?

CC: She lived in a house. She didn't live in the prefab but she was from Roman Way.

JO: It was a great time, and very happy for me, I just got happy memories of it, bearing in mind I was only five when I left. I imagine if you were to interview my parents, especially my mother she might have something different to say. I think it was good all round.

Have you got a funny story to tell?

JO: Not me particularly, no.

Woman's voice: What about your shed? Your lovely shed in the photo in your garden, what did you use that for?

JO: I remember I must have been about three, and you know what boys do with big stones. I remember just throwing one to get on the roof of the neighbour's because they had flat roofs, I remember lobbing this great big stone to see what happens when it hits the roof, of course it went through the bedroom window.

CC: And perhaps you don't remember, because of course in those days parents were very responsible and dad went round and spoke to them. And I still have this vision, because of course the window panes were very big, of our father walking down the road with this massive pane of glass under his arm because obviously he was coming down to get it mended. But I remember that Jim, I do I really do, I remember.

Dad paid for it, didn't he, and the guy got it fixed.



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CC: Of course he did.

JO: And that's what you do. But that's the sum of us, with a few extras bolted on.