

Portraits in Sound

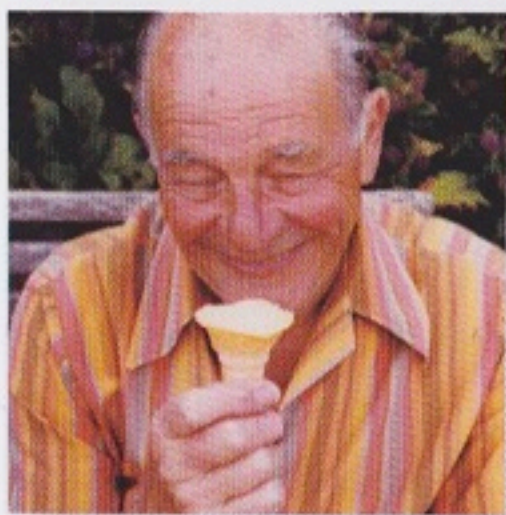
Interview with Claire Peyton Jones



Interviewing people about their life seems such a marvelous idea. Tell me how you started?

When I worked for BBC radio, I recorded my grandmother – Molly Ullman – who will still be remembered by some in Esher as a very colourful character, fond of golf, bridge and her gin and mixed! This was the genesis of my idea of doing the same thing for other families. It was magical being able to play the CD years later to my children, who were not even thought of when she died. They were all captivated by her! Her voice says so much more than the stories she tells. It reveals her sense of humour and warmth – you can hear an extract of her (and others) on my web-site.

What sort of people approach you to make a sound portrait?



That's what I love about my work. There is such variety. One Esher gentleman Edward regretted not having written his memoirs, so asked me to record them for his grandson. Others are persuaded to do it by their children.

Some do it just for fun, others are anxious they may not be interesting: often these people are the most thoughtful and reflective, so I've never gone away with a dull interview. The only thing my clients have in common is how much they enjoy the experience of being encouraged to reminisce!

Why do you call it a portrait?

When you see a painted portrait, you don't see the artist – the attention is all on the subject. In the same way, I always like to cut my voice out so you just focus on the person being interviewed without the distraction of the personality of the interviewer.

I was trained to do this by the legendary BBC Radio feature maker Piers Plowright. They say if you listen to an interview where you can hear the questions, you are eavesdropping. When you listen to just one voice, you are being talked to. I agree! It's also a considered piece of work like a portrait as opposed



to a snap shot – it aims to not just tell a story but capture something of the personality. I like to tread the fine line between creating an honest portrait and one that is celebratory and life affirming.

What preparation do people need to do?

None, an interview can be fresher if not prepared for and worried over. We just need a quiet room where we will be free from interruptions. Sometimes I'm asked to include a favourite anecdote by another member of the family.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about doing a portrait?

Don't wait. Tomorrow you may break a leg and have a miserable voice! Catch the moment – if the idea interests you, go for it!

How much will this cost?

An hour long edited and produced Portrait in Sound costs £650, including illustration with music. More details are on my website.

If you would like further information about Portraits in Sound, or would like to speak to Claire Peyton Jones please call 07972540222, email portraitsinsound@talktalk.net or visit: www.portraitsinsound.com