

John Spence

My Life Story



1951 - I was born in Evie, Orkney

When I was 2 years old I was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. I stayed at home with my family until I was 4 years old and I still could not do anything for myself.

1955



Me at Stracathro hospital



When I was 4 years old I moved to Stracathro Hospital, outside of Aberdeen on the mainland which made it difficult for my family and friends to keep in contact.

However, I am told that I received quite a lot of visits. I remember my mother making the journey each way to take me home for Christmas, Easter and during the summer holidays.

While I was in Strathcathro they taught me to walk and dress myself. I also got some schooling so I learnt to read and write with a speech therapist.

1960-1967

Me at Trefoil School



I went to Trefoil Boarding School in Edinburgh from the age of 9-16 years old. This school was run by the girl guides and was very strict. A typical day would be up at 7.30am, breakfast at 8am, be in the classroom at 9am and bed at 6pm. Visitors were only allowed at the weekends but my mum could only visit to take me home for holidays. I had a good schooling here.

1967-1977

From the ages of 16-26 years old I attended Scotsraig Residential Home in Paisley. I enjoyed being in Scotsraig as I got lots of adult freedoms and responsibilities. I got a trike which gave me freedom to go up and down the hill to carry out errands, I also helped in the home with care duties and in the kitchen.

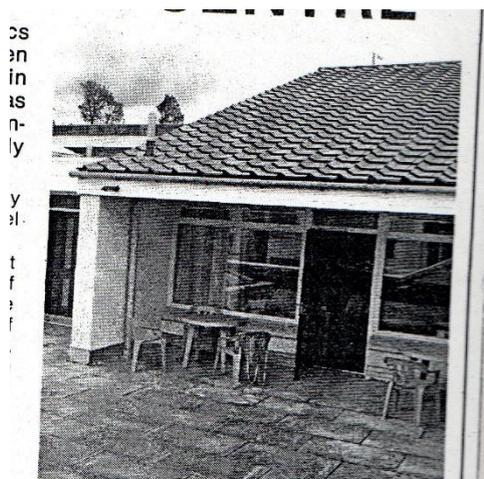
Scottish Spastics News – this was a magazine that I read which had an article about the development in Perth called Upper Springlands. Once I had seen what they were doing in Perth I was determined to move there and have my own front door and key. This was the independence I had always wanted. There were a lot of barriers put in my way though as the staff at scotsraig wanted me to stay there.

I started working in a factory which I really enjoyed and met lots of new people.

Finally I managed to win the fight to get a flat at Upper Springlands and I received a letter from the Super Intendent to tell me that I had been granted my place.

1st June 1978

This was the date the Upper Springlands opened and the following Monday I moved into my new flat.



I cannot describe the feeling I had. Here I was with my own front door and the key in my hand. It was fantastic.

I remained at Upper Springlands for a number of years and became more independent. I then got the chance to move to a flat in the centre of Perth. I had been in institutionalised care all my life so this was a huge move for me. I carried on working at Upper Springlands even when I was living in my flat.



I then moved on to a permanent job in the Kitchens at Upper Springlands and moved to a council house in North Muirton.



Had someone told me that one day I would have my own house out in the community with my own job to go to I wouldn't have believed it.

Interests and Work

I have a very busy life and am involved in various activities. These include being part of a church, being a trustee at CILPK, being involved in various disability organisations, working in various shops and Upper Springlands, I was also the caretaker at Independent Advocacy. I am a full member of the Iona Community and frequently go on holiday there.



This was me at a fancy dress party at Iona.

Adaptations

I have some adaptations to help me do some tasks such as a roller ball mouse and a guard on my keyboard for my computer, different cutlery and a wheelchair to get around. In my house I have a special bed that sits me up, an adapted chair and a button that automatically opens my front door.



Current Life

I have recently moved house into the centre of Perth as my disability has deteriorated due to an accident I had in my scooter. Things can be frustrating as I wait for adaptations to help me be independent. It is very difficult for me to get about at the moment unless I have someone to help me.

I like living in Perth and I feel it is reasonably accessible although more improvements could be made and more awareness raising done in the community and school to educate people about disabilities.