

Egbert Hughes Transcript

Female Interviewer:

Thank you, I'm going to ask you some questions now. First of all, what is your full name?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes.

Female Interviewer:

What year were you born?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

1958.

Female Interviewer:

Where were you born?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

In Kitty, Georgetown, Guyana, South America.

Female Interviewer:

What did your parents do for a living?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

My father worked for Royal Mail. He was what we called a PNT0, he worked upstairs.

My mother worked for Woolworths and then near when she was due to retire she worked for C&A.

Male Interviewer:

Could you answer that one again, sorry the sound actually went off there. If you could say... ask that question again what do your parents do for a living?

Female Interviewer:

What did your parents do for a living?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

My father worked for Royal Mail as a PNT0 postal officer, my mother worked for Royal Mail, oh I've got to do that again, my mother worked for Royal Mail.

Female Interviewer:

Don't worry. What did your parents do for a living?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

My father worked for Royal Mail as a PNT0. My mother worked for Woolworths and then C&A.

Female Interviewer:

Please tell us why you decided to work for Royal Mail.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

It had a lot more going for me, because I worked for the Co-op at first, selling furniture, bedding and carpets. I was told the possibilities in Royal Mail, promotion. Not only that it gave me time to do things outside. It came in very handy.

Female Interviewer:

Tell us about any family members who have worked for Royal Mail.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yes, my father and three brothers.

Female Interviewer:

Tell us how you started working for Royal Mail.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

I started working for Royal Mail, unfortunately in the bag room. And I suffered from dust. And soon we were taken out of there. But I've never delivered for Royal Mail. I've only been on processing.

Female Interviewer:

Describe the training that you did.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

The training, it was across the road from Kings Cross. We had to go to school there to learn the sortation and learn... it was overseas mail we did at London overseas mail office and we had to learn 500 sortation and when we finished that we had to go, when we went to LOMO, we had to learn 250, I think it is, of England, sortation in England.

Female Interviewer:

What was your-

Male Interviewer:

Do you know what sortation is? Ask him if you're not sure.

Female Interviewer:

What does sortation mean?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Sortation is, where it is... LOMO dealt with parcels and you have frames and you've got to sort the individual items into individual pockets in the frames. That's what we did there, but with letters we do it

into a frame that is standing in front of you. That's the difference between packets and letters and flats. Flats are the large looking letters.

But you can get an item that is, say that small, if it's that thick, that is what we call a flat. It's just goes it's different.

Female Interviewer:

What was the first job you did for Royal Mail?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Like I said, sorting bags and flattening bags. Not very good.

Female Interviewer:

Tell us how you felt on your days at work.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

It's different. I was more relaxed. I met someone who actually saw me two weeks before. I never knew him and he introduced himself to me and he told me he saw me fight two weeks before. And he started the very same day as myself.

Female Interviewer:

Describe your work in those early days.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

My work in the early days, with Royal Mail you've got so many numerous jobs you could do. I worked, for one time I worked on the platform, whereas we offloaded and loaded trailers. You know the big long lorries? Offloaded and loaded them. And I became a PHG, postman higher grade, and so all I started to do was, I would be the man standing there with a tick board and ticking what the other postmen were offloading and loading.

Female Interviewer:

What was the atmosphere like at your work in the early days?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

It was great. It was great. It was relaxed. The office was called the holiday camp, because it was a bit of a holiday camp. It was easy. I can't go too much into it, because I realize I'm speaking to young people here. Right. But it was good, it was fun.

Christmas time we had parties, all the different areas would have a party and the last party of each year, the West Indian guys would put their money together and we had a party in the table tennis room. Everybody was invited and it's the one time you got to see the management, the very top in the office let their hair down. And they did let their hair down.

Female Interviewer:

What kinds of people were you working with?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

People meaning?

Male Interviewer:

Age, where were they from, gender.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Age, well they were very females in the office when I started. But as time went on, there were numerous women there. I'd say it's great, you got on with everyone. There are those who you could have fallen out with, but Royal Mail would make sure, well the management would make sure you don't work with them. If there's differences between you.

Female Interviewer:

That's very good of them.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yeah, well they need to keep the peace.

Female Interviewer:

How diverse was your workplace when you started.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

When I started there was not a lot of young black guys there. But there was a lot of black guys there, but Asians, blacks, whites. It was a mixture, but it wasn't a great mixture like it is now. But times have changed. They changed it.

Female Interviewer:

What sort of equipment did you use in your work?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Equipment. We used what I'd call a wheelbarrow or, what are they, Yorks. These were blue Yorks that were bin liners, massive bin liners that you'd push, you'd throw items into it. Take it somewhere, some people would take it to a chute and you'd throw the items down the chute and they'd go to a different floor. A different area for them to do their sortation down there.

Me personally, I did not drive, I did not deliver, all I done was sort. In 43 years that's all I done.

Female Interviewer:

What was your uniform like?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

We had some nice uniform and we had some terrible uniform. We had a gray uniform, light gray and nobody liked it, but I think we had changed... they had tried to sell Royal Mail off to another company

and I think that was their uniform, but that did not last long. It was horrible to press. When it come to ironing it, it was ugh, no.

We had a blue uniform which ended up chaffing our necks. A dark blue uniform. We had sleeveless, part of the uniform. It was good in the winter, but otherwise, no. It's still better than using your own clothing. But some people prefer to use their own clothing.

Female Interviewer:

A range of different uniforms then. Tell us about the skills you needed for your job.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

The?

Female Interviewer:

Skills you needed.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Skills, memory. You need a good memory. But they did provide people like myself with a thing called the idiot board. That where it is... if we didn't know the postcode of a place, we had to look to the idiot board, find it and we threw it off. Idiot board. You can imagine, I used it often.

Female Interviewer:

Describe a typical day at work.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Typical day at work.

Male Interviewer:

In those early days, I think.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

In the early days, getting to work, first thing you want to do is have a tea or a coffee and then you go, sign on, go to your point of duty. One time when I became a PHG there was... part of my job was working on a road where I dealt with the Holland, Dutch, the Dutch road. We had to fill out a sheet of what it is we were to send that day. And we had to make up bags, we had to weigh the items, make sure it had sufficient stamps on it. Make sure it's the right size. Everything had to be done correctly. There was numerous things.

We had paperwork in those days for paperwork. Yes. For one item you could have up to five different sheets of paperwork that you had to make out. But that's how it went.

Female Interviewer:

What were your favorite things about your work in the early days?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

In the early days, you were given time off to go and play football for the office. The canteen had a good range of food. We had a television room, we had a bar. We had a photography room, table tennis room and these were things you could do during your break. A snooker room with two large sized snooker tables. The management in those days came up through the ranks, they were postmen or postwomen themselves. And a lot of the senior men knew them and that made working easier because there's a certain way, when you get into a place like Royal Mail there's a certain way people speak, that I cannot mention.

Male Interviewer:

Tell her what would happen, you don't have to say the words.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

There's a lot of kidding around. There was a lot of swearing, but the swearing is not meant like you're calling someone a bad name. It's just, how can I put this? You know how you might call one of your school friends a stinker, you're not being bad to them, you're just calling them a stinker. It's a joke, nick name.

My name is Egbert, I am called Eggie, Egg but no Bacon. I mean that is from when I came over here. They called me Eggie. I had a bad reaction to that at school. But when my father told me he was called, Egg but no Bacon all the way back in Guyana. It's a matter of growing up.

Same thing with Royal Mail, you get into Royal Mail you see how things are with people and you integrate. It's a matter of integrating into the office.

Female Interviewer:

What were the difficult things about your work?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Difficult things about work. Those jobs that were very serious. In short you could actually be dealing with gold, diamonds, money. You worked sometimes with the customs officers, Customs and Excise. And we'd be opening items for them, leaving it on the table and they will come along and check them.

One time, one of the guys beside me was opening a box and then he stopped, because the box moved. And I said, "What is that." He said he doesn't know, and then the box moved again. So he stopped trying to undo and when he read what was on the declaration, the Customs declaration, it had a rare snake in it. And the snake woke up. The box had slight perforations all around it, but the snake woke and the Customs and Excise had to take it away. The people who sent it obviously are going to be fined for that.

I have had where you get gold, gold come through, diamonds. One time there were two gems sent to Prince Charles from the Sultan of Oman, but he didn't receive them. They disappeared. So you can imagine Royal Mail was up in arms, we looked everywhere. Could not find it.

Two months later somebody found a bag that was stuck on the chute. What it is, we had a thing called a glassy. Somebody would stand up on the glassy, they had a chain ring in the bags, he would cut the bags, the items would fall in the glassy, roll down and the guys down at the bottom would seg them. What's happened now, these things could not be found and yet someone found a bag underneath. And so Prince Charles did get his gems. They were not happy though.

Female Interviewer:

So one of the hardest things is pressure?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yeah, you can't go losing things, especially to do with the Royal Family. Pressure, you got to be correct though when doing the insured, because you're dealing with sometimes thousands of pounds. Items that cost thousands of pounds. You could lose a lot of money over that.

Female Interviewer:

Can you tell us about any discrimination experienced?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

No, I didn't feel any discrimination. Not saying there wasn't. But I personally felt no discrimination coming at me directly. Because like I said, I would handle it myself. I've always believed in handling any problem myself. Not going and running to the management.

Times have changed in society in the country so things are done differently now. But in those days, you dealt with it yourself. But then again you're talking about discrimination or racialism, there's a difference.

Male Interviewer:

Do you want to talk about racism then?

Female Interviewer:

Okay, so about racism.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Racism. Right, this is a delicate one. There was a guy from the Black Stuff came down to work in London, Black Stuff is somewhere up north and he'd not worked with black or Asian guys at all. He'd had no dealings with them. A governor told him, go and work over there with those two guys. He turned to the governor and said, "I don't work with blacks." And the governor said, "Okay." He sent him to work elsewhere.

And it got round. Now most of the black guys, white guys, Asian guys in the office knew each other, they go drinking together. Some of them actually go parties with each other, they weren't too happy about that. And to show everybody learns, 10 years down the line that same man was on his knees crying, begging a certain black guy not to leave. He was taking voluntary retirement, EVR, early voluntary retirement. He was on his knees begging the man not to go.

And I recorded it on my video camera. And I did not keep the recording. I am so disappointed in myself. Because everybody will laugh. There's a room full of people and that same man. It's because he didn't know, he was ignorant.

We all show signs of ignorance.

Female Interviewer:

And don't realize.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

And don't realize. When I say we all, including myself. Until I know or I go through a thing I don't know. I really cannot say this is how this goes or that is how that goes. I'm screwing up.

Female Interviewer:

Next question. Tell us a story that stands from your working life.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

That stands out.

Female Interviewer:

It could be a funny story, an interesting story. Something you remember.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

There was something.

Male Interviewer:

Come back to that one.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

There was something and I can't remember.

Male Interviewer:

We'll come back to it.

Female Interviewer:

Okay, that's number-

Male Interviewer:

I'll make a note of it.

Female Interviewer:

What were some of the naughty things people did at work, where they really shouldn't, but they did it anyway.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Where they shouldn't? Oh I can't talk about those. Definitely I cannot mention those. And I'll say it wasn't me. I'm very innocent.

Male Interviewer:

Give a blow by blow account.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

No, this is really bad. This, okay. I feel embarrassed to speak about this to... you're there egging me on. Some funny business was caught by some IB in the car park, in a car. Also there was in the cupboard on one of the upper floors, because we had some young ladies come from Canary Wharf, when they closed them and brought them to upper floors. And the guys were excited, the girls got excited. Oh look at all these postmen and next thing you know, nature took its course. This is embarrassing.

That's all I'm going to say on the subject.

Female Interviewer:

We get the picture.

Talk us briefly through the different jobs while working for Royal Mail.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Different jobs, loading lorries, offloading lorries. Being a PHG. Sending items abroad. Receiving items from abroad. I did their insured, where it is I had to make sure I did everything. There are different kinds of insurance. Working with the Customs was where we had a few things happened.

One time we received, I believe it was Spanish money, and it was four or five boxes. Opened one of the boxes, Spanish money. Customs said, "Oh good, we're going to seize those." And they took them. Everybody went to break, when we came back from break the Customs were running around like headless chickens. All that money disappeared, while we were at break for half an hour.

Another time I worked with a Customs officer, I worked in an enclosure with him. I had to open the items and leave them, go a break, when I came back from break, he said to me, "Have a look at that." I said, "Beautiful Bible isn't it." It's a very burgundy Bible, very nice, lovely Bible. He said, "Open it." I opened the first few pages, he said "No, grab the middle." I opened and there's a hole in the middle and in the middle was something called Moroccan Gold. It wasn't actually gold, it was drug, a block of drugs, but it's called Moroccan Gold.

That was an interesting job, because it's just the two of us. And it gave me time to slip away when I wanted. There's exciting times, like with the football, they would let you go early, it could be up to about three hours before your duty finishes and we go and play football for the office. That was exciting. Because most of the guys were from the East End and they love their football. They also love their fighting. So some of our games did not finish.

Female Interviewer:

Similar, but tell us about your favorite job.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

My favorite job, I've had so many jobs.

Female Interviewer:

A few that stand out maybe.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

There were so many jobs that were good, but what I called my favorite job was working on the platform offloading the lorries. Because soon as you finish, they had a thing in those days called "job and knock".

You finish doing all your work. Bye-bye you're gone. That was allowed, but as long as you finish. But there was a lot of work to do still. It was an incentive for you to finish your work.

Female Interviewer:

How did you progress in Royal Mail?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

I only progressed as far as PHG. I had no intentions of going higher because at one time I thought I was going to become a professional boxer. And when that went out the window, I was doing my own video business. Video recording, weddings, christenings, birthday parties and I was doing my own editing. And I aimed at one time to pack in working for Royal Mail and go full time on that.

Fortunately, that did not happen, because that was just before the hand cameras came in. Because a lot of people used to do their own weddings, or get their families to do their own weddings. I would have lost out, staying in Royal Mail was the best thing I've done.

Female Interviewer:

So you're glad you-

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

I am very glad I stayed in, I am very glad I stayed in. And not only that, working for a place like Royal Mail, you've got a thing called the Union and the Union helps you. Any problem whatsoever. The Union is there for you.

Your tax, I did not have to do my tax, Royal Mail did my tax. Right now my son, he in a way works for himself, he has to do his own tax and you've got to be spot on with that. Because if you miss anything they could catch up with you later, and the tax man never misses out.

Female Interviewer:

That's good they do that for you?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Pardon?

Female Interviewer:

That's good that they do that for you?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Oh yes. Yes.

Female Interviewer:

We have the next question. Tell us about your relationships with your colleagues. Did you make any close friends?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Oh yes, I made lots of friends. There's a group of us who have known each other for 43 years. And we still meet, say twice a year. We've not been able to meet in the past two years, because of the Covid. But we meet say two, three times a year. Sit down drink, talk, laugh, bring up the old memories and we find out who of us has passed on. Yeah, we still keep in contact.

Female Interviewer:

Tell us about your experiences of-

Male Interviewer:

Sorry, just got a... well done... just need to press that one again. Well done though Sammy, really good. Okay carry on.

Female Interviewer:

Next question, tell us about your experiences of joining clubs.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Clubs.

Female Interviewer:

Clubs, yeah so football.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Football clubs, I played for Eton Manor football, we won a few trophies and that. I done boxing and I won quite a few things for England in Denmark and that. I had to join because my mother thought I was on the way to rack and ruin, because I always had fights in the streets and my mother didn't understand, I was never the trouble maker. Anyway she said to me she was going to put me in the army, so I took up boxing and that gave me a bit of discipline, I never looked back. That was good. The last club I joined was the boxing club.

Female Interviewer:

I've done boxing before. It's good.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yes, it does give you self discipline.

Female Interviewer:

Tell us about any other opportunities to socializing in your job.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Oh in the job. Socialize. They have the sports and social. They have a very good sports and social club where the football that you're allowed to do is a sports and social, the table tennis room, the snooker room with the snooker tables. All that is sports and social. They have the mini bus you could use to go away. Also they have holiday lets that you could go to. You have to pay obviously, but it's Royal Mail so

you get it a reduced rate. I was very happy with that. But I never done it. Only done the... used the items inside the building and the football.

Female Interviewer:

What made you join the Union?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Union security. The Union is one of the best things I have joined. Yes, because if there was someone in management that you and them clashed often, the Union was there to make sure that just because he's in management and if he's wrong with what he's saying to you, the Union was there to make sure that he cannot being his management get the upper hand, if he's wrong. The Union is one of the best things for any business, because it helps the ordinary working man.

Female Interviewer:

Yeah, sounds great. Why is the Union important for postal workers?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Well, I'll tell you this, Royal Mail, we're an unskilled job. All right you need a bit of a memory to deal with the letters and be able to sort them fast. It's an unskilled job, but the pay that you get at Royal Mail for an unskilled job it's very hard. And that is all due to the years of going on strike and fighting for higher pay. Not only that, if I am sick from work, if I go sick from work, I'm still paid. A lot of the other jobs if they go sick, they're not paid. A lot of the jobs nowadays, they're not paid any money. If I'm on holiday I get paid. Do you understand?

Female Interviewer:

Yeah, you paid.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

You get paid whatever is going on. Not only that, the Union have helped, there's a thing called in search of your fortune. There was a young guy at my office who went to America to see if he could become a football coach there and they gave him a year off. He didn't get paid, but his job was secure if he didn't get the job in America as a coach. But he did get the job as a coach.

There's, like when the office was closing there's a thing called gardening leave, whereas a certain amount of people would be told to go home, come back in say two weeks three weeks. Some people it could be a month, this is when the office is closing and they'll still be paid and that. Unfortunately for me when that did happen, from low move and my office was the first office that was closing, when I was still on gardening leave, the Union phoned me and said, "Don't come back to the office, go and report to the Whitechapel office." That's the office I had put down to go to, and so I never got to say bye.

That happened twice. When I was at Whitechapel office and when I was at Bow office. When I was at LOMO and when I was at Bow office.

Female Interviewer:

It's really good that they would hold your job while you go and do something else.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Royal Mail, well I think due to the Union, there being a Union, they had to give a lot. They had to give a lot because at one time when my father worked for Royal Mail they were on strike for seven weeks. Not seven individual days in once a week, seven weeks straight and they eventually got an agreement and the strike was canceled. But seven weeks, fortunately for my parents, and fortunately for me and one of the best things my parents ever gave myself and my brothers, the opportunity at the age of nine to go and do a paper round. And we were good at saving. We saved our money into a Post Office book. When my dad was on strike for seven weeks, we were able to use all that money to pay for the house and food. It worked out very well.

Female Interviewer:

What part did the Union play in your life?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

I have used the Union when I had a grievance with a manager in this very office, in Mount Pleasant. I put in a letter about him and the Union were going to take it all the way. Meaning get him to apologize, because I was accused of something. Not something that I did wrong. I was accused of not working fast enough. When two certain people arrived, they drew his side and that wasn't right. And I said this is personal. It said, damn right it's personal. He had called someone as a witness and that witness turned out being my witness. And the Union fought them all the way with that.

Female Interviewer:

Anything unreasonable.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

That was very unreasonable of him. Mind you, we get on great now. Well he's left the job and I still send him text, he sends me text, that's just the way it goes.

You never know what goes on with some people's lives outside of Royal Mail. Some people are having a hard life and you don't know. You think that they are coming in and they're just annoyed all the time and yet you do not know what their life is outside.

As time goes on you might actually get to talk and get to understand each other. And that is what happened in that case.

Female Interviewer:

You really can't judge what-

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

No, no that was one of my failings. Judging people by sight. Reading a book by the cover. Not good.

Female Interviewer:

Yeah, that's what I've always thought. Okay this links to another answer, but tell us about any strikes or disputes you were involved with.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Ah so many. I've been in many strikes in the 43 years, but I've not been in a strike since... last strike was Bow, which was about 10 years ago and that was before Bow office shut. Strikes, it's not always about money.

One time there was a strike over something that happened between a couple in Bow office and I knew more than I was willing to say. I didn't tell the management or anyone that I know about the couple that had a falling out, because that was too personal. We should not have been out on strike for that, but I had to keep my mouth shut. I actually saw one of the people yesterday. But that was a strike that happened, it blew over in a short space of time. Because someone was going to get the sack, the eventually did not sack the person, but they were reprimanded.

Male Interviewer:

Go to number three in the next section, because I'm just a bit worried that the kids are going to come out in the playground soon, so go to three.

Female Interviewer:

Over your working life, what were the main changes at work?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Main changes. Working. The system of working. Machines, more machines were brought in when I was at... yeah that was LOMO my first office. They brought in something we call the Ferris Wheel. Whereas you'd have somebody pretty high above you coding the items would be offloaded onto a chute and it runs onto this large wooden plates. And as you are coding the items, items come in front of you, you punch in the code, it goes on to the plate, it goes around and it drops it on the area of the... say it drops it on Dutch Road or it drops it on the French Road.

And the people at the bottom they will offload and do their sortation. That took away... it's another way of cutting jobs in my eyes, but it worked. It cut down jobs.

Now there are things called packet sorting machines. They're letter sorting machines that do it way faster than we can. We need to do it, because our opponents are doing it. We need to drive ahead also.

Female Interviewer:

Up the game.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Up the game yeah, because we're getting a good kicking.

Female Interviewer:

In what ways do you think the job has improved over how long-

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

It's improved, well because we have gone more technical. We use the systems that have come out now, computers, I even hear that they'll be having drones that will be flying to the outskirts, because no other company goes into the outskirts of England, to drive there it's like a one horse town, only Royal Mail drivers go out. Now they aim to use drones to take those out. I don't know how they're going to do that.

Because I can't see it being the very big drones. It must be the small drones. But that is one way they aim to get forward.

Female Interviewer:

I'm sure they'll figure it out, in some way.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Hopefully they do.

Female Interviewer:

That's impressive. In what way has it got worse?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

In the past, when I started, I had to go and learn the routes, sortation, the different countries and that. That is what you call London Overseas Mail Office. Where I work now is England, United Kingdom should I say, not England. United Kingdom. And we had to go to school to learn. Now they do not do that.

You get people who are sorting very slow. In the past they are moving like octopus because they knew the sortation very easily and they were fast. Nowadays they're not, because they're not sent to the schools. That's one way where it's not too good.

Female Interviewer:

I see. What would you think if your child wanted to work for Royal Mail?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

I'd say good. Oh yeah. My son's an electrician, but he's not interested. Even in being an electrician. He's found other things he wants to do, which is good. Whatever makes you happy. If it's going to make my son happy to work for Royal Mail great. It's what makes you happy. You need to be happy with what you're doing.

Female Interviewer:

No point staying in a job you don't really like.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

No, there's a lot of people who've got very good jobs and they are miserable. And there are those people who've got... the job could be very hard, but they get pleasure out of actually doing it.

Female Interviewer:

If you were the boss of Royal Mail what changes would you make?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

If I was the boss of Royal Mail, one change I'd make, I would get everybody who is high up in Royal Mail to put on some dust coats and come and work for a matter of weeks on the ground floor. So they could understand, get a good idea of what it is that postmen and postwomen do. So that when they send from

up high, orders that they want changes made, they do have an understanding of what goes on down on the ground floor.

Because they do not. We get orders, in most businesses it's like this, you get orders from on high saying we want this done, we want that done. And they have no idea of what goes on down there.

Female Interviewer:

So you want them to see what it's like.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yeah, it's only to see what it's like. They pass it on to the ones below them, who pass it on to the ones below them. Which could be the management and the management have got to come and enforce things on to us. That even they themselves know might be impossible. But they know we, as postmen always find a way around to be able to do it. But I'd say the top man need to put on a dust coat and come and work on the shop floor. And I'm serious with that.

Female Interviewer:

That makes sense. And last one, looking back over your working life, what has working for Royal Mail meant to you?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Holidays, a house, a happy wife, happy children. A future to look forward to. A retirement to look forward to bring through Royal Mail. Not only that, friends, colleagues I'll still be in touch with.

Female Interviewer:

A lot?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

It means a lot yes. And it gave me opportunities to still do things I wanted to do outside. It gave me opportunities.

Female Interviewer:

Did you have any friends who got sacked and why?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yeah. People I know that I spoke to, but friends is a long term. One person which was a complete shock to almost everybody in the office. Very nice guy. Everybody liked this guy, he was friendly, jovial always and then we came in one day and found out that the IB, Investigation Branch have taken him away. Because he had been stealing for quite a while.

There's other guys who, he was what we call the 500 club. 500 club means they took home pay 500, well just over 500 a week. Because they worked on nights, they did all the overtime coming. But what the guy would do, when it came to Christmas time, he would wheel stuff in what we call red tents into the lift and then when he's in the lift he would open the tent and go through Christmas cards. Some children would send Christmas cards to their grandparents and it might have money in it. Or it might be going from their grandparents to them. And he'd open it and take out the money, re-close it, put it back

in. What IB done, they put a camera inside the lift one year when they realized this was going on often, and they caught him. And he was on £500 a year. It's ridiculous, that's a lot of money to lose.

Female Interviewer:

Do you still remember what your memorable moments are?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Memorable moments.

Female Interviewer:

Like moment that you know it off by heart.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yeah there was something. It's when I had done 30 years in the job and you get a little something from Royal Mail. I was given I think it was £200 and also I was able to pick some items, a choice of one of so many items items, what I'd like to have.

There was something I always wanted to do. Fly a plane and they gave me that opportunity to fly a plane. And I did, I flew a plane in Croydon and they paid for it.

I think that, oh no I got reversed on that. That was one of the things, the flying the plane, my wife and a friend paid for that. Oh, if she ever sees this.

Female Interviewer:

Not in her credit.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

No. But they did have one where I could fly a plane. I didn't take that, instead I took a music set and I use it in my gym in my back yard. There's always good things that came out of Royal Mail that put a big smile on my face.

You hear the plane now.

Male Interviewer:

Can I just ask you a quick one, you said your Dad and if you could answer talk to Eva, you said your Dad worked at Royal Mail. He came from Guyana. Did he come and... was that his first job. Tell me how your dad ended up at Royal Mail.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

What it is, my father's a very intelligent man and he would have been working in the government in Guyana. And what he done, when he came here he had to go and get the paperwork, again he had to go to college and get the paperwork to go higher in Royal Mail. And he is what we call a PNTTO. I don't know what that abbreviates, but he walked through college. I mean it's that easy for him. And he was what I call a trouble shooter. He worked in the Post Office, behind the counters and then he went into Royal Mail, the mail centers and he worked upstairs dealing with very important paperwork and things like that.

Anytime the manager of any of the postal offices went sick, he'd go and do their job. He even done the television license at one time. He used to be in the vans. He'd be driven round. You know about the television license?

If you've not paid your television license they could find out. They'd come along in a van. Find out who on that street is watching television and they'd be able to check to see if you're paying your television license. And if you weren't they'll come and knock on your door. And I don't know if they gave you a warning or they gave you a fine straight away. I think more likely they'd give you a warning so that you would go and pay it.

He did that, that was overtime for him though, not his full time job.

Male Interviewer:

Tell us what year he came over?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Oh shucks, well I came over in 1965, three days before Christmas 65. My father, mother and my two older brothers and my one sister came over 62. Three years before I did, 62. But my father had come over here a few years before that because he was in the ambulance brigade. And he came over to England to get training. That's how he found out things about England and he liked it and he came. Brought his family over.

Male Interviewer:

How long did he work for Royal Mail for?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Not as long as I did, I have should I say. He must have worked for Royal Mail, 25 years.

Male Interviewer:

Did he recommend it to you? Did he say you should get a job there?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yes, yes he did because the pay was that much better than I was getting at the Co-op. Yeah the pay was that much better than I got at the Co-op, so I took that. It was well worth it.

Female Interviewer:

Thank you for answering these questions, is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven't covered that's important to you?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Important to me. I'd like to know that, I aim to retire next year if the opportunity comes, but I'd like to know that Royal Mail still keeps on going, getting forward and becoming up to date with the computers. What our opponents are doing, I think we are larger than all of them by far, but due to certain things that the government did, I think it's 10 years ago, they took away a monopoly that we had and spread it amongst others. And now we're having, whereas other companies are able to go and do what we call cherry pick and pick, we'll take this and deliver this kind of stuff. Royal Mail are unable to do that

anymore, so we have to take what we get. It is not good. I'd like to know Royal Mail just take on all their opponents and beat them.

Female Interviewer:

You want to see them grow.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Yes I'd like to see Royal Mail grow. For one, I'd like Royal Mail to grow because they'll be paying my pension. That's how it is. I'm paying someone else's pension right now. That's how it goes.

Male Interviewer:

Do you feel proud of working, do you have a sense of that for the Royal Mail?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Oh yeah, I'm very, very proud working for Royal Mail. Because anytime I see a Royal Mail van and I'm in the car, on the bus or anything and my wife or my son or my daughter is with me, I say, "Good old Royal Mail." And say "Here it goes."

It stands out, everybody knows Royal Mail.

Male Interviewer:

Do you have a question?

Female Interviewer:

Where you planning to be in Royal Mail when you were younger?

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

No, I was planning to be a footballer when I was younger.

Male Interviewer:

Talk to Eva please.

Egbert Alexander Jones Hughes:

Oh sorry. I was planning to be a footballer when I was younger. And then when that didn't work out because of my eyesight, I was going to be a boxer, when I was in my late teens. And that didn't work out, because of my eyesight. Next thing, to my own business. Because when you work for yourself you've got no-one else to blame. You have got to be your own driving force, but that did not work out.