

RADIO GRAM

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I never got why my mother listened to Radio 2 and then, even more cringingly, Radio 4. I just added it up to her sum total of un-coolness, something that most teenage daughters do, whilst admiring friends' mothers. I recall Woman's Hour and the Archers and I didn't get them either. Chat on the radio instead of music - how bizarre. My mother did 'meals on wheels' and I was taken along to help do any other chores whilst Mum dished up lukewarm mash. No microwaves in those days. Each short journey between our visits meant radio, which seemed to me to add to the austerity of the whole experience. Woman's Hour was far too topical and all grown up, and as for Ambridge, well to a 13 year old discovering the Punk scene it was as boring as hell.

For years I could only listen to Radio 1 - Simon Bates and 'Love Story', Bruno Brooks, 'bits and pieces', the summer roadshows, Peter Powell and a whole bunch of excitable DJs we thought were stars. Later on I specifically loved Chris Evans, whom I still enjoy today.

But I do like voices. Terry Thomas and his 'Oooh hellooo', Richard Burton in Camelot makes me melt, and, if I think on it hard, I surprise myself by finding all the ones I love so much are very Radio 4. Exactly like the ones my mother had subjected me to - not just in her red VW Golf but from her little crackly Philips radio at home while we shelled peas or cleaned the silver.

One voice does stand out for me, Moira Stewart, she can read the news for me any day. Her husky enunciation I find soothing and safe - her career must now span 25 years! I am pleased to find her now on Chris Evans show on Radio 2 and reassured to learn that this lady like myself does not own a 'Onesy'. As if! Incidentally if you google her, you find out nothing. She is pure class.

I first had experience of radio from the inside back in 2004 and my first call up for Parkinson's UK and BBC Radio Leeds. I was calm but excited driving to the studio and, with a tiny briefing from the show producer, suddenly found myself live for 15 minutes. I remember clearly it seemed to last 2 minutes and I was frustrated I hadn't said enough. I have the audio, and listened to it the first time ever. I was pleasantly surprised. I sounded pretty confident, I was asked back 2 more times so I must've passed muster.

Since then I have done a wide range of radio interviews, phone in's, panels etc all for PD. However it took Scotland and a sense of change in my voice for me to take the

plunge and have a go. I have this theory - you can call me crazy - that if you find something tricky, go all out and try to meet it head on. My radio life came from this approach. I had a sense of my voice changing so I thought 'what better way of making me speak and speak well than radio'. So off I trotted to my local CIC (Community station) and put it to them. They generously put me on air, and up until a few months ago I did a weekly show. I racked up over 50 shows before they sadly ran out of funding. It became so much more than speaking, which was very good, it added to my self esteem, my general joy and of course accomplishment. None of those are quite so easy to pin down as they once were.

Despite not having a weekly show, I do still broadcast, I am a regular guest on an internet radio show, I pre record one off shows and features and I do the odd voice over. It took me a long time to get used to hearing my voice, let alone liking it. Now I think I sound ok and with a bit of studio tweaking almost BBC 2 myself!

This is not the only time I use my voice, I also 'speak' at events, conferences and in business. I guess after 5 years that could be classed as professionally. It is something I enjoy and am told I am very competent at.

My voice is still changing, along with my swallowing. Losing my speech as it now is, is a thought I don't like much. I had a cold recently and lost my voice for several days. That was ghastly.

In order to help myself should I find that the temporary loss of voice becomes part of my long term symptoms, I have written a 'Dear me'.

*Dear me,
if you are reading this then something you don't much care for has happened, to do with your voice. Well you wrote this at a time when your voice was good in anticipation of today. You need to know just one thing, when you had a voice, you used it. You really used it, and you know what you were mighty good with it too. Now go and find other ways to use it again.....*

I hope, I can and I do.

