



My dad talks about his life [978] Episode Transcript

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Introduction

Hello listeners, welcome back to Luke's English Podcast. How are you doing today? I hope you're doing fine. So last week, in the last episode, I published a conversation with my mum in which she talks a lot about her life and I'm very glad to see that people seem to enjoy it a lot, which is no surprise really because my parents have been very regular guests on this show over the years and also very popular guests with my audience.

So it's no surprise that last week's episode was received well by everybody. There have been so many comments from listeners expressing their sincere appreciation for the chance to listen to my mum

sharing her thoughts and feelings and memories so openly. Here's just one of those comments from Paola.

Paola wrote, you're lucky because you can still talk with your parents, make the most of your time with them. And this sums it up very well actually. That is the whole idea in fact of that episode and indeed this episode.

While we're still able to spend time in conversation with our parents, we should try to ask them plenty of questions about their lives and then listen to them carefully. Listen to everything they have to say because one day we won't have that option. Now this is true of everyone of course.

We have to take time to appreciate our loved ones and to listen to them, our close friends, not just our parents but everyone in our lives. We should take the time to listen to them and appreciate the people we have and ask them things and talk to them as much as we can while we can. And that's what I wanted to do recently when I was staying with my mum and dad for a few days and I just thought I could also make several podcast episodes that work not only as hopefully interesting episodes for you to listen to but also a kind of record of them and their experiences.

Luckily for us, luckily for me and luckily for you too, my parents are both open enough and willing to be part of a podcast project like this. So after interviewing my mum last time it was my dad's turn and I pretty much planned to have more or less the same conversation with him as I had with my mum. But of course this ended up being quite different as we followed the story of my dad's life, his upbringing, moments when he finished school and applied for a place at the prestigious Oxford University and then began his career and the sort of choices he made about what direction he wanted to go in in his career and then his

interesting experiences working in advertising at first and then broadcast journalism which is what he did for the rest of his career.

Plus some thoughts about being a father of two boys. And so yeah, a similar intention I had with this conversation but obviously the results are quite different because you know my dad is a different person. Yes, what a surprise.

Now I'll let you notice the differences between my dad's personal experience and my mum's. Not that this is a comparison. Anyway, I'll stop this introduction now and I'll let you get into my chat with my dad.

All I want to say is that I am very lucky to be able to do this. Some people in the comments of the last episode said that for one reason or another they couldn't do the same thing either because of health reasons or because of issues in a relationship or obviously because the parents are no longer with us. So I feel like I'm very lucky and I'm mindful of that fact that having a close conversation about personal things with my parents is not something that everyone can do and I appreciate them both very much for doing this.

If you're watching the video version of this you will see that there is no actual video footage of the conversation. I just recorded audio but there are subtitles on the screen which might help you notice certain phrases being used and can help you follow the conversation more easily. There's a pdf for this episode with a full transcript of this conversation which you can check later if you want to consolidate your learning either simply by reading it or by searching for words and expressions that you will hear.

The link for the pdf is in the description. So I will chat to you again at the end of this but now without further ado here is my conversation with my dad Rick Thompson and here we go.

Conversation

Luke: Hello, Dad.

Rick: Hello, Luke.

Luke: What is the situation? Right now we're sitting together. What's the general situation?

Rick: The general situation is you are in our living room, sitting in front of the, the fire, though the fire isn't actually lit.

And you've given me a microphone and I'm holding it.

Luke: Yeah, exactly. And I'm here for the, for the weekend basically. Yes,

Rick: indeed. You came over from Paris for a long weekend here, which is great. Lovely to see you. Always good to see you. Particularly useful. And you've been doing all the jobs that I can't do

Luke: right.

Rick: really useful indeed.

Luke: Like what?

Rick: Changing light bulbs that are difficult to change. Removing the double glazing so we could clean behind the windows, which these are heavy

Luke: double glazing.

Rick: Yeah. Two sheets of glass in the window to give insulation.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And keep things quiet.

Luke: But, crafty spiders manage to find their way into that space.

Rick: They do. How they get in is very difficult to see because these are tiny, tiny cracks between the double glazing and the window. But they get in there and then they spin their little webs and, when the sun shines in through the window, you can see all these spiders webs in there. So, you've been removing them.

Luke: The whole big piece of glass has to be removed. That's right. And it's quite a physical job. That, and it's heavy. And then you get in with the vacuum cleaner and get rid of all of the, the cobwebs and stuff like that. Yes.

Rick: Exciting. Isn't it?

Luke: Very exciting.

Rick: Skilled work.

Luke: Yes, I was just saying to mum, because I recorded the conversation with Mum just earlier and I was saying that I got a comment a few years ago on an episode that I did with Mum, where we chatted in the garden about this, that and the other.

And the comment, from a listener called Nika Nika three years ago said, oh, I love listening to your podcasts with your family. I love them all and

it doesn't matter what you're talking about. It's just great to hear a natural flow of your conversation. Thank you so much, Luke.

Rick: Well, that's a good thing because I don't know what we're going to talk about haven't the faintest idea.

Luke: I don't really know either, because one of the great things about doing a podcast, maybe doing this podcast is that we have the freedom to just kind of go wherever we want. And I think what's interesting for listeners, although you always need to be convinced of this, is that people genuinely love listening to us.

Rick: They don't mind us rambling.

Luke: No. That that's, that's what they like. That's specifically what people like.

Rick: I can hear them out there going, nah, it's boring.

Luke: Well, those people can just go and listen to something else. As far as I'm concerned, there are plenty of people, and I know this because they write to me time and time again who say that this is exactly the sort of thing that they would like to listen to.

Okay. So, so you can take it from me that people are enjoying this. I get lots of comments like that and Nika said, it doesn't matter what we're talking about and, and that is true. But I do have lots of questions to ask you, but we'll see where things go. Childhood, growing up, being an adult, different phases of your life, family history.

These are all fascinating things. I think

Rick: deep things.

Luke: Mm, mm-hmm. As mum was saying in the, in the conversation I had with her, I helped her get some large boxes from a high cupboard, and in it were lots of photos and albums and letters and things from the past.

Rick: Yes.

Luke: Yeah,

Rick: they, they're absolutely fascinating.

Some of them, you know, going back, into her great grandparents' time, you know, in, into the late 19th century and some great old photos. And listeners, I have to tell you that Luke's school reports from when he was aged eight, are in there from Lady Katherine Leveson Primary school.

Luke: Yeah. There was that, there was the reports from my primary school and then reports from pretty much every year in secondary school, including the last year of secondary school.

Rick: Yes.

Luke: Which is when I was about 15 or 16 years old. What do you think of the reports?

Rick: Not surprising, really. I mean, you know, they all say he's a nice enough boy, but he doesn't work very hard and underachieves he ought to do better. Hmm. Mm-hmm. Well, we heard this before,

Luke: so you remember that from the time, do you

Rick: Oh, yeah.

We, we, it was extremely frustrating for your mother and father, especially when you got a bit older and you were moving towards exams, which were quite important. Yeah. It was immensely frustrating that, that you wouldn't apply your time to doing your homework, for example. And, you seemed to think that you would just get through your exams by some kind of magic process.

Luke: Yeah. There was a lot of mistaken sort of, I don't know what, how do you describe it? Is it hubris?

Rick: I suppose it is.

Luke: Is that it?

Rick: Well, yeah. Kind of overconfidence.

Luke: Yeah. Or an, an assumption that I would just find somehow the results would just be on a plate. Uh, I don't know why I thought that. I just sort of had a sort of, yeah, weird misplaced confidence in, in myself, I suppose.

Or it was laziness or something. It

Rick: was laziness actually. It was, wasn't that it was because you were too busy doing all sorts of other things,

Luke: you think?

Rick: I think so, yeah. Like what? And, and, well I don't know, you, you, were you already getting into a bit of music and playing music with your, with your friends.

Luke: That was my A levels, yeah. When I was seven 18 sort of age. Yeah, definitely. No, I was totally distracted then.

Rick: when you were younger, there probably wasn't much excuse. You should have didn't. No,

Luke: I don't

Rick: particularly want to do it.

Luke: No, I wasn't particularly mentally disciplined, I suppose. But you did very well at school, didn't you?

Rick: I, I did. Okay. I mean, I could have done better, but, I did okay.

Luke: I think

Rick: my parents were, were probably fiercer than we were.

Luke: Mm.

Rick: You know, I should have beaten you, but, uh, they

Luke: didn't beat you. They didn't beat you, did they?

Rick: No, they didn't. But my mother in particular was fairly fierce and, you know, I wasn't allowed to watch the television until I'd done my homework and, you know, all that stuff.

Luke: You, you, you,

Rick: and they, they were quite encouraging, but you couldn't possibly go back to school the next day without having done your homework. That was absolutely impossible.

Luke: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You've said before that. you were even not, I don't know if locked in a room with your homework is, is the right way to put it.

Well,

Rick: it did. It's it's I don't know whether the lock was actually turned click, but I was certainly put into what was then the back room where we lived and the door was shut and I didn't, wasn't supposed to come out until I'd finished my homework. And of course that's helpful discipline because you could just get on with it.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And it doesn't take all that long.

Luke: Mm-hmm. And in the back room you didn't really have any distractions. Nope. It was just you and a table and the homework. That's right. Yeah.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: It's very important to know.

Rick: Anyway, so, yeah. Well enough of this subject. I mean, I think most. Most people would say I could have worked better at school, don't they?

but certainly you and your brother, you were, you were, not the best at, applying yourselves to your schoolwork.

Luke: No. Were your parents strict?

Rick: Fairly strict.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: Yeah, I mean, they, they were very good. You know, my, my mum and dad were really, really good parents, and my brother and I appreciated that.

But they, my mum in particular, expected us to do this, expected us to do that. And you know, we had to behave and we had to, I don't know, it was, I don't whether you call it strict or whether it was just firmness. I think they were firm about things.

Luke: Mm. Did you ever get into trouble?

Rick: Oh yeah. We all get into trouble.

Luke: Like what?

Rick: Oh, I don't know. How far back do you want to go?

Luke: No, just don't know. Did I just want to, I'd love to know about a time when maybe your mum and dad got really angry with you and punished you, just because it's a good story often.

Rick: Well, he, I, I can go all the way back to when I was really small you know, when we lived up in, in Leeds in the north of the country.

And one thing that I, that sort of lived with me was the fact that,

Luke: what kind of age is that then?

Rick: I think I would be about six or seven.

Luke: Okay.

Rick: And, uh, cars were quite unusual in that part of the, of Leeds anyway. I mean, it wasn't the richest part of the, of the world and cars coming up and down our quiet road was quite a, quite something.

Luke: We're talking about the 1950s here, listeners.

Rick: We are talking about the early 1950s.

Luke: This is, this is not the, this is not, we're not talking about when cars were invented.

Rick: No, we're talking about the fifties, but there weren't so many. And when a car came up the road on one occasion. I had a piece of wood in my hand.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And as it came past, I tried to throw the piece of wood underneath the car so it would come out the other side. Unfortunately, it hit the car and of course, you know, I ran home, but the driver, you know, followed me and knocked on the door. And your son has been throwing things at my car, so I was in trouble.

Luke: Was the car damaged? Do you remember?

Rick: Can't remember. I doubt it was, it wasn't a brick, it was a bit of wood.

Luke: Right. So you weren't throwing, to be fair to you, you weren't throwing wood at the car, but

Rick: explain that to the driver

Luke: you were trying to throw it under. Yeah. This furious driver.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: And so how did your parents,

Rick: I can't remember, but they were, they, they sent him away and la-di-da and I was in trouble, but I can't remember any more than the fact that I was, absolutely terrified of this, this man coming after us.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: You know?

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: What else? When I was in trouble? I don't know.

Luke: stuff like that, isn't it?

Rick: Stuff like that.

Luke: Yeah. That's interesting.

Rick: I was very small.

Luke: Mm-hmm. So yesterday, because we had this conversation after having brought down some of those boxes and we looked through some of the pictures, a lot of it's like my mum's stuff.

Yes, yes. It is her dad. It's stuff that we got from my granddad, from Dennis when he died when, so we got a lot of his old photo albums and his diaries and pictures and letters and stuff like that. So a lot of it's my mum's stuff. But, we did have this conversation about what it made us think about. And one of the things that you both said, and you have said numerous times, is why didn't I ask my grandparents.

Why didn't I ask my parents and grandparents more?

Rick: Definitely. Yes.

Luke: Yeah. Which I'm sure is a common thing that everyone thinks at different times. You know, you look back and you, when someone is gone, you regret not having asked them various things. Why do you think we don't ask people? Why don't we ask our parents and grandparents these questions?

Rick: I don't really know. I think we, we are wrapped up in ourselves when we're, we're growing up.

Luke: Mm.

Rick: and there is a generation gap. you are into whatever you are into. The parents are simply there and have to be kind of appeased. They provide the food. I, I'm not really sure why, but I don't think you're mature enough to put things into perspective.

I was a, a baby boomer. You know what a baby boomer is. The generation born soon, quite soon after the second World War. And there was a boom in babies being born for obvious reasons. I saw a graph of the, of the number of kids being born and I'm right at the top of it. March, 1947.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And as, as a baby boomer, we had, a particular.

Separation between our generation and our parents' generation that we were born into this period where the food was better, rationing was finishing. We had free education, free healthcare. The National Health Service was launched in 1947. And we were very, very fortunate. And the parents wanted the best for us.

They'd gone through six years of war. Terrifying, really. And I think that, this generation may have been a bit indulged in, or a little bit spoiled, if you like, but we had a lot of freedom and things changed quite rapidly. So we, we got into the fifties, late fifties, rock and roll arrived. "What on earth is rock and roll?" thinks my father, I imagine, you know,

Luke: do you know how he felt about

Rick: he was very supportive of us. We loved, we, my brother and I both liked music, but we didn't really get into the Elvis Presley thing. We got into the sixties, early sixties,

Luke: the British sort of sixties, the

Rick: British pop scene,

Luke: the shadows.

Rick: Yeah, definitely Cliff Richard and the Shadows, and then it was the Beatles big time and Rolling Stones and all the other bands and everything else, and all the kids wanted to have guitars.

They all wanted to play in bands, and of course I did.

Luke: So what's the difference between that and the, the whole Elvis thing?

Rick: I don't know. I think the Elvis thing was, a lot of the parents seemed to be a bit hostile to it.

Luke: Because it was rebellious, wasn't it?

Rick: Yeah, it was. And they didn't like the sexuality of it.

Yeah. Overtly sexual (they) thought he was, he was a bit unsavory. The girl screaming at him, waving his legs about Yeah. And that and that. He was followed by the rock and rollers. Who sort thought they were quite hard, you know,

Luke: it was a bit violent, wasn't it? Because they Well, yeah, they like Teddy boys.

Rick: That's right.

Luke: Teddy boys. It was a sort of a subculture in the late fifties and they wore these sort of Edwardian frock coats and had their hair done in that fifties rocker rockabilly style.

Rick: they did a little, they were tough

Luke: guys.

Rick: There was a bit of reaction to that. In Britain because, there were mods and rockers.

The rockers wore motorbikes and wore leather, and the mods wore sharp clothes and rode scooters.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And they became, they used to have fights on the beach at Brighton, Mods and the rockers, but the mods were, the people who supported The Who and, and, they, they,

I think the parents probably were much less worried about the bands like The Beatles because they were, they were sort of nice. Yeah. And amusing.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And quite good to listen to. And they appealed to everybody.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: and I think it was a kind of, a wave of good feeling, which was reflected by all the other stuff that happened in the sixties, the colorful clothes.

And it was, a a lot of freedom that our parents and their parents could never have experienced. Really.

Luke: So your dad was really supportive of the fact that you and your older brother liked to play music and you, you got into bands that were playing guitar music and your dad was pretty supportive of that?

Rick: Yes, he was. It was mainly me. I mean, I, I got into some bands when I was really quite young and, he would load my drums into his car and take me off to this to practice or to a performance and then come and collect me in the evening. I mean, it's very nice of it really.

Luke: You had drums, you had a drum kit?

Rick: Yes, I did. I, I collected drums that I could afford. It started off being a real rough old drum kit.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: With one of those big bass drums as opposed to the little ones.

Luke: Right. '

Rick: cause I couldn't afford the little ones. They were the new ones.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And the snare drum and a, and a, a couple of the high hat and a symbol.

And that was it to start off with. Mm-hmm. But, I, I started accumulating a better drum kit.

Luke: Well, that's good. That's nice that he was supportive.

Rick: Yeah, he was. And they, I mean they, my parents were both very musical. My mum was a very good pianist, not a classical pianist. She, she just, I think she was probably self-taught or taught by her mother.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Like more likely.

Luke: Mm.

Rick: And she used to play popular, popular songs at the time, and you did it really well with a lot of feeling and touch and everything else. Yeah.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And she used to perform a lot, you know, with, things like the hockey club and the Women's Institute and things like that. They, she was called Olive, "Play us a tune, Olive!"

And so she'd sit at the piano and go, "When the red, red robin goes bob bob bobbing along"

Luke: she, she could do the bass part with her left hand. That's she do the other chords with her right hand. Yeah, she was great. And didn't she have perfect pitch?

Rick: Yes, she did. Which is quite clever. it means that if you asked her to sing a certain note, she could do it.

Luke: I remember her being in the living room and I would be in the other room with the piano and I'd play a note on the piano and she could tell me what the, what note it was.

Rick: Exactly. I mean, she was, came from a very musical family. Her two sisters were musical too.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And and I think it's great to have music in the family and you know that because you are very musical and both your kids like music.

Luke: Yes. Yes, that's right. I want to try and encourage them to play music.

Rick: I, I learned the piano with my older brother and me both had piano lessons when we were small and the piano teacher was really horrible. I mean, she was like something out of a Roald Dahl film, you know, she had, sort of warts on her nose, you know?

Yeah. And, and, was not very good looking. And she used to come to the house to give us our piano lessons. She was called Miss Lamborne, if you're out there, miss Lamborne. I haven't forgotten. and, she

Luke: was, she, was she young, old,

Rick: or No, she was Oh, she felt very old. Yeah.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: To me, because I mean, I, I was, learning the piano when I was six.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And, she used to always have a glass of sherry.

Luke: Really?

Rick: When, when we were doing our piano lessons. Yes. Glass. It's alcohol. That's an alcoholic too. Or, or maybe it was ginger wine, but was a little glass of this, it was presented to her. And if, if you, if you got your scales wrong. She would hit your knuckles with a ruler.

Luke: Oh wow.

Rick: Wonderful way of teaching you.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Not

Luke: really instilling a love of piano playing.

Rick: And we moved, we moved from up north down to London and we both refused to continue with our piano lessons because of the experience we'd had with Miss Lamborn.. No, we're not doing piano lessons anymore. Now that's a regret really, because I would love to be able to play the piano.

Luke: Yes. Well, you did continue to play music we'll, we'll maybe talk about that in a moment. Let me just ask you about your mum and dad though. They lived through World War II.

Rick: Indeed.

Luke: Your dad was in the army. Is that correct?

Rick: That is correct.

Luke: because I know less about, I know less about him really, because I never met him.

Rick: He died early folks.

Luke: Yeah. He, he died.

Rick: He was 56.

Luke: Yes. Yeah. You,

Rick: uh, anyway, yes. He was pretty much a, a self-made man, my dad. His father who lived with us for a while, my grandpa Thompson

Luke: Frank,

Rick: Frank, Frank Barley Thompson's a good name

Luke: from Leeds in

Rick: York.

Yorks from Rippon,

Luke: Rippon

Rick: in Yorkshire, rip in North Yorkshire. he had a very strong Yorkshire accent and, and he, he'd had a Taylor's shop in Rippon. And before that. Did various things, I think connected with the countryside. I think he worked for blacksmith for a while and a butchers for a while.

Anyway, my dad went to the grammar school. He, he qualified in certain things and finished up being a planning officer. he, he was an engineer,

Luke: civil engineer.

Rick: A civil engineer,

Luke: which means someone who, who plans roads and towns, infrastructure.

Rick: That's right.

Luke: Infrastructure in towns. And,

Rick: and of course at the time there was a lot, a lot of building going on there.

The bombed cities, uh, needed new homes and they were building flats and council houses. And he was busy doing that, first of all, up in Yorkshire. And then he moved down to London to work for the government in, in, the Ministry of Housing and local government to start off with, and planning new towns and then the Ministry of Transport planning motorways.

Luke: So that's after the war. There was a lot of rebuilding going on, certainly. So there would've been work for him. But then during the war, he was, he his skills in civil engineering were used, weren't they?

Rick: Yes. He went into the royal engineers.

Luke: Right.

Rick: And he, uh, he was commissioned as a, as an officer most of the war.

He was a major, major, major Thompson

Luke: major. Really?

Rick: Wow. Yeah. That

Luke: sounds impressive.

Rick: But he finished up being, at the end of the war, he. He went into the territorial army, the part-timers. Yeah. As a lieutenant colonel He was Colonel Thompson.

Luke: Oh, wow. I didn't know that.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Gosh.

Rick: Anyway, unlike your mother's father, Dennis, who was a frontline, infantry, infantry, infantry regiment.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: D-Day landings and, you know, fighting their way towards Berlin. A horrible experience. My dad was sent to France when Germany declared war and when they overwhelmed everything heading for Paris, he was evacuated, not to Dunkirk, but westwards,

Luke: a lot of British soldiers who initially went to France to fight against the, the Nazis and then had to escape

Rick: indeed

Luke: they did. because they got pushed all the way back to the North coast, until they got to Dunkirk.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Then they managed to find their way back to

Rick: famous evacuation by lots of civilian little boats that went to collect

Luke: them. Yeah. And then later, a few years later, the allies then invaded France again on D-Day.

Rick: That's right.

Luke: So, but your dad was in France in that early,

Rick: early on. He was evacuated west, I think St Lazare? Is that, is that the place on ... can't remember, on the west coast somewhere, got onto a warship and was brought home.

Luke: Okay.

Rick: Um, but he was then assigned to doing major engineering work, connected with the war.

And the first place he was sent to was Iceland.

Luke: He went to Iceland?

Rick: Yeah. The island of Iceland.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And, uh, there was censorship on what you could say to your family about where you were. And he sent a letter back to my mother saying it's C not R, because he thought he was either going to Ireland or might even go to Iceland.

Luke: Oh, I see. So it's either Ireland, meaning That's right. The Republic of Ireland. Correct. Or it's Iceland. And he wrote C meaning ice, C not R, R, not R meaning Ireland, but it was Iceland. Okay.

Rick: And the reason he went there was that the, the allies needed to have a military base there, and he supervised the building of a military airstrip at Reykjavik.

The capital. It's still there.

Luke: Wow.

Rick: So having built the airstrip at Iceland, and the conditions must have been pretty chilly.

Luke: Mm.

Rick: Um, he came back to, I don't know, do some stuff. He, he, for, while he was seconded to the artillery unit, Royal Artillery, and I know he had two ties after the war, the artillery tie and the engineer's tie.

Luke: Right.

Rick: Okay. Depending on what function he was going to, which one he would actually wear. So he, he, he did work with the artillery for some time. I'm not quite sure why. I don't think he was trying to pop at

Luftwaffe planes over London. Uh, but he may have been manning defensive positions somewhere else.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Anyway, before long he was sent off to build another airstrip and that one was, uh, in the Pacific.

Luke: Wow.

Rick: And the Cocos Islands.

Luke: Where's that?

Rick: Cocos Islands. Well, that's good. Good question. Miles from anywhere in the Pacific.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And the reason for that was that they knew they were going to have to fight the Japanese and they wanted to have a, an air base on the Cocos Islands.

Luke: Wow.

Rick: Not many inhabitants on the islands.

Luke: Okay. So I can tell you where it is. It's kind of off the coast, far off the coast of Indonesia.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Basically go from Jakarta and head. Kind of south, west.

Rick: It's a dot in the middle of the Pacific.

Luke: It's right out into the middle of the Pacific. Yeah.

Rick: So that's quite a contrast of Iceland.

Difficult thing didn't, and you know, he, they, they slept in hammocks and, and under the palm trees. It was hot.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: and, and all that. And so that, that was not the hardest war.

Luke: It's Indian Ocean technically.

Rick: Is it?

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Oh, right.

Luke: Anyway,

Rick: yeah. So, that's, that's pretty much as much we know and, Obviously it wasn't quite as horrendous as, Gill's father's war. But he was away a long time and, and, uh, it must have been strange coming home.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And my brother was born during the war.

Luke: Right.

Rick: So he was conceived on leave, obviously, as many of them were.

Luke: Yeah,

Rick: he was born in 1943 and it must have been weird when this bloke in uniform came home in 1948, I think it was.

Whoa,

Luke: really? So he was five when he first

Rick: met? No, no, no, no. Not 48. 46, I think it was the year after the war finished.

Luke: So he would've been three years old when he

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: First met his

Rick: dad. That's right. Probably.

Luke: Gosh, that's amazing.

Rick: So I would've liked to have asked him about that. I mean, that's what you are saying, that, what, what would you have asked him?

Lots of it. I would've liked to have asked him much more about what you did in Iceland. What was it like? What did you do in the, how did you get there? How did you hear about where you were going?

Luke: Yeah. What did you see? because that's a, what

Rick: did you see?

Luke: Because that would've been an extraordinary journey to go out to the.

Cocos Islands.

Rick: Yes.

Luke: In the middle of the Indian Ocean. He would've seen all sorts of incredible things, like even just animals and stuff.

Rick: Well, they had rats on the island.

Luke: Mm.

Rick: Must have been obviously brought in by Europeans, I guess

Luke: sailors. Yeah.

Rick: But they, they used to poop off [shoot] at them with their rifles.

Luke: Oh yeah.

Rick: I don't know much. He came home with a collection of exotic shells. Beautiful shells.

Luke: Right.

Rick: And, a wooden sailing boat made by one of the indigenous people there. Really nice. Which obviously he'd bought, and then he, you know,

went back to work. And my, my mum was a teacher and she, in fact, she was a teacher at the primary school I went to in, in Yorkshire.

Teaching piano as well as anything else.

Luke: Yeah,

Rick: a few other things. Being a class teacher and they were very, very nice to my brother and me. We were very fortunate.

Luke: Mm mm When you left school, you then went on to do A levels, which are qualifications that we I did

Rick: it while I was at school.

Luke: You did them? Okay.

You just continued at school, did your A Levels at school. Yes. And then it was time to try and get into university.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: What do you remember about that time?

Rick: Well, my older brother had amazingly enough gone to Oxford - top top university.

Luke: Mm. Why you say Amazingly enough?

Rick: Because he wasn't particularly academic and he didn't get very good a level A level results.

And I've always suspected that they, they, uh, took him in on the basis of the interview because in those days they interviewed everybody who'd applied and he would've been good in an interview. And he had a very interesting teenage life, you know, writing plays and, being as a senior scout, as a troop leader and one thing or another, all a natural leader.

And he, he was very good at sport. So he, he played football for the best school football team in the country. And he played basketball at a very high level. and all these things made the fact that his A level results weren't very good, less important in those days. And that's what, you know, Oxford did put a lot of score on the individual's character, what they were like.

Luke: Right.

Rick: Particularly this college. This was the St. Catherine's College, which was a new college invented by a historian called Alan Bullock, who was also a Yorkshireman. And it was built in that period when Danish design buildings, new type buildings were being built around the place. And it's, it's a, you know, fantastic building to this day.

And the principle was that it would take more kids from state schools as opposed to private schools, and it would have a broader curriculum. and in fact they did engineering a amongst other things. So it was the kind of college that would've Peter, they would've liked to have Peter there. So him having gone there and I went to visit him as a school boy,

Luke: I should, I should say also that he was the first person of his family ever to get into Oxford.

Of course. Yeah. But university too.

did your dad go to university?

Rick: My mother's sister went to university.

Luke: Right.

Rick: She was very clever and no, that was it. On on, certainly on my father's side. Yeah. I mean in our family. Yeah. He was, was the first one.

Luke: Was that not a big deal?

Rick: Yes, it was quite a big deal.

Luke: Were they, were your parents incredibly proud?

Rick: Yes, they were. I'm sure my dad would've, was really pleased. And so.

Luke: Did you, did you, he, how many years older than you was

Rick: he? He was three and a three and a half years old. Three, three and a bit years older.

Luke: Did that, did you feel like you had a lot of pressure to follow in his footsteps or did it make it easier?

I don't know, a

Rick: pressure, but I, I put the pressure on myself.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: You know, I thought, well, if he can do it, I can't do

Luke: So you're competitive?

Rick: Yes.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: Yes.

Luke: So, but it, so did it make it easier though? Well, because you thought he's already done something, so I just kind of just do the same thing. Well,

Rick: if he can, I can.

Luke: Right. Okay.

Rick: So, and the system then was that you took your A levels and then if a school approved, you would stay on for one term and do the joint entrance exam for Oxford and Cambridge. because they were they elite universities and they had their own entrance exam.

Luke: This is what you had to do though.

Rick: This is what I had to do.

Luke: Yeah. Okay.

Rick: So, so just before Christmas, before I did leave school, I took that exam. Okay.

Luke: This is before you even got your A level results?

Rick: No, after I'd got them

Luke: You got, you got

Rick: your A. You got my A results. Stay on for a bit. To do their entrance exam.

Luke: Right. I see.

Rick: If they like the look of you.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And they think you've written something interesting.

They invite you for an interview.

Luke: Right.

Rick: And I went to my interview.

Luke: so this is just to be clear, this is you, you also went for an interview at Oxford University?

Rick: Yeah, at St. Catherine's College. Oxford.

Luke: Same college. To go to the same college. Same college your brother went to, uh, and they took you in for an interview.

Your A level results were a bit better than your brother's, though.

Rick: They certainly were. Mean his were rotten.

Luke: What do you mean? Do you remember what they were?

Rick: He got, he got two A levels. Only two.

Luke: Normally people get three

Rick: or four

Luke: or four, right. He got two.

Rick: He just got two. And neither of them was an A or a B.

Luke: Wait, he got two, meaning the third one he did, did he take a third one and fail it? Yes.

Rick: Yes.

Luke: So he got like F? Yes. Uh, and the other two,

Rick: I think there were the equivalent. That was C and a D.

Luke: Okay. Well, surprising that Oxford took him on

Rick: it is rather, isn't it?

Luke: Because that by today's standards, that's a dismal failure.

Really.

Rick: It definitely a dismal failure. But anyway, the, the, the fact is they did

Luke: okay.

Rick: And my results are better than that.

Luke: Do you remember what you got?

Rick: I think I got, I think I got B, C, D, D, I think

Luke: so. You took four?

Rick: Yes.

Luke: Do you remember what they were?

Rick: I do English, French, geography and art.

Luke: English. French, geography and art.

So you got a like a B or something at French? A level?

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Wow. Okay.

Rick: Can you believe?

Luke: Yeah, I can.

Rick: I know. You forget everything. Anyway, I went off to this interview, which was very bizarre because the, the, I was interviewed in a room with two, the English professors, and they were both rather eccentric, to say the least.

Luke: Yeah. Were they,

Rick: you know, like, like

Luke: what did they look like?

Rick: One was slumped in his chair. It was in his room and he had snow white hair and, and chain smoked, Kensitas Untipped, I remember

Luke: cigarettes. Yeah.

Rick: And, had a habit of letting the ash drop on his front. So he had a lot of ash down his front.

Luke: Was he an old, really old guy

Rick: then?

Yeah, he was quite old.

Luke: Okay.

Rick: And the other one was a bit younger, was sort of stockily built, had wispy hair and, didn't sit down. He walked about all the time.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: Paced about, paced up and down.

Luke: Did you get the impression they were sort of, what's the word for it? Intimidating, frightening characters or were they friendly or,

Rick: well, I don't know.

It was a, was a bit intimidating because every now and then, the one who was walking about would spin on his heel and fire a question at you, "What do you mean by _melodrama_?" You know? And, and so on. Anyway, I'm managed to get through that experience. I found it quite amusing really. I remember coming out and thinking they're mad, but they were both very brilliant and, so then I had to wait until the following September.

To go to university.

Luke: So it took you a year just to apply, just to go through the application process, right? An academic year, right, because you finished your A levels in, let's say in the

Rick: summer,

Luke: may, June of the one year, then you had your summer holiday. Then in September you started preparing for the application process for Oxford, and then you had your interview later on that year, and then you had to wait until the following.

What?

Rick: Well, the, the year, academic year started in, in, I think beginning of October, end of September.

Luke: Oh, I see. So you didn't have to wait a full year.

Rick: No. But you best school at Christmas. But yeah. Well,

Luke: you go to school at Christmas because

Rick: after I'd done the, the, entrance exam.

Luke: Right, right. Okay. So, yeah.

Sorry to bang on about this, but I'm trying to work out the timeline. You, you finish school with your A Levels in the summer, you get your results during the summer holidays. Then in September of that year, you start preparing to take the Oxford entry exam and all the rest of it. You take that in, when December, December of that year, and then you have to wait until the following September, October to actually start at Oxford.

Rick: Yes.

Luke: So what did you do with the rest of that time?

Rick: Well, that's the point. Yeah. I mean, first of all, I, I decided to earn a bit money by serving petrol on the forecourt of the local garage.

Luke: Okay. What, what, what was that like? I

Rick: seem to remember the, the jet petrol was 4 and 11 a gallon.

Luke: Four pounds. 11 what? Uh,

Rick: four shillings and 11 pence.

That's just nearly five shilling, which is actually, a quarter of a pound.

Luke: Yeah. 25p because a shilling was about 5p.

Rick: That's right.

Luke: Yeah. So it's about

Rick: 25p a gallon. A gallon, not a litre. Anyway, I, I then cleaned the cars in the showroom. Then I started driving their Land Rover to, to collect parts.

Luke: You were for

Rick: the garage?

Luke: 17, 18, 19.

Rick: 18.

Luke: 18.

Rick: And then I sold a car.

Luke: So they sold cars at this garage as well?

Rick: Oh yeah. They're the showroom.

Luke: How did you sell it? You just accidentally

Rick: sold it? I was cleaning the showroom.

Luke: You were cleaning

Rick: the showroom? One lunchtime.

Luke: Yeah. Yeah.

Rick: And the salesman was on his lunch break.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: And this guy came in and looked around the car and I started asking me questions about it, you know, so, you know what? What's this like? I said, oh, nice little car. It was called a Hillman Imp.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: and it had an engine at the back. It was rather unusual

Luke: British car.

Rick: Yeah. Not a very good British car.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: And so I chatted him up and everything else and he said,

Luke: look, it's got four wheels.

Rick: Yes. That car. Remember what I said? But the end result was that he said, well, put me down for one. Then I said, fine. The name and address wrote it all down the forms. And I said, if you come back tomorrow, we can have one ready for you and da-de-da-de-daa. And the salesman came back from his lunch break and I said, oh, I've sold a car.

Luke: Yeah. Yeah.

Rick: And he was rather cross.

Luke: Really?

Rick: Yes.

Luke: because you, you took his commission.

Rick: No, I didn't take his commission. He took the commission.

Luke: Right. Okay. But why was he cross? because I

Rick: don't know really.

Luke: Well,

Rick: he would've thought, he'd say, well done, Richard, but he didn't, he said, you shouldn't be told that doing, that's my job, blah, blah, blah.

Luke: Right. Okay.

Rick: Anyway. After that I was delivery, driving new cars,

Luke: delivery, driving new

Rick: cars, getting, getting them from a wholesaler, bringing them to the garage or taking them to the customer.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And then getting public transport back - a bus.

Luke: So just driving new cars around.

Rick: One of them was a great big Jaguar.

A Jaar Mark 10,

Luke: Jaguar Mark 10. Right.

Rick: It was huge. And so I did that for a bit and my father was instrumental in saying, well, you should use this time better. And he knew somebody who worked for the Times newspaper and he asked him if he could take me on as a trainee of some kind. No, they didn't do that.

But he knew somebody else. He knew somebody else. And, and I finished up going into London to be interviewed by an advertising agency.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: They were called Clifford Bloxham and Partners, otherwise known as Bloxhams. And this was in 1966. And it was in the time when it was swinging London.

Luke: In Soho as well,

Rick: wasn't it?

And it was right in the middle of it, just off Carnaby Street, along up St. Martins Lane.

Luke: How exciting.

Rick: And it was, it was exciting. And they asked me to write some stuff based on advertising, which I did. And then, they took me on for just under six months before I had to leave and do something else.

And, that's

Luke: Oxford.

Rick: Well, I, I had a little adventure with my brother before that.

Luke: Yeah. In the summer holiday.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Anyway, I found the advertising agency thing very, very interesting. And again, I was lucky. I keep being lucky about these things in that I was attached to copywriters for six weeks at a time.

Three of them, copywriter being they, they have a system in advertising. I don't know whether it's the same now where you have account executives who look after the clients.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: And you have copywriters who work in effect to the account executives.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: The creatives. They have to offer up what they, the campaigns and, and you know, what they think, the product should be presented

Luke: on.

So writing the text for the advertisements. Yeah. Often and maybe, you know, including descriptions of what imagery images would look like in

posters and things, but often writing lines of text or even writing quick, phrases and things like that.

Rick: Yes.

Luke: To sell

Rick: the, the written stuff. You know, in newspapers, magazine specialist magazines in particular, and then, posters, you know, on the street, hoardings

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And that kind of thing. Yeah. And this company decided it wanted to get into. Producing TV commercials. And I was working with this copywriter, offering up suggestions for, commercials. They were very good. If you were very young, they thought this was a good thing. It was the time when, you know, being young was good.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: You can relate to young people

Luke: Right, I can imagine. "So, yes, Richard Thompson. Right. So you are, how old are you? 18, 19. Jolly good, right?"

Rick: Jolly good. Yeah.

Luke: I'm sure that you are perfect, perfect. Just write us an advertisement for, you know, blah, blah, blah. You understand young people."

Rick: Yes.

Luke: "You're a teenager"

Rick: right?

That, that kind of thing. That kind of thing. And anyway, the bloke I was working for fell ill when they'd arranged everything for a TV commercial. And so they said, well, you know what you're doing, you go and produce it. So I went off to this house in Richmond, in Surrey, where they filmed this commercial with a rather horrible little boy.

It was a Triang train for, for toddlers to

Luke: a toy train.

Rick: A toy train. That

Luke: was the product.

Rick: It was called The Big Big Train.

Luke: The Big Big Train

Rick: The Big Big Train because it was quite big. Right. And it, and it had a feature where you didn't have to build a loop of track, because it had, listen to this, a boomerang switch on each end.

And so the train would go along and when it used the end, it would come back again. So it could keep doing up and down and up and down. And you could go and have your tea. Anyway, so the commercial had French windows in a garden and a pond.

Luke: Right.

Rick: And the, and the track went up to the pond. Right. The

Luke: track went out of the house out out of the french windows, through the, what we call french windows.

Yeah. Which is basically doors with windows in them that open out into the garden. And the track went out of the house through the windows, through the garden, to the pond, to

Rick: the pond.

Luke: And then it, it stopped,

Rick: and then it had a boomerang switch, so it didn't go into the pond. It came back again.

Luke: Right.

Rick: And the commercial had the little boy setting it all off, following the train.

And then, oh, it's good to go in the pond, but no, it boomerangs back.

Luke: Great.

Rick: Isn't that brilliant?

Luke: It's a good advert.

Rick: Anyway, having produced that, they, they accepted my storyboards for two more. So, wait,

Luke: did you storyboard that commercial then?

Rick: Not that

Luke: one. You just produced it, but you understood how this, how it worked?

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: So, This was the, the toys account Triang were a big maker of, of toys and, they had the Triang account. and I did another one about a product called Trick Track. And then, and they did another one. Yeah. So,

Luke: but you liked advertising then, did you?

Rick: Well, yes and no. I had a very good time and they gave me lots of responsibility and it was amazing really.

But at the end of the day, I thought it was all a bit ridiculous, a bit trivial. At the end of university, the sort of careers advice people suggest where you might apply for work and everything else.

Luke: And you did a degree in English literature.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And they, they said, oh, well, you know, you've got this experience, you've got a portfolio.

I had, I had a big folder with all the stuff I'd written in the newspapers. Yeah. Great experience. And I had two cans of film, which were my commercials, you know? Yeah. Oh my God. Yeah. So they said, oh, well. And I was sent off to the big advertising companies, not, not JWC, but Benson and Bowles, SNH, Benson, and can't remember another one.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: To go through their interview process. And I indeed, I got offered a job, quite a decent job.

Luke: This is when you graduated. Yeah. So three years later.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: But I'd also applied to the BBC trainee scheme.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: And I finished up being a, a regional trainee in BBC news, working in Birmingham, for very little money indeed.

But I didn't want to really go into advertising.

Luke: What, so what, why was working for the BBC for not very much money, more attractive than advertising?

Rick: I think it's idealism. I wanted to do something which was worthwhile.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: And it may seem a bit ridiculous, but devoting your life to selling soap powder or toothpaste didn't seem to me to be particularly worthwhile.

And the BBC seemed more interesting.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And I also didn't like some of the people in advertising. I was probably rather arrogant, arrogant teenager. I bet I was. But they seemed to me to be useless, some of these people. And, they also seemed to be very, unwilling to go out on a limb and try something different.

Luke: Right.

Rick: I don't know whether your audience is interested in all this stuff. Yes. They're a long time ago. I mean, I'll give you an example. They had, they had quite a portfolio of, of different clients and one of them was Florida orange juice.

Luke: Okay.

Rick: Now, Florida orange juice, this was American, they had orange juice in the states.

It wasn't traditional in our country to have orange juice in the morning. So people had to be introduced to the idea of orange juice in the morning. And these things came in. Little concentrated orange cans.

Luke: Yep.

Rick: Florida orange juice.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And you know, you. Diluted it and had your morning orange,

Luke: you opened the can poured some into a glass and then added some water to

Rick: it.

Exactly.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: So they were doing the usual thing. They used to have, you know, put, put it out amongst the staff. We need, we need ideas, you know, and I was included in that. I would stick my ideas in.

Luke: This is when you worked in advertising after...

Rick: when I was working for Bloxhams? No, no, when I worked for. Oh, this is

Luke: back in,

Rick: yeah,

Luke: the, the,

Rick: when I was working for them before I went to university.

Luke: Right.

Rick: And um, I had this idea that you could do a big poster campaign and that the first, first of all, the posters would appear and they'd be all orange. And in the middle of it it would say, "Think Orange".

Luke: Ah, that's very modern, isn't it?

Rick: That's, and then you just leave them there. Mm-hmm. Intriguing. And then after a couple of weeks you put posters over them.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: Saying "Think Florida Orange".

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: With a picture of the product, "For a fresh start".

Luke: Oh, that's great. I mean that's, that's very, that reminds me of the sorts of campaigns they do these days where they drop in some sort of viral thing that makes you curious and then I

Rick: Yeah, I thought it was a good idea.

Luke: Yeah, it is a good idea. Yeah.

Rick: And uh, nope. No, no,

Luke: they didn't take it.

Rick: No. No, they don't do that. No. No.

Luke: Because the idea of spending that many weeks with just Think Orange on a poster, they because for them, you can't spend money just putting that without the name of the product on it.

Rick: I think it must have been that.

I can't quite remember Luke it's a long time ago. I'm sure it's

Luke: something like

Rick: that. But I was rather frustrated by the fact that advertising was full of people who didn't have any imagination.

Luke: Yeah. I could see that.

Rick: But anyway, I'm sure it's changed a great deal, because, you know, the sixties shook everything up and, art became much more radical.

Music became more radical. And, and I imagine the advertising agencies got more creative at that time as opposed to, you know, housewives holding up a washing powder and saying, "Surf gets your washing whiter".

Luke: Yeah. It's

Rick: changed a lot since those

Luke: days has, it's changed a lot and it's also become a lot more sophisticated in the way that it uses all sorts of psychological techniques to get what it wants, you know, to, make people buy things. but Okay. So you chose to do,

Rick: I went into BBC news,

Luke: BBC news, and did you have a specific idea of what you wanted to do? What was your, because these days when you get a job or when you are being appraised in your job every six months or something like that, you know, you talk about having a five year plan.

Did you have any sense of a five year plan? Did you know how you wanted your career to progress?

Rick: No, I don't think so. I just got thrown in there and, it was very much, even though you're called a trainee, there wasn't really any training. And, I was chucked out on the street in my first week at work with a camera crew and a tape recorder over my shoulder to do a report

Luke: and a microphone.

Rick: Yes, yes. I didn't really know how it worked, but fortunately the cameraman who became a friend

Luke: yeah.

Rick: Talked me through it. And, uh, told me how to write a script that would go with the pictures and, and all that.

Luke: So you went out to do a report and you interviewed a couple of people.

Rick: Mm-hmm.

Luke: Uh, and then you had to take the footage and the audio footage back to the BBC.

It was film and you had to create a report.

Rick: It was filmed, there was audio on the film. It was, uh, called Commag - combined magnetic tape. And it was a bit difficult to edit because the sound and the picture were out of sync.

Luke: Two different tapes,

Rick: but the tape recorder was because I was doing it for radio as well, So I had to learn how to edit radio tapes, quarter inch tape and everything else. So it was quite a tough learning curve.

Luke: And a lot of it, the challenge is to write a report that fits the video footage, if it's for TV, video footage as well. And it has to be a certain number of minutes. Similarly, for radio, you've got to do your report in a certain number of minutes.

Rick: yes. Or seconds.

Luke: Or, or seconds.

Rick: Yeah. I mean, may maybe a, a news report on radio might only be 45 seconds.

Luke: Right. So it's really a, in terms of, language, you have to be, you have really got to work on a lot of control. Yes, that's right. And choosing your words very carefully. And, and being clear and being able to communicate with the general public and stuff.

Rick: I've obviously, over the years I've learned this technique and later on after I'd left the BBC, I was training young journalists and coaching them in how to do it. But it, it is interesting language wise because radio

and television are very different for a start, you consume radio through your ears and the overwhelming attention on, on TV is through your eyes and the images are very powerful.

There's been experiments about that. How much of your brain, people getting wired up, how much of your brain's attention is on the visuals, and how much is on what you're hearing. Visuals dominate. And so your commentary is almost like a caption to a cartoon, right? So you, you can imagine the cartoon shows Louis Lane in trouble on the top of the skyscraper help, help.

And then you have Superman saying, I hear you Louis. And then the next one is, he's flying on, you know, on my way. And then, oh, thank you, Superman. Well, the, the captions. On a, on a film, our shot, shot, shot, shot, shot. What do we need the audience to know on this shot? You

Luke: don't necessarily say what they can see.

Rick: It doesn't, has to be a sentence, and it certainly doesn't have to describe too much.

Luke: Mm.

Rick: So you can say, you know, things like, Dawn and the tanks are on the move. You can do captions to the pictures. Yeah, yeah. As opposed to a narrative in, on, on radio where you have to describe it.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: But the other thing is that you can, you can break with chronology in radio.

In radio, like in newspapers. They very often start with the key thing.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: "It was in the last minute that so and so came up with the equalizer."

Luke: That's the most important part of the story,

Rick: and that's the way you start.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: But if you did that on TV, it would be all the wrong way around, you know, like, "Here he is scoring the equalizer.

Earlier this happened" you know?

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Well, TV tends to be a, a chronology and I used to tell them, people don't break the chronology,

Luke: keep it linear.

Rick: It's a linear story.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And I think that's fairer as well, because if you have a, a riot or demonstration and it all turns nasty at the end, you might think, oh, those are the best pictures.

We'll start with them, but it's not fair. The story is it was a peaceful march and then some people broke away and, and it got a bit nasty. That's the, that's what happened.

Luke: But a newspaper report, or a radio report, as you said, is, tends to start with exactly what happened, and then it breaks down the details.

Rick: It may start with what they think is the most grabby, exciting moment.

Luke: It's more like importance or relevance first, and then you get into slightly more unspecific details.

Rick: I'm afraid that happens too often because I think it, it, it means you're not in context. You, you want to, understand what you're seeing in context.

Luke: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. It's interesting. It's, it's very interesting in terms, you know, we're getting into talking about, communication and visual communication and, how the medium affects the way that we communicate and stuff like that. So these are all things that you learned and that you got really into.

because I mean, you can see that there's, that's re that that happens in advertising, but somehow the reason you are doing it is not quite as, satisfying as working in news, which has this sense of a civic, a sense of civic duty to it, that you are providing a genuinely useful service and there's something.

Rick: I mean, the process was, was fun. I enjoyed it.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: But I didn't think I wanted to spend my life doing it.

Luke: Advertising

Rick: quite, I must tell you another anecdote about advertising.
Mm-hmm. You'll like this one. This is when I was working for Bloxhams, just after I left school and before I went to university and how they seemed to think it was really good to have a schoolboy amongst their ranks

because I understood young people.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: Well, the, the, I told the guy who fell ill and I took over. Producing his TV commercial, the same, same guy had lined up another TV commercial, which was extremely boring. Yeah. and it was for a fridge and it was called, Cold Space. And the big attraction of this cold space refrigerator by GEC was that it had more cold space.

Now talk me through that one. Does it mean it's bigger?

Luke: Just more, more fridge, more fridge.

Rick: And yet that's what they did. The commercial showed the fridge and it had graphics showing dairy products on the top shelf and you know, other stuff here and milk in the door and everything else. And the commentary was saying things like "GEC, Cold Space Refrigerator, more cold space, more space for your dairy products", you know?

Luke: Yeah, I'm, I get the idea that more cold space, it tells you that there's more space and it also reminds you that this is a refrigerator.

Rick: It was really, really dull. Anyway, they wanted me to go along to a sound studio in, Dean Street.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And supervise the recording of the music that would go with this.

Luke: Oh, wow. Okay. Okay. Yeah.

Rick: And, 28 seconds. And

Luke: this is, this is, uh, like a little orchestra or something like that,

Rick: collection of freelance guys who were very talented

Luke: playing

Rick: and they, they, they booked a leading musician of the day who did lots of backing tracks for pop singers and other, the stuff called Johnny Arthey and Johnny Arthey's Band were their small numbers.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: So I turn up and they're drinking champagne, and I, I say, oh, this is the way it is, is it? And they say, no, a special occasion, we've just heard that we're number one. And I said, what's that? And it was Dusty Springfield. They

Luke: back

Rick: Dusty Springfield. I wonder which, which tell you love me,

Luke: Don. You don't have to say you love me.

They did the backing music for that?

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Wow. And they were drinking champagne. because they just learned because they just, it

Rick: was going to be

Luke: number, it was number one. Okay. So

Rick: then

Luke: you had to deal with a half drunk? Uh,

Rick: no. They were all, they were fine. And then he sits down at the piano and says, well, I just, I thought it would go like this.

And he said, "Buy GEC and you can't go wrong", right "Buy GEC and you can't go wrong."

Luke: That's not bad.

Rick: And then it went into a fugue. So it was "dang dang dang dang" because there weren't any lyrics. It's

like a fugue Uhhuh. And I finished and I thought, well, that's pretty clever. So I had this conversation with the great Johnny Arthey and I

said, really good. But it sounds like Bach. I mean, it sounds too much like Bach.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: It could have been a bit of Bach.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Why didn't you try a saxophone in there? He said, right.

One of his blokes put, put down his, whatever it was, flute.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: And picked up his saxophone and they did it again, and it went down the saxophone. It's a completely different vibe.

Luke: Yeah. Yeah. That's interesting. Yeah.

Rick: Yeah. So I had a great time

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Doing this stuff, but I didn't want to do it for life.

Luke: Yeah. Then you went to university, went to Oxford for three years at St. Catherine's College between the years of 1966 and 1969. But even ... or eight and even before

Rick: 69

Luke: 69. And even before that though, you went on a trip hitchhiking with your brother through Europe. And you, you have told a story on this podcast once before about how you ended up in Italy and you hitchhiked.

and you got picked up by a dodgy driver. A

dodgy driver in Italy. Yeah, we, we tried to steal my brother's guitar, but we got across to, to Greece and then we got down to Crete and it was hot. And we managed just to get back in time for me to go to university. It was a close run thing.

Mm-hmm. How did you feel going to Oxford then?

Did you feel intimidated by the fact that there, you were, like going to this place where there were, admittedly, St. Catherine's college was a lot more modern?

Rick: It

Luke: was, but Oxford probably also had a lot of very old fashioned and, let's say upper class people associated with

Rick: it. It, it did. I mean, I, I didn't feel intimidated at all.

I mean, I'd visited my brother there yeah. On several occasions. So I was familiar with the buildings and the layout and everything else. I must admit, I thought that I would be surrounded by people who are much more brilliant than me and, and studying English. The fact is that all my contemporaries had read much more than me.

And, that, that really was a little bit worrying that they could talk about Saul Bellow and talk about this and talk about that. And I hadn't read any of it, you know?

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: So there were more academic and, and just pretty clever, but there were a lot of things which were changing. And, I, I'm glad they did.

There were still quite a lot of kids who came, went to private schools in St. Catherine's and certainly across Oxford. Lots of them.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And they were in, in the main different from the state educated kids, particularly those from north of England.

Luke: You were a state educated...

Rick: yes, absolutely.

Luke: ...kid. You didn't go to a private school?

Luke: I did

Rick: not.

Luke: You just went to a, a state school. Yeah.

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: So what was the difference?

Rick: I may be exaggerating, but a lot of the private school kids were privileged and uninteresting.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: So the, the, it was the state kids that, got into the theatre group and produced plays and, were the prime movers in the student union and, and things like that.

They had more oomph about them. And obviously they wanted to take the opportunity, grasp the opportunity. The whole institution was very old, very traditional.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: The colleges were segregated. There were no mixed colleges. There were five women's colleges and all the rest were men's colleges.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And there were lots of, you know, social change going on.

People who were interested in politics and world affairs would be demonstrating about the Vietnam War. There would be people demonstrating about apartheid in South Africa. and these were very much the state educated kids who were into all that stuff. And there were a lot of things that that changed around that time.

Not least voting age. Mm.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: And that, that was a big change. And it, and the age of majority, as it was called, changed from 21 to 18 in, I think in 1969. You can look it up, but, it was around that time and of course it changed the status of the students, the relationship between the college and the students before that had been, that they had been looking after children on behalf of their parents.

Yeah. They called it in *in loco parentis*, but suddenly, when the age of majority changed, young adults were coming to the college and we didn't like things. We, we thought the course was wrong and we didn't like being locked out at midnight. because you, there was a lockout at midnight. It had to be in college by midnight.

Luke: Did they think you were all a bunch of upstarts or something, or were they quite open to letting you have a certain level of...?

Rick: They weren't open to it? No. I think there was quite a lot of resistance. But in, in St. Catherine's, the master was, was pretty good, but it took a lot of effort to get them to change.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: There was graffiti in those days. It was a bit of a, I'm not a great, fan of graffiti, but this was political graffiti. Quite interesting. Really?

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: You know, and the, the ancient College of Balliol College, one of the original colleges was where graffiti would pop up. It was witty. One of them was about the fact that the deans or disciplinarians of the

university could fine you or send you down, which means throw you out.

So one of the bits of graffiti on Balliol was Deans spelled D-E-A-N-Z.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: _DEANZ MEANZ FINEZ_ which was a parody on a famous advertisement for Heinz baked beans. _BEANZ MEANZ HEINZ. _Yeah. So Deans,_ DEANZ MEANZ FINEZ _and a lot of people refused to pay their fines. And, and there was a movement about mass staying out late and all sorts of stuff was going on.

Luke: It wasn't to the same extent as it was in Paris.

Rick: No, it certainly wasn't. 68 in Paris was violent. 68 in Oxford was, passive resistance.

Luke: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Can I fast forward?

Rick: Yeah.

Luke: Um,

Rick: this is going on a long time.

Luke: I know. Yeah. We're going to close before too long. Okay. I just wanna fast forward to, a period that I talked to mum about, which is, so you, you, you've left Oxford, you joined the BBC, you met mum at the BBC, you got married and then you had kids.

what was it like having kids? Was it, were there any, was it as you expected it to be, you had James and a couple years later you had me. Was it, was it what you'd expected or was it kind of,

Rick: I think so.

Luke: what did you expect? I,

Rick: well, I don't know. Yeah. That, that was it. I was pleased to have two boys because that's where I'd come from.

My older brother and me, we were comfortable with two boys.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And you were super, it's your mum that brought you up.

Luke: Mm-hmm. because

Rick: I was working very hard.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: I was into, you know, a phase where I had some quite responsible jobs and they were unsocial hours.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: You know, the news is on in the evening and I wouldn't get in until midnight.

Right. And all that kind of stuff.

Luke: Yes, yes.

Rick: So she had the, the bulk of look... bringing you up.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: And, you were delightful boys. Super boys.

Luke: Alright. Didn't we ever get into trouble? I don't remember that many times.

Rick: Not seriously. I think James got into more trouble than you. one way or another. I don't know.

Do

Luke: you remember anything?

Rick: Seem to remember him. having his phone stolen or something and

Luke: he, he got into a fight, when

Rick: Yeah. He got into a fight. At school.

Luke: At school. But you, I think you weren't that disappointed.

Rick: No.

Luke: Because he was standing up for himself.

Rick: Absolutely. I was actually rather pleased. I shouldn't say so, but, I mean, I, I remember talking to you both about it.

Luke: So what has

Rick: happened say that you will get bullied at school?

Luke: Yeah. because we, we moved. Just

Rick: stand by. You will do.

Luke: We moved because when I was nine and James was about 11 or 12, we moved from West London to the West Midlands and we both started in, at a new school. And I started at the primary school, and then I started the secondary school from year one.

But James joined the secondary school in year two, which is difficult because, you know, he suddenly the new kid in this big school with kids who are teenagers and stuff around you. And yeah, he ended up getting into a scrap in the playground and he, he was being picked on and he, he, he hit the guy back.

He punched him. Yeah. I think, or hit him or something.

Rick: And he went "oooooooooer"

Luke: the, the other kid and

Rick: ran to the teacher.

Luke: The other kid did. Yeah. This is the one who'd been bullying James. "James hit me" and then James ended up in the headmaster's office. James remembers that he thinks that he was going to be caned.

Because he would've been one of the very last kids in the country to have been threatened or given the cane, which is listeners, it's a form of

punishment that involves being hit on the hand with a wooden stick, with

Rick: a whip whippy stick,

Luke: like a thin whippy stick that smack on the hand or something like that.

And it was, it, the cane, I think, was banned at the mid to late eighties in England. And so this, we're talking about 1986-1987 when this happened. And James remembers being told he was going to the headmaster's office and he would be given the cane. And the headmaster essentially showed him the cane.

And I think even just touched his hand or didn't, he just gave, he caned him because he had to, but he, he didn't actually hit him. He just went tap like that. And I think James was probably crying because he had his hand out. Probably was. And the teacher was like, tap, there you go. Now don't do it again.

So he got away with it. but yeah, I mean, fair enough. He was standing up for himself.

Rick: James told me that the headmaster knew whose fault it was and it wasn't James.

Luke: Right. Okay.

Rick: Because he, he knew a little bit about their characters and he'd probably been briefed by one of the teachers.

Luke: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rick: Anyway, yeah. I mean, it, it's partly my fault because I remember saying to you both, but certainly to James, that you will get teased. You've got a London accent, you'll get teased.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Just ignore them, laugh it off. Use your wit. And if you really get seriously bullied, don't be bullied. Fight back.

Luke: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Rick: And of course.

I didn't be expecting to sock somebody doing the jaw, but, but I'm quite pleased he did. And he didn't get bullied again.

Luke: No, he didn't. No. Fair enough. Yeah. I managed to have pretty much avoid, I got picked on, but I never really got bullied. I, I didn't fight back, but I also didn't really respond. No, just

Rick: it's pathetic.

And if you don't, if don't respond, they get tired of picking on you. Yeah,

Luke: that's true.

Rick: But I was very small when I was at school. When I went to grammar school, physically, I was really quite short, quite small.

Luke: What do they call you? Tch

Rick: Titch Thompson.

Luke: Titch. Titch

Rick: Thompson.

Luke: Because titchy is a sort of slang word that means small in English.

Yeah. Titch Thompson, they called you.

Rick: Yeah. And when I was in the second year, I was still one of the smallest boys in the school.

Luke: Yes.

Rick: And I got picked on, but I soon discovered that if I flew at them like a wild cat, they didn't, they didn't pick on me again.

Luke: Mm mm mm.

Rick: I mean, that's boys, boys in the playground and all that.

And, and I do think that if you're a victim, you have to be non victim. You basically say, I'm not going to be a victim.

Luke: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rick: Well, there you go.

Luke: Let's finish with this. So, what about now? How do you, I mean we, there's a lot of stuff we skipped over. Yes. We can't possibly cover everything, but how do you feel right now at this time of your life?

We've obviously, we spent most of the time talking about your late teens and your university time and stuff, and then whoosh, whoosh. All the way back to now here is...

Rick: and it's a bit of a whoosh because as you get, get older, obviously thoughts of mortality grow.

Luke: Mm-hmm.

Rick: You think, how many more years have I got?

Might not be very many. And so you are kind of particularly grateful to see your children doing well and your grandchildren - special relationship with grandchildren.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: And you know, we've got three beauties and the, the other thing is that I just don't like getting old. I mean, it's, I really don't, it's

Luke: a stupid question, but why not?

Rick: Well, I don't know, it kind of creeps up on you. You say, I can't, I can't be this old and mm-hmm. And you can't do things like you used to be able to do them, and you get tired and, and you, you know, you groan when you get up from a chair and all that, like people do.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: Um, and, you know, I just don't like that I'd, I'd, I'd rather be bouncing and still fit, but I'm afraid those days are gone.

Luke: Mm-hmm. Mm. I don't know how to end this.

Rick: Well, I, I'll end with a bit a Hamlet for you. I mean, Hamlet's contemplating death.

Luke: Shakespeare's Hamlet. Yeah,

Rick: indeed. The context is that he's determined to kill his uncle, who is now the king.

Luke: We can all relate to this.

Rick: Yeah. But he knows that if he does, he'll be killed himself.

Luke: Yes.

Rick: So that's his problem, you know, to be, to be alive or not. To be, to be dead.

Luke: Yeah. Yeah.

Rick: And, he says about his death, if it be now, it's not to come. And if it is to come, it won't be now, but it will come.

Luke: If it's now, then it's to come.

Rick: If it's now.

Luke: Yes.

Rick: I die now.

Luke: Yeah.

Rick: That's the end of it,

Luke: right?

Rick: It isn't.

I'm not waiting for death. That stopped. If it is now, it is not to come. If it is to come. Oh, I see. In the future. If it's going to be happening in the future, it isn't now, but it will come.

Luke: So if it's now, then I don't need to worry about it coming. Is that That's right. Is that what that means?

That's

Rick: right.

Luke: So it's like if it's now - so be it.

Rick: End of the end of the trepidation and anxiety,

Luke: at least I don't have to worry about it coming.

That's

Rick: right.

Luke: Uh, whereas if it's not now, then it's still going to come and that's inevitable.

Rick: Hmm.

Luke: So whatever in, in any case, it's going to happen. Yeah, of course.

Rick: It's all, it is just a way of saying it's going to happen.

Luke: You have to just accept it. Yeah, of course. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I don't think much more needs to be said then on after that.

How, who can improve on Shakespeare?

Rick: Indeed.

Luke: Yeah. Alright, well, dad, thanks for talking to me about all this stuff. I hope you haven't minded me, kind of, sitting you down and, uh, you know, making you talk about everything.

Rick: No, I haven't minded. I, I repeat what I said at the beginning. I just worry about your audience.

So whether they, they have any interest in this rambling on about the old

Luke: days. Are you joking? I'm telling you that, that the people who love it, of course will be, really happy to listen to this. Some people won't have survived, but that's, no,

Rick: it's a long, it's a long episode. That's okay. But I hope it's helped in, listening to some English being spoken.

Luke: Well, the idea is that if people are really riveted, if they find what they're listening to, just genuinely gripping and interesting then. Their acquisition of English is much more likely and much more effective and easier. Right? Yeah. That's the theory anyway. But also, you know, people can pick apart what they're hearing and take, take out bits of language and stuff like that.

But in any case, those people who've listened, I'm sure until this point, have really enjoyed listening to you. So thank you very much.

Rick: Okay.

Ending

So there you go. That was my dad talking about his life. Thank you very much for dad for being up for doing this as always He's made plenty of contributions to this podcast over the years and I'm very grateful.

So if you are too, I mean if you're grateful to to my dad for doing this episode then show your gratitude by leaving a comment in the comment section to say thanks and to show your appreciation.

Also listeners, you can wish my dad a happy birthday because it's his birthday this week just a few days after this episode is being published.

It is his birthday. So wish my dad a happy birthday in the comments.

So just some thoughts at the end here. Just like with my mum, I feel like this conversation could have gone on so much longer and I'm obviously still curious about so many things, and I think I probably always will be.

Listening back to this conversation while I was editing it I did think of plenty of other questions, which I actually didn't get to ask my dad mainly because, well, like mainly a conversation goes in different directions and you just follow it wherever it leads and you can't always branch off into all sorts of different directions all at the same time and sort of explore different angles all at the same time, you know.

You just follow a conversation where it leads and you don't have time to focus in on every single detail in just one one episode, one conversation for an hour or something.

But other things I could have asked my dad and perhaps I will ask him next time I get the chance are, first of all, you heard that he talked about his dad. That's my grandpa Eric. He died quite young when he was in his fifties and I never knew him. But I wonder how my dad felt when he lost his dad as a teenager. I think it was when he was at university. I've asked him about it before but I'm always curious about what kind of effect it had on him. I have to say that it didn't seem to hold him back very much because my dad and his brother were both very successful as you could hear from this episode. They were both very successful both had great careers and I think had generally happy and good lives - have had - continue to have happy and good lives both at home and at work, but it must have been quite a blow to lose your dad just as you're becoming an adult.

Unanswered questions, which I mean I have to be fair, I've talked to him about it before but it's always the sort of thing that comes to my mind.

Also, my dad was in London during the days of the swinging 60s and not just in London but working at that advertising company in Soho, which is a district in central London and Soho is known as being the kind of heart of that kind of scene in fashion music and culture in The 60s in London and 1966 was the kind of pinnacle 66/67 was the sort of pinnacle of that scene which is called swinging London with all its boutique fashion shops and bars and clubs where all the coolest hippest people could be seen, and I wonder if he saw any particular examples of that in terms of things like fashion trends or certain people or anything else.

What was it like in central London in Soho in 1966? Also coming of age in the mid to late 1960s must have been fascinating. We think of this as a time of sort of partying and free love and all that kind of rock and roll legend but was that just a small elite group of people who actually actually did those things, you know, like the rock stars a certain cultural elite? How did the 60s cultural movement impact my dad's life specifically or the life of my mum who was living in another part of the country? Did the whole 60s thing impact most ordinary people or was it just something that the cultural elite were doing in certain areas or circles?

You know, like we read these books about the Beatles or indeed any other rock band whatever and there's always so much stuff about the significance of the cultural changes that happened in the 60s and the lifestyles, the way their lifestyles changed and stuff like that. It was quite a radical change for a lot of those people, but what about for just other, let's say more normal people?

Also, my dad worked as a journalist in his career and so what are some of the moments he was part of when he worked as a journalist? What things did he see and experience? Bear in mind he was foreign news editor at the BBC for years during the 70s and 80s, I think during the 70s definitely in the early 80s and then he worked on the evening BBC news programmes in the 80s and 90s the 6 o'clock news and the 9 o'clock news, the sort of national news programmes. He worked on those as well, and so, you know, he must have been part of some pretty interesting historic moments and also travelled to some interesting places.

He must have been in the newsroom when certain big breaking news stories happened and they had to decide how they were going to cover them, which stories they would cover. You know, it must have been absolutely fascinating, and I'm curious about what that was like and

also some of the interesting places that he must have travelled to when he worked as foreign news editor. I mean again, I have actually asked him those things and only recently he told me about his time, the time he spent in East Germany and East Berlin during the the Soviet days when the Berlin Wall was still standing. He actually took a trip to Berlin and was allowed to visit East Berlin during that time. Also, he took a trip to Moscow as well and so I'm endlessly curious about those things. Why am I, why am I mentioning these questions that I didn't actually ask my dad During the episode? I don't know.

Maybe this is, maybe this is stuff for a sequel. Similarly, I could do, I could do a similar thing with my mum, you know, there's always room for a part two for these sorts of things.

Anyway, I've got lots of other questions, but there's only so much time And I expect there will always be unanswered questions and moments when I will suddenly be curious about what feels like large swathes of my parents' personal experience that I don't have information about and ultimately maybe It's it's none of my business, you know.

Anyway in the end I'm just happy to have the opportunity to chat with my parents whether it's all about family memories and stories or just even chatting about more trivial things like what's happening in the football at the moment.

Leave your comments in the comment section. If you enjoyed this conversation put my dad's doubts to rest because he had doubts as he always does. "Are you sure that your listeners are going to find this interesting? Surely they're all going to be bored to death by this." Put my dad's doubts to rest by letting us know in the comment section that you enjoyed the episode that you listened to it all the way through without becoming a skeleton with headphones on and wish him a

happy birthday. Tell my dad that actually his ramblings were interesting to listen to and thanks for doing it.

Now if you want more of this kind of thing if you want more chats - chatting with dad, you could listen to a few other episodes.

So here is a selection of other episodes that you could check out in the episode archive So there's episode number, episode number, what what episode number is this episode? Episode number 252 was called marooned with my music in which my dad chose various favourite pieces of music and then talked more about his life story including the story of how he met my mum and other things like that. So there's a sort of musical storytelling I mean life story with musical choices as well.

Also, I did episodes a few years ago called quintessentially British things and I did one with James one with mum and one with dad the one with dad he talked about I think it was three of his favourite aspects of British life and culture and we recorded it on New Year's Eve 2019 at more or less midnight.

My mum had gone to bed. We were still up. We recorded the podcast there and then it was on the stroke of midnight. Actually that moment is recorded in the episode so you can join us as we move from 2019 to 2020 and we yes the year of the covid pandemic. We had no idea what was in store for us. But anyway, you can listen to that moment that my dad and I shared together at the stroke of midnight New Year's Eve. That's episode 638 called three quintessentially British things that you might not know about with dad. As I said, there's also Similar episodes with my mum and my brother as well, which you could find.

I think they are the previous two episodes. Also episode 372 was called the importance of anecdotes in English that was recorded at the dinner table with my mum my dad and my brother and we told some stories

some anecdotes. Some funny strange or frightening stories from our lives including the story which was briefly mentioned by my dad in today's conversation that you just heard. That's the story about when my dad was hitchhiking through Europe with his brother and they were tricked by an Italian, I think it was an Italian, was it Italian? It doesn't matter. They were tricked by a taxi driver who tried to steal my uncle Peter's guitar and they got into a kind of a dramatic situation. It was a misadventure and one of those exciting things that happens when you are a teenager, and one of those things that you always remember.

If you want to hear the full story listen to episode 372 along with the story of how my mum met, was it the president of Burundi or something like that? What was it? What happened?

Oh God what were the, what were the funny anecdotes? Meeting the king of Tonga. My mum met the king of Tonga. Now if you listen to episode 372 you will have to listen to or you'll get the enjoyment of listening to me first of all talking about how we tell anecdotes in English and giving you an English lesson about how we tell stories and the narrative tenses the verb tenses we use to do them, and then in the second half of the episode you actually hear some real anecdotes from my parents.

Mum's anecdote was meeting the king of Tonga. Tonga is a Polynesian kingdom of more than 170 islands and my mum met the king of Tonga and he was very keen to talk to my mum for some reason.

There's James's famous anecdote, infamous anecdote about a misadventure he had when he travelled to Hastings and he ended up missing his last train home and he had to find somewhere to stay and he ended up staying, crashing out on someone's sofa and things got a bit weird. So that's my brother's Hastings story. Hastings is a town in England and then my dad's anecdote was about hitchhiking in Italy as I

mentioned, and then there's my anecdote, which was a pretty frightening experience I had when I lived in Liverpool.

So if you want to hear those stories, you can listen to episode 372.

We're nearly finished here listeners. I just wanted to mention something about the Rick Thompson report. You might wonder about episodes of the Rick Thompson report, which if you don't know is a series I do I have done with my dad where we talk about news and politics particularly UK politics. It's a very popular series. Most of the episodes focused on Brexit and we did most episodes of the Rick Thompson report during the whole Brexit saga. So you might think "Luke when's the next Rick Thompson report?" well I mean, basically my dad is retired now, you know and believe it or not, I mean, he's semi retired. He still does various other bits of work and he writes a lot these days. He writes books. He's been on the podcast to talk about the three books that he's written.

He's working on a fourth one at the moment but he's otherwise in terms of his journalistic career, he's more or less retired these days and believe it or not, I think it is quite demanding to do episodes like the Rick Thompson report and bear in mind that I have a relatively large audience and it's kind of a big ask to regularly get my dad to come on and explain and talk about all the most complex current stories in the news today.

It's quite a big thing to ask him to do. Also the news these days particularly internationally is so incredibly charged and sensitive that it's not all that much of an attractive prospect to wade into it all and to talk about it all and yeah. So, I mean as I said, my dad is more or less retired now, so I don't want to impose on him too much basically but never say never maybe we'll do something. It's not like I've it's not like he's he's absolutely put his foot down and said No, that's it. No more.

I've just kind of stopped asking him because I started to realise that it's probably probably quite a lot to ask, you know, he's it's he's doing me a favour every time I ask him. But you know, maybe we'll do something at some point. But I just wanted to kind of let you know what's going on with that.

The last time we talked about politics my dad and me or mainly the last time my dad talked about politics because in those episodes I don't really need to do much talking, the last time was about I think it was after the latest UK general election in which the Labour Party and their leader Kier Starmer came back to power. Things are pretty complicated for Starmer at the moment. Maybe if there is a big change in the UK at some point like for example a new leadership contest we can talk about that but otherwise I think that the Rick Thompson report is probably off the air for the time being. I hope you understand.

But anyway, I'm happy that I did this recording today with my dad and also last week's one with my mum. Happy Birthday to dad. Thanks also to mum and thank you again for for listening to this episode and for commenting.

I'm away on holiday next week. My family and I are taking a break and doing the thing that French people do at this time of year, which is essentially - go east and head to the mountains for some fresh air and some snow and maybe some skiing. We're not actually going to ski this time, my wife and me, but my daughter is she'll be doing some skiing but my wife and me are going to just hang out with our little two-year-old son.

Hold on. No, sorry. I mean my wife and I are going to hang out with our two-year-old son. Right. I just needed to make that correction. I couldn't let that one go. That was a little slip. You don't say "my wife and me are

going to hang out". It's "my wife and I" are going to hang out because you wouldn't say "me is going to hang out" unless you're Tarzan.

But anyway, my wife and I are going to hang out with our little two-year-old son and it's his first time in the snowy mountains. It's it will be his first time enjoying proper snow up in the mountains and it should be fun.

I think we're going to do some sledging. I think he's going to absolutely love that. Sledging - that's like a thing you sit in and it slides down the side of the the mountain or the hill on the snow and he's going to love that so that should be fun.

There will be an episode next week as well which I've already recorded. It's a short story episode. I hope you enjoy it. But otherwise until next time I'll just say goodbye. Thank you for listening. Thank you for watching if you've been watching the video version.

Don't forget to like and subscribe and tell your friends about Luke's English Podcast.

Have a lovely morning afternoon evening or night wherever you are in LEPland, Okay? And be excellent to each other and I'll speak to you next time but for now, it's just time to say good Bye. Bye. Bye.