

**FRONTLINE SCOTLAND**

"Quarriers"

**THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH 'PEARL MAILEY/ALLISON'**

**SAM POLING:** Okay it's an interview with Pearl Mailey, and it's M A I...

**PEARL ALLISON:** Eh...can I stop you there?

**SAM POLING:** Yes.

**PEARL ALLISON:** Sorry. Can you use my Em...

**SAM POLING:** Whatever name you like.

**PEARL ALLISON:** ...maiden name please.

**SAM POLING:** Yes of course you can, what would you like it to be Pearl?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Allison, that's what I was.

**SAM POLING:** Allison. A L L...

**PEARL ALLISON:** ...I S O N.

**SAM POLING:** ...I S O N. Pearl Allison, no worries. So we'll refer to you at all times, any time as Pearl Allison.

**PEARL ALLISON:** Yeah.

**SAM POLING:** Yeah. How old are you Pearl? Lie if you like.

**PEARL ALLISON:** 46. (laughter)

**SAM POLING:** 46 Oh...excellent. Just really start by telling me a, about how old you were when you went to 'Quarriers' and, and what, what 'Quarriers' actually meant to you at the time?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well I was 7 when I went into 'Quarriers', it was actually my big brother's birthday Em...and there it was just relief from nightmares, and home life really. We had three meals a day, you had a nice warm bed, clean clothes, it was lovely.

**SAM POLING:** So 'Quarriers' to you meant a very safe place?

**PEARL ALLISON:** It was safe. It wasn't wonderful, I mean there was bits and pieces that nobody wants to experience, but that's what happens, that's life. Life's not wonderful every day is it?

**SAM POLING:** Looking at 'Quarriers' and looking back at 'Quarriers' (clearing throat) what are your fondest memories?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Just being with all these other Eh...kids, you know, ages with you, younger, older, and you just were a big extended family. It was, it was smashing because everybody was in the same boat. We all came from the same sort of backgrounds really. Some were better than others, some were worse than others, but we had that camaraderie there that we were all together, and we were all one, which was great.

**SAM POLING:** When you look at the, the different houses we had your house, and you were looked after by the Luppets?

**PEARL ALLISON:** The Luckets.

**SAM POLING:** Luckets, and we had a number of, we had Drennans, we had Dunbars, and we had Porteous's. Give me a picture, if you can, of which houses were the favourite ones, which houses were the ones people wanted to be in, and which ones, don't say which ones weren't so nice ones cause they may start suing

us but, you know, just which ones were the best ones that kids wanted to be in and why?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well there was the Dunbars, there was the Porteous's, you know, there was quite a few that you all wanted to be in. You know some of the Em...single Housemothers, they held their own as well, but there was others that were more regimented, they were more Em...boot and polish I would say, you know, Eh...run with an iron rod, you know, there was no leeway, you know, that's, that's the sort of thing.

**SAM POLING:** So you recall the Porteous houses being a very happy one. Can you tell me at length (clearing throat) what you remember about the children in Port, the Porteous household, not using names, but just how happy they were?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well they all got on that well. They were able to do more than a lot of the other children in other units were. I call them units, they were cottages actually. Em...they got a, I mean they got away with murder as we would say because they were able to go out playing longer than a lot of the other kids were. They went to even more activities, you know, they got more involved, you know, they were allowed that way cause they were pushed, you know. The rest would sort of 'Yeah okay if you want, you know, that type thing.

**SAM POLING:** Did you (doorbell ringing)

**(BREAK)**

**SAM POLING:** Okay, okay. Now that was, we were just talking about the houses, how much the Porteous house was a great house, and that some people wanted to be in it, so we'll do that answer again, just because I'm not sure when the bell rung. I think it was at the end, but we'll do it again anyway, okay? (Clearing throat) Pearl tell me about the houses, and which ones were the favourite ones, and why the children maybe even yourself wanted to be part of those houses?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well Em...they've different scales on the group, and you have these nice easy, easier, and easier life's, and then you get the harder ones where you have to boot polish, and everything's got to be just so. I can't, I don't know...

**SAM POLING:** That's okay, we'll start that one again. Basically the answer you gave me, no, no you were doing well (laughter), its cause of the doorbell. (Clearing throat) Basically the answer you were saying was that, you know, that the kids just seemed really happy just basically they used to go out and do things together, and they were allowed to do what they wanted. They got away with murder, and that was, I just loved all that (Pearl laughing) so just, just give me that again, give me a natural answer about what you remember about how happy the kids were in the Porteous's house.

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well they were fine, and the Porteous house was a good household because they were able to join in lots of activities. They got the best of all the activities, anything that was going on the Porteous families in their cottage, they got it all, you know, we were a bit jealous sometimes.

**SAM POLING:** Did you wish that you were in the Porteous house at times?

**PEARL ALLISON:** No, no I can't say that because I had that, my home was cottage 3, and that's the way I wanted to be. It didn't matter who came in to look after me, I was there before any, they were, you know, and other Houseparents.

**SAM POLING:** So that felt like your home?

**PEARL ALLISON:** That was my home yeah. Mm...Hih...

**SAM POLING:** One of the people you became friendly with in the Porteous house was James.

**PEARL ALLISON:** Yeah.

**SAM POLING:** And you and James did form quite a friendship. Can you tell me what you remember about James, how you met him, how long you knew him, quite a lengthy answer, everything to do with you and James.

**PEARL ALLISON:** When there's new children come in to 'Quarriers' we're all there, its like flies round a honey pot, and this particular James was a good looking boy, he was a handsome boy, very nice, very polite, a lovely, a lovely chap. Em...and, of course, we all wanted to get to know him and, of course, there was only about a year between James and myself, and we went to school, we travelled to school together Eh...we joined lots of activities together, you know, as I said before we were one big happy close-knit family even though there was like 500 children, it didn't matter. At least we all knew, everybody knew what was going on, and why it was going on.

**SAM POLING:** As you got to know James what was his character like?

**PEARL ALLISON:** He was, he was good. He was a good laugh, you know. We used to make fun of him because of the type of things that he used to do, you know, and say and, you know, the carries on he used to come away with, you know. He was good, he was good fun, he was, he was lovely.

**SAM POLING:** How would you describe your relationship with, with James?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well I was a, I was the year older than him, so he sort of looked up to the, he always looked up to the older, and he did that with me, and he was, he was always chatty with me. We all had lots to talk about, and things, so it, it was a good relationship.

**SAM POLING:** Did James ever tell you that he was being abused in any way that he was unhappy at the Porteous house.

**PEARL ALLISON:** No never, never, never, not at all.

**SAM POLING:** Do you think he would have told you?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Oh...yes. Oh...yes. Eh...you can't keep secrets like that, you can't, its impossible. There's always telltale signs, and there was no signs, none whatsoever.

**SAM POLING:** What kind of signs would you have expected?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well you, you either can go two a, two ways. One is you lash out, or you get very aggressive, or you go into yourself, and you'd become very quiet and, you know, your, your mood swings change so drastically. I mean I know this from experience because I was sexually abused myself as a child, so there's no telltale signs.

**SAM POLING:** You never noticed the change in James's character at all?

**PEARL ALLISON:** None at all, none at all.

**SAM POLING:** And you're convinced that if he had been sexually abused, or even physically abused you would have known.

**PEARL ALLISON:** Yep, yeah. Especially with the Porteous's definitely.

**SAM POLING:** What makes you say that?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well he wasn't always in with the Porteous's. He did, he was in another unit, he was in another cottage, and I remem, I distinctly remember him telling me about the fight he had with the Housemother, and of course in our day if you're having a fight with the Housemother this is big news, you know, because this is us against the system basically, you know, we won, and this particular skirmish he had, he told me he had actually put a knife to her throat, you know, but it, its like the usual, is it a wee bit more exaggerated than it really is.

**SAM POLING:** So James told you that he'd put a knife to the throat of his Houseparent, who was his Houseparent at the time?

**PEARL ALLISON:** That was Mrs. Drennan.

**SAM POLING:** So he put a knife to Mrs. Drennan's throat?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Yep Oh...yes, Ugh...Huh. It wasn't the Porteous's. That was why he was moved to the Porteous's, or one of the incidents really relating to him being moved.

**SAM POLING:** Yet James is alleging that the reason why the abuse against him started was because he had put a knife against the throat of Mrs. Porteous?

**PEARL ALLISON:** No definitely not, definitely not.

**SAM POLING:** That didn't happen?

**PEARL ALLISON:** No that did not happen, and I think he's confused in all honesty, there's no way that would have happened there.

**SAM POLING:** When he spoke about this incident how did he seem?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well it was I, I, I think it was more disbelief that he had actually, I mean it takes a lot for to rise to anger and, of course, if you're going through Eh...quite a hard time it takes a while for you to actually physically do something, and snap, and he snapped because it wasn't just holding a knife to her throat, I mean it, it, it went on for I think for quite some time, and he grabbed a knife. I mean I don't know the exact details cause its quite some time ago, but I just know the incident, I remember him telling me the incident and, of course, like me being a bit older going – Ugh...Huh...Ugh...Huh...you know, a wee bit of disbelief, but the truth's there, you know.

**SAM POLING:** And let's be clear this attack was against a former Houseparent Mrs. Drennan?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Mrs. Drennan.

**SAM POLING:** Not against Mrs. Porteous?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Not against Mrs. Porteous, not at all.

**SAM POLING:** When you heard that he had said it was against Mrs. Porteous what went through your mind?

**PEARL ALLISON:** I, I couldn't believe it. I really could not believe it because they were such an open family Em...and for anything like that to happen Em...there's no way cause there's no way that Eh...I don't believe that there's very opp, much opportunity he's been left alone far less, you know, to do, be able to do that whereas when he was in the Drennan's it was easy enough done.

**SAM POLING:** You say that its, its, he wasn't left alone a lot, James wasn't left alone a lot, and some of the other allegations are that it, it took place in a Church, it took place during holidays, it took, took place during days out. Is any of this true in your mind?

**PEARL ALLISON:** It can't be, it can't be. There's too, there's too many people around, there's too many. In the units you had younger children in, so you always had someone around. You had cottage Aunties, you had Eh...deputy Housemothers. Eh...before that you had, you know, you had cleaners. You, you know, there's quite often you have people coming in with Eh...visiting other, Housemothers visiting each other, the postman. When could this have happened? There's no way. You're not left alone with children, you know, in that kind of way.

**SAM POLING:** You seem convinced that James is lying?

**PEARL ALLISON:** I, I do believe he's lying, yes Ugh...Huh...wholeheartedly.

**SAM POLING:** Why?

**PEARL ALLISON:** I, he's, it just does not commute, it does not, I just can't take that in, that's not true. I don't know; understand why he's come across this at all. Em...I know, I really don't know. There's just no way could that have happened to him.

**SAM POLING:** Why do you think...

**PEARL ALLISON:** But not with them. I'm not saying it hasn't happened, but not, definitely not with the Porteous's, definitely not with the Porteous's.



**SAM POLING:** Why do you think he would make these allegations?

**PEARL ALLISON:** I think he's easy led, and I think his Em...co-partner Eh...in crime, I don't know what you would like to call him, has Eh...sowed a seed, and the seed's got out of hand, you know, and there's no turning back.

**SAM POLING:** What does he have to gain from making these allegations?

**PEARL ALLISON:** I really don't know cause there's nothing to gain cause he can't have a nice life. He can't have cause what goes around comes around.

**SAM POLING:** What about money?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Oh...well there's always that, but its not worth that. Not worth ruining so many people's lives just for some cash. Oh...no.

**SAM POLING:** Were you aware of abuse going on in 'Quarriers' in general, was, did physical abuse or, or even sexual abuse go on in 'Quarriers'

**PEARL ALLISON:** Yes.

**SAM POLING:** Can you, I'd like to hear you tell me that as opposed to me (clearing throat) otherwise you, so if you can tell me – I know there was physical, and sexual, and whatever?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well Huh...Em...there's certain things like Em...you got sent to the shed after you got skelped, you know, I mean, I was put in a cloakroom, locked up in a cloakroom cupboard, and I'm talking about me when I first went in there at 7. Em...the first Houseparents I had, I mean, she used to Em...thing at your jaw, do this to your jaw and, of course, we got fly and we used to lock our jaw so as it wouldn't crack our teeth and maybe bite our tongue, and she used to get annoyed and tell us to slacken off our jaw, you know.

Em...they used to have these slipperette things, and we used to get the slippers Eh...across our backsides, and things like that. I mean there was Em...I'm not so sure about the sexual abuse cause I don't know how far that was, but I know of a Houseparent who was very much Em...in to the girls Eh...I, I can't explain it, I just know that Em...he used to bath them and things like that. Em...but that's not the Porteous's.

**SAM POLING:** Was this common knowledge?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Yes, yes.

**SAM POLING:** So sexual abuse of some kind did go on at 'Quarriers'.

**PEARL ALLISON:** Eh...I don't believe it was Em...fully fledged, I think it was like Em...the touchy feely Em...you know, that sort of intimidation of sexual abuse.

**SAM POLING:** But never involving the Porteous's?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Never involving the Porteous's. Never.

**SAM POLING:** We'll just take a break here Pearl just because I really have not much more to ask you cause you've just...

**(BREAK)**

**SAM POLING:** Do you believe that James and the other accusers were sexually abused?

**PEARL ALLISON:** No, no. Definitely not with the Porteous's, definitely not.

**(BREAK)**

**SAM POLING:** Do you believe that James and the others were sexually abused?

**PEARL ALLISON:** No I don't believe James, or the others were abused sexually, or otherwise, definitely not, not in the Porteous's unit, definitely not, definitely not because I have, was sexually abused myself as a child, and Eh...physically abused, and I know the signs, I can sense the signs. There's a sense of unhappiness, there's a sense of Em...you, you know, you, you either go two ways. One way is you act out, you become aggressive, or the other way is you become morose and into yourself, and its very difficult to get past that, and your, your personality do change, definitely.

**SAM POLING:** Did you notice a change in the characters of James, and the others?

**PEARL ALLISON:** The only time I noticed a change in James's character is when he left the Drennan's (clearing throat) I'm sorry.

**SAM POLING:** I'll ask you that again, Okay. (Pearl clearing throat), and start it exactly the same as you did. Did you notice a change in James's character at all?

**PEARL ALLISON:** No there was no change; the only change I saw was when he moved from the Drennan's into the Porteous's cottage. That's the only time, and he became happy. He was more lively Em...he was able to join in so much more, be able to do so much more. His freedom, it was like given, being given your freedom. It was lovely. (laugh) Nice to see.

**SAM POLING:** And would he tell you this?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Oh...yes Ugh...Huh. You, you know the differences, they talk about the differences. We talk about what went on in the units, or the cottages. We do, we, we talked about that always, ratbag, I mean we used to curse and swear Em...and the language was foul, you know, just chastising them verbally to each other because of the injustices we felt.

**SAM POLING:** What would James say to you about the Porteous's?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Not a lot because he enjoyed himself there. It was Eh...Oh...auntie Helen's doing this, or Uncle John's doing that, and Eh...we're going here, and we're going there, you know, and it was like Naw, Naw, Naw, Naw, Naw. (laughter) and you're not.

**SAM POLING:** He was one of the lucky ones?

**PEARL ALLISON:** He was one of the lucky ones yes, Mm...Hih...yep.

**SAM POLING:** When Helen and John decided to give up being Houseparents did you notice a change in him then?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Em...well I was near Eh...leaving by that time, you know, so I was too busy in all honesty though to notice Eh...a lot that's going on. I can't Eh...I mean I, I'm, dates are no use to me.

**SAM POLING:** Okay don't worry cause we've got other people can talk about that. (coughing) Do you want...

**(BREAK)**

**SAM POLING:** Pearl exactly as Sonya said Em...(clearing throat) what, starting again with – We used to talk about the Houseparents, what would James specifically, include in your answer what James would specifically say about how happy he was?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well it would be Em...Oh...Uncle John's taking us to see this, or we're going to do that. Auntie Helen's doing this, and Auntie Helen's doing that, and it was like, you know – We're going here, and you're not Ha, Ha, Ha, aren't we the lucky one, He was, he felt lucky because he was enjoying his stay with the Porteous's, definitely.

**SAM POLING:** He was very proud that he was in that house?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Ugh...Huh...yes, definitely was Mm.Hih...

**SAM POLING:** Was this something he shared with you often?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Well we all knew what was going on, and what all the out, other Houseparents were up to because Em...we used to curse and swear about them, you know, the injustice of this one, and the injustice of that one, but he had nothing to complain about, you know, it would be frivolup, frivolous whatever it was if they had anything at all. It would be nothing whereas we had lots of gripes. (Laugh)

**SAM POLING:** He was very happy?

**PEARL ALLISON:** He was very happy, yep. He never Em...shown any other way, no way.

**SAM POLING:** Did you know John Porteous yourself?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Yes.

**SAM POLING:** Because of what you experienced as a child perhaps, as you say, you perceive people a lot more you, you, you...

**PEARL ALLISON:** We do.

**SAM POLING:** ...you, you perhaps Em...you as a person, having gone through what you've gone through, maybe be a bit more aware about people's behaviour towards you okay. As someone who was abused as a child sexually did you ever feel uncomfortable around John Porteous at all.

**PEARL ALLISON:** No never, never. There is one or two I did, you know, Em...and you steered well clear of these people. You knew who they were, you had the sense, they have a look about them. You have an inner Em...ability to, to sense these people, you do. You, its like Em...someone talking about undressing you with their eyes, and things like that. They have a look about them, and we are honed into that look.

**SAM POLING:** And John ever acted this way?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Never, never, never.

**SAM POLING:** Did you feel completely safe with this man?

**PEARL ALLISON:** Oh...yes Ugh...Huh...Ugh...Huh...definitely, definitely. There's no, no qualms about that at all. We were safe, there's no way that Em...like in John's unit that any abuse could have taken place anyway because there was so much going on in that house. It was like Em...a roundabout, you know, just step off when you're, when you're ready cause it was constantly in and out the door. They should just have put a roundabout on (laugh) go in and out. Yeah. They were good, they were good Houseparents, and we were jealous.

**SAM POLING:** (Clearing throat) One final question. The whole experience of what's happened to a man who you knew and respected what, what are your thoughts?

**PEARL ALLISON:** I think it's terrible, absolutely awful. The amount of lives that they, not only John's life, but all the others round about for this to come Eh...its nonsense, absolute nonsense. What are they thinking, can't get past that, what are they thinking cause that's not true. They'll get their come and upence they will.

**SAM POLING:** In most cases when you hear of (clearing throat) a convicted paedophile in your area were you expecting to see angry mobs outside the house, police cars having to protect them, this is so far removed from that, and everybody's, everybody's in support. Tell, tell me all about this.

**PEARL ALLISON:** Oh...I don't know.

**SAM POLING:** Just are you not. I mean this is a convicted paedophile you're supporting, in the eyes of the law.

**PEARL ALLISON:** Yeah. There's no way. I'd lay my life on it; I'd lay my life on it. He's not. I, no way. I, I just can't get past that. There is people out there that yes I would like to help drive the nail in the coffin, and things like that, but

**not, not for John, no. There's no way that could have, no. It's not in his nature. I can't really say much more than that.**

**SAM POLING:** But it was absolutely perfect. That was absolutely lovely. Yep, yep absolutely perfect.

?: You don't need to say any more.

**SAM POLING:** No absolutely, you can't say any more, you know.

**ENDS/**