# Maria – Interview 2

3 Oct 2017

Interview starts with Maria asking me about my PhD

## C

So how are you then?  you are a lady of leisure, are you?

## Maria

yeah, yeh will I am a lot better than I was at Easter.  I was about having a nervous breakdown at Easter time I erm had started the <><>< at XXXX I think I had told you that, did I?

## C

yeh

## Maria

I'd been head hunted, I'm just taking my shoes off, I'd been head hunter for this job and erm er I was really chuffed and it was a job I thought I was really going to love, you know having done it in the services already and then getting to be the head of department so to speak.  And all the money and the car and all the stuff but the reality was having been run by 6 servicemen you know in the MoD between the 3 services was me plus one other and the one other and this isn't me being rankest cause I came from the ranks myself it was an x-Army Warrant Officer WO1 who really was not that bright, quite young, about 10 well he was in his 40's I think he was in his 40's so maybe 10 14, 13 years older younger than me.  He had a bit of a chip on his shoulder handsome looking man really friendly on the outside but a bloody nightmare to work with,

## C

Oh dear

## Maria

on the other side thought he knew everything.  Knew nothing but the worst of it was the very first day I got into the job the chap the American Chap who was my boss who had head hunted me and he did his arrivals brief and everything er you know an arrival chat with me just happened to mention this chap, Clive his name was, Clive was now not going to work directly for me erm but would continue to work because he had started as I was off my resettlement so he had already done about 3 months before I got there and sort of said oh he will work he will continue to work directly to me.  And I before I had left the Air Force I had helped this man settle in for a week and because I had done the job before and because they had already left even though I was still in the Air Force I sort of did the handover for the job.

## C

yes

## Maria

so and that whole week was a nightmare week and I had a feeling the whole time I was off that we were not going to hit it off which was quite unusual for me

## C

yeh,

## Maria

I'm not used to not getting on with people.  Er that work for or that either work for me or and em but I just had this feeling on the very first day I met him he erm we were both went into see what was going to be our line manager and you know I was still serving then.  And he had turned up at Easter and I didn't know he was turning up that day with the other SO1s, obviously wasn't expecting that they were still in position at that point.  And so oh yem yeh I think it was my er old boss actually my old Wg Cdr and sort of gave him some handover notes that he had been given when he came in.  I'd worked for 2 Wg Cdrs in that area him and his predecessor, I received those notes myself when I started the job. I know how helpful they were I know how they were.  They were quite long winded but there was an awful lot of good information.  A few years down the line they were slightly out of date, there is no doubt about that, but they the Wing Commander had given them to me in good faith as such something to do and so I turned up.  I turn up and go in and see our new line manager and straight away this ex-warrant officer is saying ughh well I got handed these notes clearly someone is trying to make a job for themselves just full up crap I can cut these down to one page.  And I could just feel my hackles rising you know on the very first meeting and I had been given the job I knew because the chap who had hired me liken me and he lined my straight talking and he liked the fact  I wasn't afraid to say what I felt and I had been I had been quite he had seen me at work for the last year and knew that I was quite tenacious at getting things done.06:40 and he was there going 2well yeh I am sure we will be able to get that sorted out <><>" and I was going "well can I just butt in here in a minute because yeh they are out of date but they were doing you a favour when they handed the to you because I wasn't here, I said, but actually there is an awful lot of good information in there and I said I think you just need to give it a bit of time into the job <><><>   before you start, you know making comments comments like that.  so we got off to a really awkward, start.

## C

yeh

## Maria

So on the day I started proper and I was told he wasn't going to work for me I turned round to, Mark, the boss and said "how's that going to work then?" you know, "I'm in charge of the section", of two (laughs) and cause you know there was supposed to be there was going to be at least 4 when I took the job on he'd said you know 4 and and maybe more in time and I said and he doesn't even work for me, you know I I don't want to be doing this and having all the responsibility if he is then going to turn round and say well I'd better check with Mark first and or I don't fancy doing that.  And he said no no that won’t happen.  But of course, it did.  And it was just like form day one it was almost like every time well in fact on day 2 he actually walked out on me and said he couldn't work for me.

## C

Oh my G

## Maria

On day 2!

## C

Goodness

## Maria

erm I just sat there dumbstruck all I had done was go through some notes and was asking questions on the notes. And the and I wasn't being critical and I was being nice and I was being <><>< and he was and he was saying things like, we'd been asked to do a particular job which I knew it was erm it was sort of like a list of jobs that we do on a daily basis.  Erm we were having to record, it was like a recording of of the amount of work we were taking in.  And he had decided, and he wasn't good, it it meant nothing it was just fill out a piece of paper that had no earthly use at all it wasn't going to decipher anything or improve anything but I knew that with a few tweaks like the date we got something in and how long it took us to process it would make a difference.  And so, I I said we could put a date in and immediately I got back "yeh well Mark's happy with it."  And so**, I said well I am not I am going to be running this so I think we need to we need to change it you know it’s just a couple of tweaks it won’t take long.  So, there was all this sort of atmosphere right from day one and I made one more comment and he went "right that's it I'm going I am resigning, I can't work for you"** and I sat there thinking

## C

Oh my gosh

## Maria

'Shit, what have I done?' and erm and erm so I said we best go and have a word with "oh I don't want to talk" I said "come with me" and we went off to this like conference room and I said what is your problem?  I said I've been here, you know, not even 24 hours fully and you are threatening to walk out on me.  I said we have got to get this sorted out you've got a family, he had one young child, and I said I am bran new into the job there is only you and I going to be on this account we have to get on.  We have to get over this, whatever this is, and move on.  And and I talked to him for about an hour and at the end of it he said "oh I feel so much better for talking to you" and you know I don't know really what his issues were he never really explained I think partly he had been under a lot of pressure he was out of his depth Caroline, that is the bottom line he was out of his depth he had three months of hell.  He had fallen out with quite a few people before I got there and so initially I was hopefully that having come down from his high horse slightly and just accepting that he had been under pressure and that he hadn't really coped and I think me coming along and questioning what had happened over the last 3 months was just that was the final straw.

## C

Just too much yeh.

## Maria

I think after that I thought ok we have 10:56 got to the <><>< and so I said look we are here to work together now I can help you with this. I  I know the job I understand what we need to do I can prioritise and we can get this and I said now there is two of us you are not going to be on your own cause he had been thrown in at the deep end.  But  but it it it was fine at that stage but it didn't matter he was rubbish at what he did and he made so many mistakes that every time I had to say actually you should have done this here or we could do this there or actually you would be better off asking that question of the customer the more I had to pick him up the more defensive he got and the more nasty he got so there was that as a pressure erm the job itself you know I was hired for 40 hours on average I worked 55 up to 63 in a week every week erm and I had a 3 hour round journey everyday as well just before I resigned I erm had a 6 monthly, because I was on erm review you know for the first 6 months, I had my 6 month interview with Mark who turned out to be a bloody dreadful line manager.  liked him as a person but if he if he was assessing (cough) he was controlling he did not want to let go, the job as as the leader of the area as the team leader, a senior key account manager senior being supposed to be the key word here.  I was not allowed to make any decisions.  It very different to being the Air Force where we are sort of empowered eh you know even at SO2 level and ok if you make a crap decision you stand by it or you know you get told off you you take wrap if you get it wrong. (interrupted by telephone call).  You take the wrap if you get it wrong.  But you don't generally get it wrong because you have reached a level of experience and training, he took me on knowing all of that and knew I had done the job but he was a control freak.  So, it’s a, I get this all the time and they will be cold calling quite often they hang up on me anyway it’s never important. So erm at my 6month review erm and the job wasn't being done properly either I mean I was trying to do the job of what had been 6 people and I was and this is my fault I was trying to do it to the same standard.  I was trying to do a good job and because I am a bit of a perfectionist and I wanted it to be good and I wanted to make improvements I couldn't keep up so I kept putting more and more hours in and and taking on more and more and it was like working with half of us and with the ex- WO because he wasn't doing a good job himself he wasn't helping me and erm and it was harder having to check on what he was doing all the time and erm and so at this 6 months review I got this startling review of how brilliant I was I mean he started it by saying "well how do you think you have done over the last 6 months" and at this stage I was a bloody hacked off person already.  And er I just sort of went "hmm well I would say you are getting your money's worth from me" you know that was my opening gambit and his reply to that was "oh yeh we sure are, you're doing great" and then it went off on a long spiel about what a great job I was doing they nothing to pick me up on there was no improvements to be made and they gave me a pay rise. Oh now you have got this we are going to give you a pay rise you are doing a great job Maria, and er so I sat there and at the end of it I said "lovely", I said "would you like to know how I feel about the job?" and he sort of went  "oh yeh, yeh ok" I said its crap it’s a nightmare you have taken on 2 people instead of 6, you are supposed to improve the service, it’s a dire service I said the individual who is supposed to work for me works for you, you promised me after a few months he would end up working for me, it was to help me through the first few stages.  you haven't carried through on that, you have had complaints about his attitude and how he works, you have seen how he is you have done nothing about, you keep saying he has got potential but I am the one having to bring that potential on its a bloody nightmare.  You are a li nightmare line manager, you don't listen you don't like the question, you ignore e-mails, and I said I like you but you are too busy.  One of the hardest things Caroline is that he worked harder than me.  He was a good worker, American's have quite a different ethos to work he was also ex-military, ex-WO himself. Had a bit of a buddy buddy thing with the WO to WO, he's got potential.  yeh everybody has got potential and I've worked with plenty of WO I would happily have had come and work with me or for me or me work for them.  But, not this one.  No.  So erm it I was dissatisfied there but what came to a head was about 2 weeks later erm the WO had been off for a week on leave I had covered everything that week I was then going to be away for 2 days the week he got back so I did some handover notes and I gave him about 3 tiny tasks, I mean I had done everything, his work all my work and erm and then I had asked him to do me one favour and by the following Thursday when I physically saw him, did you update the ph strategic thing we were doing? and he said erm, "oh well no" so I swallowed and I  went "oh, right ok did  you not have time why did you not finish it?" and he goes "I didn't know you had asked me to" I said "What, it was in my handover notes" he'd actually written to me and said "wow, Maria, it’s fantastic to get back after a week off and come back to no real work he said you have done a great job" and so I thought "oh what a great start to the week" and then when I said it was in the handover notes I had asked you to do this particular job he said "ahh well I didn't bother reading them".  So I said "ok, fine" so er I it was funny I was beginning to lose confidence in myself er line management ability you know er leadership ability after all those years because I just didn't want the hassle and the trouble and the worry and the argument because he was argumentative and he could get nasty and we'd had a couple of face to faces and and it’s very hard when you working in an open plan office and you are trying to keep your voice down and level when really all I wanted to do was cry. But cry thought anger you know cry through frustration.  Not because I felt sorry for myself or that I was frightened of him as such but it was just awful. So, I thought keep calm Maria, don't say anything and my stomach was going and my heart was pounding erm so the next day 18:13

I I used to work from home on a Friday and erm I wrote him a note and I said "oh" I said erm "I asked you yesterday, I've already written to you to <><><><> you haven't done it, there wasn't a logical reason as to why you haven't done it I am really busy I'd appreciate it if you would now do it" his answer was to come back and he cc'd in the American boss and said erm "I am really disappointed that you feel you have to write an instruction to me when all you had to do was ask" and what started was a ping pong war backwards and forwards and erm I mean he actually, I was quite happy that he wrote back and he then cc'd everybody into it because it actually proved that he didn't want to do anything I asked him to do it proved how petty it was and erm and it it proved he hadn't got a clue what was going on and, my old boss, works for the company and he'd been cc'd in and he rang me up and he went oh and he didn't like the bloke either and he said "how are you coping?" and I said "I've had enough, I have had enough" erm but the final straw just to finish it off quickly was after my interview with my line manager he agreed with me on everything he said I take everything you saw Maria I am too busy I am not able to help you I am not able to do this I am going to change the line management this had been coming up for a while anyway.  And I was going to work for the area where my old boss works and it was sort of a customer relationship management team and there was a my old colonel was actually going to be my line manager as a civilian.  I had worked for him when I was in the Air Force and got on with him fine. He wasn't one of my favourite bosses he was lazy erm but we worked a flexi hours system so if you'd worked over your 40 hours say I had worked 45 hours you could take back within a 4 week period those 5 hours on flexi, well of course  I had worked zillion of hours over, lost loads of hours but for those 2 days I was going to be off one was for a funeral and one was for my sisters 50th I put in the flexi hours, you know, I just took the 2 days off.  I was already up about 23 that month, sorry that week never mind all the other weeks.  And erm on the Sunday I was doing my travel claims, I was months behind doing any of my personal admin and there was an e-mail from the Colonel and he he the first start of it, or the ex-colonel, and he said "Maria I cannot believe my eyes you worked 63 hours this must be a mistake, you cannot of worked 63 hours this week.  Are you sure you are not including your travel time in this?  and some <><>< and then he continued with you must remember you are no longer in the Air Force, and you are not paid 24/7 you have got to get your work life balance right" and I thought, if he had left it at that that was a fair comment because he was right I had no work life balance I was a nervous wreck at home because I was so uptight all the time I was quite tearful I was angry I wasn't sleeping my poor husband was like tearing what little hair he's got out (chuckle) out and erm had he let it at that what I would have done is gone and have a chat with him and said this is wrong, this whole scenario is wrong.  We have got it wrong but he followed it up with "And may I remind you that the flexi system is not to be abused by putting in extra hours so that you can extend you leave"

## C

Ohhh!  (laughs)

## Maria

and it was like a red rag to a bull and I wrote straight back, I let my husband read it before I posted it,22:06 but I wrote back and I said  "I am utterly appalled that you have even thought to put into writing what you have just written.  Bottom line is we are undermanned and the job is too big for two people I would appreciate" and I said "I do not like the accusation that I am doing extra hours to take on extra leave, you can go back through my 6 months of records and see how many hours I have lost to this company in only 8 months of working for it and erm I said I will look forward to discussing this with you face to face on Wednesday when I return to the office, because I was having those 2 days off. I mean I got a text back the following” I didn't mean anything by it I was just doing the party line bit" but it was too late.  So, on that was the Wednesday I went back and he wasn't in the office I had the argument with the ex-warrant officer on the Friday with the e-mail I sat in my study or my dressing room/slash study, my husband working down stairs I was always really good at working at home, we both worked separately, I went down stairs and I was just in pieces.  And erm the ex-colonel had been cc'd into all this public spat and I was just mortified Caroline it got so childish it got out of control erm my old boss had rung up and said I don't know how you are coping.  And I wasn't and er he said my old boss said that the, sorry the ex-colonel, he wanted my old boss to talk to both of us next week as if he was then my line manager and I just said, no it was, I don't even want to talk to you about it.  I said it is not for you to discuss with me I will speak to him next week. And erm anyway my husband and I were walking on the Saturday and erm it had never occurred to me to leave, I've I've never given up on a job before and also, I've always been very dependent, as you know I was a single parent for all those years, I still had my son in school, boarding school well no university

## C

yes

## Maria

I was still paying to help him through uni.  I still pay my mums rent cause you know she is disabled and all the rest of it.  And er my husband said "leave, please leave.  Have a career break, be a house wife, it doesn't matter we can afford it" I mean obviously he is the ex erm general he has a good job we have a lovely home, erm and although I had been independent all that time I have got my pension and erm and the long shot of it is he gave me a get out and I took it. I took it because I was so unhappy and its a weird feeling because I'm loving it. (laughter) I love not getting up at bloody 5.30 in the morning and traveling 3 hours a day to work I love not having the pressure, I love not having a zillion e-mails pinging and all the responsibility it, that's balanced with the fact that I still feel that I failed erm and it I went and got myself a councillor, a lady from my choir, she is a life councillor and she sat and talked to me "you feel a failure after everything you achieved in your career" and I went I was only a Squadron Leader and I was just had a right downer on myself in general but she made me appreciate some of the good things about me and what I have done but it is hard to always look at yourself isn't it and think well what have I done I have achieved nothing.  and erm and she said what about25:58 all the other people who have worked for over the years because **you know I couldn't I could not get through to this man I couldn't make him like me, I couldn't make him respect me even you know even if he didn't even like me I couldn't even seem to get to him to respect me. And erm I said its never, well not to my knowledge or to my face, (laughter) its never happened before I'm sure there have been people that haven't liked me I am sure there have been people that haven't respected me but on the other hand I know there are people that have.**

## **C**

**yeh**

## **Maria**

**and erm I said I just and** **I had to try and remember that and as I was leaving the Air force I got lots of lovely personal messages form people.  People who have worked for me saying I found you an inspiration you really helped me at a bad time, you know, nice little comments that I tried to hang onto and think I did care about people I didn't just walk over everybody** I wasn't a bossy cow, well I was but you know what I mean, "Get your hair sorted out Caroline!" (laughter) you know what I mean.

## C

Its very tidy today look.

## Maria

yeh it looks very tidy, mines not this is how you used to look. (laughter)

## C

So erm yeh it so what I am doing is erm **oh it was oh my god the empowerment handing my notice in.** On that Monday and I immediately er got a call from well via my old boss from the ex-colonel "does she not want to talk about this first, does she want to talk to me about this?" and I went "Nope!" There is nothing more to say.  What was very telling and it was really quite sad, I only ended up doing about 2 weeks because I I then I took all my flexi that I could in the month I then had to, I then took all the leave that I was still owed and it was over Easter, just before Easter so between all of that I ended up working about 8 more days.  I didn't even discuss it with the ex-Warrant officer.  He will have found out as rumour mill went round but I had so little respect for him

## C

yeh

## Maria

and felt so lacking in and I blamed him and I blamed the American cause if I had had a good working relationship with him we could had overcome the rest of it.  We could have worked, he wasn't a nasty person, he was too busy and blind and too controlling.  But I could have worked on that over time but this little bastard I couldn't, I couldn't have any feeling for. So erm but what was telling that I had 9 people come up to me individually and privately who all worked for my boss, who worked for the company, 28:17 all of them going .... well lots of them saying they had lost the wrong person, they people outsiders could see the strain I'd been under

## C

yeh

## Maria

only for 8 months.  They had not supported the right person, the customers I never told them all what, you know I was professional about it I didn't go to the PTs and say I'm leaving because of ..

## C

yeh

## Maria

But .. things got out anyway between and I'd customers ringing me up saying they'd made the wrong mistake they'd taken had not helped the right person he should be going not you.  And I went "well thank you it’s really lovely to hear and feel free to tell the management that feel free to tell the company that because they are supposed to provide you a service and that service is not going to be there at all now until they replace me" and I said and erm I said "but it’s too late for me" but I had 9 people from the company come up and a few of them in tears saying they felt the same, they worked for my boss, he was a bloody nightmare line manager er because he just he controlled everything and I was in very luxurious position because they were bread winners, they were single people, had a mortgage to pay, they didn't have my get out of a reasonably ok well off husband with a nice house and no debt.

## C

yeh

## Maria

And eh God I ended up feeling so bad and they came up and said please will you go and speak to the MD and the MD had was Charles Green,

## C

oh right

## Maria

and he had only, yeh, he'd only been in position a few months, a couple of months really but he had been shadowing the old boss for year.  And er I I made an appointment to see him and er he fitted me in the following week and I didn't go in there to bitch and moan and I said I started off and I said I think you already know why I am here.  I said this isn't about getting my job back, that's that's not what this is about.  This is to let you know, Charles, what your staff are feeling.  And to let you know that you are losing more and more people and more and more people want to walk out.  And if they could they would.  Morale is low. And erm ok yeh so I had the personal issue with the ex-warrant officer but the bigger endemic problem of lack of manpower, too much work eh the stupid thing that the ex-colonel had done I did mention that I said how dare he write to me about flexi hours I said I am sure a lot of people do take the micky out of system I flexi hours, I've seen it with civil servants, I said I never have but if you are going to have to make a point make it to the right people don't make it to the person that's already lost hundreds of hours to the company in 8 months and he said I know, actually he said "yeh he came into explain himself", so he was panicking. He knew I was going to say something. So, everybody was covering their backs.  I've no idea if it has improved erm I've kept out of the way. the chap that got my job, I really liked, he actually worked for a sister company but he had been an ex-SAC but he had worked himself up in the civil service and then got TUPE'd across.  He really knew his stuff he and I got on really well.  Erm and he erm I helped him write his CV.  I I practically wrote his CV for him because he had practically no management speak he and actually you are supposed to have a degree to have this job but you did not need a degree you just needed common sense and he knew enough about the whole system so I put it all into nice words for him I then put in a big recommendation in for him before I left and he got the job.  The ex-warrant officer applied for the job, I would have died if he had got it, (laughter) then apparently, he went ape when he didn't get it and said "how is it he's got it?" and actually he knew this man and liked him they got on quite well.  erm but he was bitter so that is all I know about it I've left erm and what I am planning on doing is selling my house in America I've no mortgage left on it I should clear a good amount and I am hopefully going to but 2 to 3 steel hull narrow boats and run a little narrow boat holiday business

## C

ohh wow.

## Maria

But but this is going to be next year erm I haven't sold my villa yet it got damaged in erm Urma, it needs a new roof.

## C

oh did it?

## Maria

It’s still got a roof, it’s not leaking but it is not looking quite as pretty as it looked. (laughter) and erm I have got insurance so I am getting that sorted.  Erm it was always going to be up for sale in November, I didn't want to let my guests down, it’s been fully booked up for years and I had to stop it at some stage and I didn't want, well the realtors said to me you are a victim of your own success because there is no room to show people round cause it is full of customers all the time. So, I had already booked a year in advance but I had had it in mind to sell anyway and I am going to work for myself.

## C

yeh (laughter)

## Maria

yeh,  <><<><

## C

you can boss yourself about, brilliant, oh my God what a

## Maria

**so, I am gardening and I am baking and I'm joining ladies that lunches and am keeping fit and getting out of bed at half past 7 instead of half past 5. and erm loving it really and loving my husband for giving me the out 34:09**

## C

the the its the choice isn't it?  It was the choice wasn't it? Fascinating

## Maria

It was.  And life is too short and you see for him it was making his life miserable because he's got his own work and what not and he doesn't suffer stress or strain and he's far brighter than me anyway but to come home to an unhappy person that he loves and to find that I'm just close to the edge all the time it was no fun for him either for 8months and you know 8 months is a relatively short space of time to go from, you know in my mind, from hero to zero from being excited and ecstatic and happy sad to leave the Air Force I I you know I remember you leaving speech I had all those same emotions Caroline, you know. It wasn't an easy decision to leave and if I have got any anger in me about it it’s that I didn't need to have left when  left I was in quite a cosy situation I was contract monitoring 35:08 the contract the one I joined and I was left to my own devices because I was never going to get picked up for promotion for all the reasons we have talked about before but because I well respected nobody ever put me under shit or hell I was trusted in other words I could come and go and the fact is I didn't go off to but I could come and go as I pleased if I wanted to go and see something at my son's school no body questioned that I was taking the afternoon off because they knew that I'd never miss a deadline and to go from that atmosphere where I was trusted and respected to questioned on everything, checked on everything and given no power and then not even a person to work for me.  Bloody Hell for that to happen that quickly in 8 months to go downhill that quickly it was a bit of scare.  Erm so I don't know if that has anything that you wanted to talk me about?

## C

It’s fascinating because as you said you went from its its I haven't asked you any questions yet really but you know if that I was going to ask you about the leaving experience and how you are doing on you said it you were the pay you were getting the car and and all the rest of it

## Maria

the car the business cards, senior management

## C

yeh the hours, the responsibility and the working environment weren't right

## Maria

No no, I mean it is such a shame because it had such potential. If the company hadn't been so greedy or if they had understood the job better while it was still service led because what they did at the time it it continued for a year with service people in the job but they kept the SO1s and got rid of the SO2s which is how I came onto the contract monitoring team cause I I didn't want to leave the environment I loved the job and so they said come and work for us over here.  we all knew that the company well huh, I say we all knew the company told me when I was still in the Air Force that they knew they needed experts and that they knew that they needed people quickly with experience and that they knew the import of the job but they said that the MoD had not transferred the liability the money

## C

yeh

## Maria

No no, I mean it is such a shame because it had such potential. If the company hadn't been so greedy or if they had understood the job better while it was still service led because what they did at the time it it continued for a year with service people in the job but they kept the SO1s and got rid of the SO2s which is how I came onto the contract monitoring team cause I I didn't want to leave the environment I loved the job and so they said come and work for us over here.  we all knew that the company well huh, I say we all knew the company told me when I was still in the Air Force that they knew they needed experts and that they knew that they needed people quickly with experience and that they knew the import of the job but they said that the MoD had not transferred the liability the money

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yeh

## Maria

across to them.  the MoD who I was obviously working for was saying no we did and they have chosen not to take that option. They have chosen to either use the money elsewhere or not not I don't know just take that money as profit I have no idea.  But they both told me different stories and this was while was in and after I had left they both insisted and so I don't know the truth of the matter.  My gut feeling is that the company didn't appreciate the role they didn't appreciate, what it basically became was a glorified clerk.  (goes onto describe details of the process and job role) but the complicated ones the ones that always caused the problems meant meetings, it meant explaining situations, it meant troubleshooting and it meant keeping a relationship up with the MoD and looking after the MoD they were our customer and the reality is the company weren't doing a good enough job in that area.  I'm not saying in all areas I saw some improvements with the things they put in but in that particular area and it just happened to be the one that I went to work in (laughs) I could take full responsibility for the failure of it. (laughs). So

## C

Buts its interesting, you said you said empowered.  You said you felt really empowered when you told them you were going to leave.

## Maria

Oh God yes40:12because I had already after 8 months I felt so unempowered because even though I stuck to my guns and I kept working hard and I didn't fail on anything and I was getting all the laudits about a great service I mean the PTs I couldn't of got better reviews from them and those that had been there the long tie and knew the service they used to get with the old system, in fact they had seen it disappear over the year when the SO1s were there, cause the reality is other than my original boss there what they got left with was pretty crud.  And the SO2 were the workers, that's the reality of it.  And they had already noticed in that year before the company had even er took me on that that the downward grade of the service they had received so they were chuffed when they knew that I had got the job and the Army who I had never mixed with before because I was the Air Force suddenly I was Tri-Service as soon as I met them they recognised that I knew what I was talking about even though the equipment was different.

## C

yeh

## Maria

I understood the requirement.  And they were so relieved so I went from feeling happy to knowing I was letting them down struggling with that, struggling with the ex-Warrant Officer, struggling with my boss then struggling with the ex-colonel who made a stupid bloody comment and I ended up feeling weak I ended up feeling that I wasn't I ended up feeling disrespected as much as anything.

## C

yeh

## Maria

Because they weren't listening to me. they were saying they were listening to me but they weren't acting on it so you end up thinking you just sound like a winge.  I can't keep going on.

## C

yeh

## Maria

my husband said "you have laid the facts down you have told them what is what you have now got to fail.  You have now got to not let something happen.   Because you are not to work 63 hours a week you should work your 40hours and when they say but you are behind on this you are behind on that you should say 'yes' that's because I am working my contract of 40 hours and I told you that this was a 4-person job minimum.

## C

yeh42:23

## Maria

And he said you told them it was a 4-person job and yet you are actually achieving it with 2 people and one of them is crap so you are not proving your own case.  And I understood that I was defeating myself.

## C

He is a wise man your husband.

## Maria

and say again

## C

I said He is a wise man your husband

## Maria

Yes.  And even my boss, the American, clearly a very bright man even he was saying to me at the beginning I know what you are saying Maria but I need evidence, I need the evidence.  Now to me it was evident that I was doing all the hours Gods send and they could see the hours, it’s not like in the Air Force where you can't monitor it you know you don't track your hours.  I was on a tie card if you like I was having to put my hours in every week.  So, to me that was the evidence and I was doing a weekly report I thought that was evidence.  I knew my husband was right but how do you fail when you don't want to fail? When you want to do a good job when you want to, well one impress, two look after you customer you know that is the bottom line that is what we are all there for.  And so, I was my own worst enemy because I didn't want to fail, I failed anyway in a way erm because I ended up walking away.  I let it beat me Caroline is what I did.  I let the little bastard warrant officer beat me cause he kept his job he didn't walk away and I I let the system beat me.  But the empowerment came from giving them the Vs and saying I am off I am off. You didn't treat me right, I'm going because I could.

## C

yeh

## Maria

Because I was lucky and don't forget the luck that came with that through having my husband.  Has a still been a single parent and I made that move bloody hell!

## C

yeh

## Maria

bloody hell I would have been stuffed44:27 like those other 9 people.  Someone in HR contacted me quite a low relatively low level, she did our time cards, lovely lady, was forever helping me out cause I I'd find I was filling in my time card at some ridiculous time of night and it gone down and ohh I didn't get it in in time can you put it in for me? she could see what I was doing and she came and saw me and she was under stress and pressure herself and she was in tears and she said "I have seen so many people walk from this company over the last 2 years, year year and a half, and they were losing all the experience the people, the ex- MoD people they were going in their droves so but nobody is irreplaceable are they and I know the chap that has taken over from me, I trust he will do a good job and I trust he will be more sensible than me.  You know he knows how it went wrong for me erm he won’t work the hours I worked erm I don't think he'll see I don't think he will feel the same pressure I knew how it should have been and I think that is where it was harder for me.

## C

Do you think, do you think it was a lack of experience working in the commercial sector that sort of ended up getting you

## Maria

erm, that's a point yes up to a point because.  Yes, up to a point because what it is is getting your head round the fact that its money, its money orientated not service orientated.  the reality is and it’s a hard reality and they won’t say it to your face you know certainly when I was the customer it is all about service, improvements of service you know building on their reputation because of course they want to take on new contracts in the future and they had a whole team set up there to in fact the ex erm colonel was customer relationship management part of his job was to nurture new contracts for the future so they need to impress to get the new contract but the bottom line is money and I was still very service orientated and customer relationship orientated now that's not a bad thing I I'd don't do myself down for that but I guess what I didn't appreciate on leaving and gong into that environment was that the bottom line to them was money and whatever they could they could draw the work out of me and make me ill, and they weren't going to care for me not in the way that the services would have cared for me and so there was a naivety there of thinking that actually they might actually respect me and care for me because of my experience because they liked me they look me on knowing and seeing my last for the last year that is why they took me on so I went with a fair amount of pride thinking they've chosen me you know they are offering me all this money because they rate me and you see lots of other people going out into industry ex-service and doing really well because we have a certain work ethos so my naivety was probably thinking they would listen (laugh) and care erm and that the bottom line wasn't money it was still customer service.  Erm so yeh I  think had I maybe been a bit more hardnosed and played them at their own game I wouldn't have cared as much for myself and if I had and if I and this is what annoyed my husband when I left I said to my husband I am not after a career this is a really good position to go into but I am not looking for promotion within the company I had loved this job in the Ari Force I had got the if you like I had got the boost up in that I had been made the SO1/colonel type equivalent in the wages bit the cut across to me I had got rid of my little demon of not getting promoted because they had recognised me they had the warrant the SO1s had wanted the job and I was picked above them.  So, I had all my little pride bit there and erm and I said to my husband there is no more for me I have reached what I am happy reaching I I am not reaching for the stars I love this, this will be great, I will do my 40 hours and won’t worry about secondary duties, impressing for promotion and that is what I said and when it came to it I treated it as if it was still a career.  Career my husband said this isn't supposed to be a career for you.  This is supposed to be a job and the 2 things are every different subtlety different and I couldn't switch off from career mode to job mode.  So, it’s my fault 49:23 Caroline at the end of the day because I could have been stronger in myself I should have switched off from career mode and gone into job mode but if you are the sort of person that has a huge amount of personal pride in what you try and achieve and you actually care about what you do you erm you can get you can get shit on a little bit more I think

## C

yeh

## Maria

But I wasn't as bright as her.  So, you know there is a balance there between being really bright and knowing that the minute you speak people will listen to you because you really are that bright or you can be more like me who is not unintelligent but maybe as gifted bright but is a bloody hard worker and a grafter and a career and then you get the lazy sods who don't give a toss and they seem to float on through like the ex-warrant officer.

## C

Well

## C

Nothing phases him.  It

## C

Sounds like he didn't get what he wanted though.  So

## Maria

Say again.

## C

He didn't get what he wanted though.

## Maria

No, he didn't and long may he not.  and you know not wanting to be bitter and twisted I hope to God he trips himself up in the future erm nasty nasty little piece of work and funnily enough after I had put my notice in coincidently erm Jim spoke to some ex-Army people that had worked with him and found out he had had zilch respect within the Army as well.  Amongst his own colleagues, not officers looking down on him, he talked the talk he was handsome he looked very smart, he looked smarter than the average you know he wore a really nice suite smart polished shoes hair cut very clean faced looking handsome boy next door face beautiful smile he was all polish and nothing underneath and the officers erm he had worked for he had got to warrant officer because he was good at sports he was good at mountaineering cycling he was a big cyclist he didn't do any trade specific work his colleagues his other warrant officers, his staff sergeants, his corporals hadn't got a moments time for him but but what he presented when he approached the company was that perfect picture.

## C

the package.52:22

## Maria

yeh. <><< so yeh I think you are right naivety, a little bit as well with the ca with the the move from service to civilian where it’s more about money.

## C

yeh, so on reflection then any regrets about leaving the Air Force? Do you still think it was the right decision?

## M

er my mother asked me this the other week.  Erm because obviously she knew I didn't have any regrets about leaving the company but she said have do you regret that you ever left the Air Force?  Erm it’s a two-pronged thing and maybe you can ask me the same question again next year if I manage to buy my boats the answer would be different. My my gut reaction is to say yes there is a little bit of regret because I could have still of been on £61,000 a year plus my home to duty erm plus my medical and dental and you know all the little privileges and I could have held out in that job really til the end of the contract monitoring period of the 3 years which meant that I could of still had an easy life for another 3 years and been on that amount of money erm but I was board, you know I'd been board for a while cause I knew I could do more.  I loved it when when my boss was off and run things and achieve it so on the one hand because of the ease of life and the money and I didn't need to have lost all these wages these last 4 months or whatever it’s been since I resigned.  Erm but no not really from the bigger scheme of things because I am loving doing the house and all the stuff I am doing now.  I am loving not having to get up at silly hours and I'm not broke my husband gave me an allowance lucky me and I have got my pension.  I am still paying for my son’s education, I am still paying my mams rent I've learnt, I mean I never used to really think about if I wanted to buy a new dress I just went and bought it if I wanted to go and get my hair done I'd just go and get it done. I am having to think a bit more because erm I wouldn't want to abuse my husband.

## C

yeh

## Maria

I've always been independent that way and to lose the independence was the hardest thing.  To actually rely on him to give me housekeeping money is basically what I am getting and after that I buy them food and but it is mine to do with what I will so if I buy the food and everything else that's spending money for me basically, my coffees and my ladies that lunch money.  but erm it takes a little bit to become, I'm not fully kept because I've got my pension

## C

yeh

## Maria

you know I have got you know I have got the house in America that is mine and that is all paid for, that's all going to come into the house.  I used my lump to help with all the house stuff so

## C

yeh

## Maria

with a little bit but maybe the regret is leaving as early as I left for then because I didn't need to have done but I probably would have left when they started posting me anyway.

## C

yeh

## Maria

and and for that no I was ready to leave.

## C

well that's that's good. And I probably feel fairly similar I think it’s the reasons to leave were stronger than the reasons to stay I think

## Maria

yeh, yeh. I would agree with that too and so and also if you live your life with regrets and you don't move on from disappointments which the company thing was but I've been busy doing my research looking for boating areas I've got to go on a a erm a boat handlers course so that I can teach customers how you know to drive the boat. 56:15 for the week of their holiday. I am getting excited I am designing how I want it to be I am making ideas for the future I have got ideas about writing children's book, it’s been in my head for I used to write I used to read make up stories for my son who has always said to me "Mummy, (when he was little) you should write these down and sell them" you know there are other things in life that I am finding.

## C

yeh

## Maria

I have become much more involved with the community, erm, erm erm I am on the committee for the beer, food and gift festival that we just had they want me to be the chairman next year. I am running erm a womble in the village, well it’s a parish, that's a litter cleaning cause when I go for my run I hate seeing litter in the ditches so I have organised, I have been in touch with the council, my husband has become a magistrate.

## C

wow

## Maria

I've, yeh he is actually doing that today. And I actually think I will apply for that as well when there is another opening.  I didn't do it at the time cause I was still working there was no way I could have fitted it in but I could now and even if I did run my own business the busiest day is going to be the Saturday the changeover day so I could afford to become a magistrate so I have got other irons in the fire which I think will interest me a dam sight more than sitting at a computer talking about what store is going to sit on a sodding shelf. you know.

## C

yes. (laughter) put it like that there's no choice, there is no comparison.

## Maria

No. And I am getting to see my mother every week and spend a whole day with her not just an evening so you know there are a lot more pros than there are cons.  And there is a life outside  of success in industry and  a life outside of the the norm if you like and the idea  of working for myself and knowing that I I  if I end up with 3 boats I have worked out the finances and the you hire a boat for a 1000 well about a £1400 a week they are very expensive but just say I went bottom line a £1000  a week, three boats, 20 weeks a year each, that's £60,000 even if it costs me £10,000 per boat to moor it to, insure it, to maintain it, which it won’t but even if it did that is still £10,000 a boat that is, and after taxes, that is still £30,000 in my pocket that I haven't got now.  That's not £65 plus a car that I was on or whatever it was erm and with my pension neigh on £100,000 I know it’s not that but it will be worth every penny for me to do it under my ways of wanting to run things.

## C

yeh

## Maria

you know so and it won’t be a bad wage to bring in.

## C

not at all not at all

## Maria

no, and what I am thinking is after, what I have planned to do is almost buy the boats back with the money I make so that the £150,000 that I spend erm actually has to pay this mortgage off I can't afford to lose that money.  So, if I pay myself back over a 5-year period after that I might be able to bring a manager in you know somebody good to do the handovers on a Saturday.  It''ll just be my pension. It’s not going to be that hard. Anyway, that is in my little fantasy world I don't know if it’s all going to work out. (laughter)59:40 I might lose everything; the boat drowns and the insurance won’t pay out

## C

(laughter) well I mean have you thought about financing it though I mean from a bank loan as opposed to doing it yourself?

## Maria

I have actually. Erm funny enough you are asking pertinent questions there because funny enough my mother-in-law the other day had said to my husband, she hasn't said it to me I didn't know, but she said, and she has got quite a lot of money and she'd said to my husband how do you think about me what do you think about me financing Maria so she can set up her business earlier erm which is so sweet of her, she is a lovely lady.  Erm I I don't think I would want to take her finance erm I think I would rather use I think I would rather not have to pay any interest on anything I didn't have to straight off.  But let’s say it went well and I wanted to go further with it I would possibly consider bankrolling it erm I haven't looked into it to the point of view it’s not the same as getting a mortgage a boat because at the end of the day a boat is a boat even a steel hulled one and I know  people live on boats but its its a different type of mortgage it’s not a mortgage it is a bank loan and that's a lot of money I think I will end up with 2 boats rather than 3 because if I if I can get new boats, they are really expensive you are looking £80-100,000.

## C

yeh

## Maria

my husband thinks we might be able to do a deal buying 2 boats, making 2 boats at once. so maybe if I needed 2 boats at 150 say 75 each.  And get exactly what I want and high quality they hold their price, the actual boats.  My ex-husband and I owned one a little narrow boat, bought it for £8,000 sold it 6 years later for £8,000.  It’s not like a caravan but I would still be a little bit nervous to have too much money spended on it.  If I did lose everything the mortgage will still get paid off but we won’t have our lovely, what my husband wants in the bank when he retires.

## C

yeh1:01:50

## Maria

he's he's got a plan, you know he has had a life plan for a long time and it slowed down because of divorce you know

## C

yeh

## Maria

when you have gone through a divorce on both sides you start again so you know we haven't finished off paying the mortgage yet where most people our age would have done.  We are 5 years off it and we've got how we are paying it off but erm but he also wants a couple of hundred thousand in the bank in his ideal world,

## C

yeh

## Maria

that's not there yet.  (laughter)

## C

yeh I know what you mean. I know what you mean.  Right, I am going to bang through some of my questions is that alright? erm because I could just talk about I could talk about this I have always wanted to set my own business up.  So, I can talk about it for hours.

## Maria

Ohh right.

## C

yeh

## Maria

what would you do it in?

## C

Erm well

## Maria

what would you do it in, just tell me quickly.

## C

Well originally, I wanted a coffee shop, when I was younger but it’s the hours were just be too much now.

## Maria

I've gone through that one myself.

## C

yeh, yeh if I hadn't joined the air force it’s probably would have been what I did. What I would have done but erm glamping site or something like that is something now I would quite something, again it’s all about managing in your own time, managing your own hours and life-style and erm yeh

## Maria

Well you never know on day Doctor you might get there

C

Yes yes, I know, we will see we will see.

## Maria

Right go through your questions then girl.

## C

yes, alright then (laughter) erm so what what is the one thing you would change about the whole leaving process? Is there anything that sticks out?

## Maria

Er, so anything that sticks out rather than anything I would change? It sounded like is there any one thing you would want to change

## C

yeh 1:03:37

## Maria

or is there only one things that sticks out.

## C

One thing that you would that you would change if you did it again.

## Maria

Well (chuckling) I wouldn't go and work for the company. (laughing) er oh that is a tricky one you know cause no had it gone well no

## C

No

## Maria

I wouldn't have changed anything.

## C

Everything else was ok, it was just

## Maria

The only thing that sticks out is the emotional bit.

## C

yeh

## Maria

the emotion of the decision which we have talked about before. I was very emotional, you know I was I think I cried when I told you about it.

## C

you did yeh.

## Maria

very emotional.  But I don't think I would change that either because it showed I loved what I'd done and my career and

## C

yeh

## Maria

it would be sad to be regretful about any of that.

## C

yeh yeh that is true, er what what do you think you miss most about the military?

## Maria

Ah well there is no doubt it is the camaraderie bit even though I went to work for a company of which 3 of my ex-bossed were working in it was a lot of ex-mod personnel.  Erm I think the biggest thing was in the Air Force was that autonomy that even at a relatively lower rank as a in Air Force terms a senior officer, you were still given a lot more erm room to hang yourself with and if you blew it you hung yourself or they pulled you back just in time to work for somebody erm who who couldn't let go I missed I missed the high level personnel in the Air Force actually the ones that let you get on with it, let you be the leader that you wanted to be or could be and because I never really had any problems while I was in the Air Force I I never got pulled in for anything bad I think that type of mentality is what  I miss I don't see that so much in civvi street.  Er and there there I am thinking of the Americans here because the company was an American company so the high level ones  were American I know obviously I do believe that Charles Green will make differences to that company in time and you know it needs it but it is going to take him time as well but the original senior team erm it it’s their lack of team work actually it isn't team work it’s their the boss you do exactly what they say and it’s all about money at the end of the day. In the Air Force we were more about providing a service because we had an end game to protect the country, to look after the aircraft obviously the basics of it to plan for war to do the exercises it was a different end game and I I always understood that that would be the case but that's what I missed.

## C

yeh

Maria

Does that make sense?

## C

yeh, like a unity of purpose beyond the bottom line isn't it?

## Maria

yes it it was it was that end unity what we were there for and there was a pride in that. We were there to serve the country and that sounds as gushy as hell and I probably didn't even think about it in those terms while I was serving because it sounds, well it actually sounds very American and gush as hell, you know, "thank you for your service" (American accent). But there was an element of pride in that

## C

yeh

## Maria

and when you look back on it I I will I already already 8, you know a year down the line, cause its a year since I left, people ask me what I did and I say oh I am a retired officer from the Air Force, I don't ever mention the company

## C

no

## Maria

and and and the Air Force will be the bit that I can live off (laughs)

## C

yeh

## Maria

you know my pride thing. and I think my husband will be the same with the Army at the end of the day he was a General in the Army that's never going to go away.  And and I know he is a director level in his company but he hasn't got anything like the amount of power he had in the Army and he misses it.  He misses it he misses that status I think that is why he wanted to be a a you know he is doing all sorts of things out in civvi street cause it just gives him that lift and its not because he is a show off he just likes having that responsibility so I think that the thing.

## C

Do you think that, that's what appeals to you about the magistrates, potentially?

## Maria

erm well yes and no, yes and no one of the things I remember working when I was in Ari Command erm God who was the Group Captain I work for his name has escaped me, he had said to me if you had taken your commission in admin you would have been a Group Captain by now there wasn't the same promotion as we both know within my branch but also my bed was much more personnel related.

## C

yeh

## Maria

you know I wasn't that interested in core branch stuff I was interested in people when you knew me I was a Squadron commander if I could pride myself on anything I think you would remember me as somebody that actually liked the people that worked with me and I cared about them.  I interviewed them all, chatted for far too long but I was more worried about them than myself and so Admin probably would have been something I would have been better suited to on the administration side and what attracted me to what my husband do I went to watch my husband in court is the personal cases that come up very interesting and you have got to think beyond why have they broken the law what’s what’s behind why they at standing in front of you in a court of law and some of them are drug accidents and drunks some of them have had some real bad luck and I am attracted to the story behind it and hopefully I watched h I my husband can't be a chairman for 2 years I watched and they as a winger as they call the magistrates there is 3 magistrates either side you can't speak out loud to the accused or anybody it has to go through the chairman, there is a charismatic chairman been doing it for 30 years and he treated them all like humans whilst he he didn't treat  them like the guilty bastard you know you know erm "hand the guilty bastard" he he asked them how they were had they had a good morning you know had they had a good breakfast, if they had been in the cell overnight,

## C

yeh

## Maria

and then he got to the crux of the thing and you could see I worked out in my head what I thought they were going to give as a punishment for ea and I got everyone smack on right and I thought 'oh' so that is more what it is about, I'm not really a kudos person.

## C

yeh

## Maria

my husband probably is more, not kudos er position cause he has had it.  I haven't and I'm not it was never really about that it’s about erm well for me it’s about doing a good job and I think I could do a good job.  So, it’s not a status thing but it won’t sound bad. (laughter)

## C

1:10:45

Brilliant, that's brilliant I think you have pretty much answered everything else because of what we have been discussing and I think erm erm I just really glad you look so happy and you look really sort of excited about what is next.

## Maria

yeh, yeh I am glad you didn't see me at Easter.

## C

well do you know what

## Maria

If you had contacted me it would have been interesting to have had these questions 6 months ago when I was 4 or 5 months into the job where I felt like shit.

## C

yeh

## Maria

And and I was so I would probably have cried throughout the entire interview because all my feelings as it did with the lady, she had asked me some pertinent questions and I and also I was also feeling a failure, I was feeling guilty, I was feeling useless I know I wasn't and the feedback I got afterwards and PTs ringing me up and saying the things they said, it helped.  It obviously it helped its interesting the answers you would have got 6 months ago compared to now.

## C

yeh

## Maria

when I have had time to lick my wounds a bit and be think about it from a less emotional point of view

## C

yeh

## Maria

to go back to being myself in other wards erm and then you get the positive Maria back which is what I am mostly about.

## C

yeh

## Maria

and that is why it was such a shock at the time.  A shock not getting on with somebody, I haven't liked everybody let’s face it what was that girl that worked with us the bi-sexual girl, I didn't like her

## C

No

## Maria

cause she was out for herself all the time she would blame the staff for everything she wasn't there working properly with them I didn't respect her I know she didn't like me cause I was hard on her.  That's that's I don't mind that cause that is fair.

## C

yeh

## Maria

she didn't deserve it, she didn't like me cause she thought I was a bitch because she wasn't good enough.  I can live with myself being a bitch if I'm doing it for the right reasons you know.

## C

yeh

## Maria

But  to you know if you had disliked me I would have been hurt

## C

ohh

## Maria

I would have been sad you know because I liked and respected you so you know it would have been different.

## C

yeh

## Maria

you know it’s that mutual it’s that mutual respect.  And I am more about that and if somebody doesn't like me and respect me there is a genuine reason for it whether there right or wrong or I am right or wrong.  But just to have it because this man didn't like to be proven wrong on anything or he was I don't know if he was anti-female, I don't think he was anti-boss, I think, I think I do know, I think deep down he lacked confidence I think deep down he knew he was out of his depth he had taken on more than  he was capable of and he was very proud of himself when he started the job  He did keep saying I am an ex-Warrant officer doing the job of a wing commander now. That is how he saw it.

## C

yeh

## Maria

and I tried to pump him on that I said you should be really proud of yourself you have achieved well I tried that tact in the early stages the reality was he hadn't got an ounce on even the worst warrant officer er Wing Commander that did that job

## C

yeh

## Maria

he hadn't got it. and so maybe his lack of confidence and his ability he was fighting that within himself and so his reaction was to push back and be nasty with it and small minded and that is the case a lot of small minded nasty people

## C

yeh

## Maria

they haven't got what it takes so they bully and be mean and nasty and I wasn't tough enough maybe to just to (sigh) I was in shock to be honest cause it in all those years, 31 years I had just never come across it before,

## C

yeh

## Maria

not to the not to that degree

## C

not to that extent where you couldn't even put it aside to do the job properly

## Maria

Well yeh that is right and it all becomes all encompassing.  And instead of worrying about the job you are worrying about the person you are working with Good God. (laughs) yeh no so the biggest relief is that I don't have to see him anymore. He wrote in my thank you card you know they did send they got me a gift and everything

## C

yeh

## Maria

It was a lovely German lady there she was such a sweetheart and er I know she arranged it and my boss him and my boss have both signed it off saying oh they had learnt a lot from me and they were going to miss me ughh Fuck Off, I hate that I hate that

## C

laughs

## Maria

It’s because of you that I am going you bastards. (laughs).  Maybe they just didn't get it Caroline, maybe they couldn't even see it.

## C

No maybe not maybe not I think you can very easily get yourself into tunnel vision where you just can't see the way out.

## Maria

Well if you think about it I don't know if it is part of your studies but how many people really are self-aware, you know, because there are a lot of people out there that are  are completely unaware of how they appear to other people I am probably and and and it’s not a good thing to be always too self-aware. I think I am overly self-aware because I over worry

## C

mmm

## Maria

I've always been a worrier, I do care about what people think.  I am tough enough and brainy enough may be to think well tough if you don't like me you don't but I still sort of care

## C

yeh

## Maria

that they don't er and so that is not always healthy.  But Good help me it is completely unhealthy on the other side where you swing through life what you are creating below you or either side of you and we have seen that with some of those getters in the Air Force we have seen some who have risen, we've seen some great ones rise, but we have also seen the little self self interested bastards rise to the top and their clever but their so unaware of how they treat people and how they come across and the are just pleased with themselves.

## C

mm, yeh.

## Maria

So equally those 2 individuals maybe they are just totally self unaware you know.

## C

yeh

## Maria

There is plenty of them around

## C

yes, that is true, that's true I em I went for a job interview up at Cranwell last week as a lecturer on IOT and it was very very strange being back in a military environment very weird.  The job popped up and I though well we are fairly close cause we are at Wittering and it all felt so easy so comfortable in the environment but at the same time the thought of the erm the director who is an ex-air commodore said oh you know we could always call you back up and have you come back in as a reservist and do some lecturing.  And I just thought I don't want to put my uniform back if I come back it will be in civvies it would be as a civilian.

## Maria

It’s funny I understand that cause I was of because the PTs knew what had happened or some of them knew.  Erm Paul Smith, offered me a Wing commander FTRS slot back at Abbey Wood, I I could have gone from a job to a job, I didn't have to leave entirely but I didn't want to go back I didn't want to go back into uniform I can understand what what have you heard from them. 1:18:15

(Conversation continues about my work and universities and RAF courses.)

1:20:58

## Maria

I'll just quickly one story did I ever tell you when I was at Shrivenham doing my OCC course we were in the middle of a long long, we were all in their so there was over a 100 people in one of the lecture theatres, oh the sun has come right out into my face, and erm this bloke was really really really boring he was a civil servant lecturer and I dropped off and actually I was, he was talking about, oh I forget what you call it now, the traffic light system for marking how we were doing at projects or something like that I forget what it was called, anyway it was new out in those days and and I was on a unit that it and it really wasn't  working very well because people would put green in when they know its red and put some waffle in any way he was espousing its virtues I had dropped off and I must have dropped off in a semi-state of half listening to him and in the middle of him spouting off I shouted out in front of over a 100 people  "Its Rubbish" really loud.  (laughter) I woke myself up I I woke myself up my neighbours, my neighbours shock "well what is wrong with you!" and this bloke stuttered and I went "What I mean to say is .." and I warbled through a minute about what had happened and then I subsided and my heart was pounding and when I got out of the briefing people came up "Bloody hell Maria, have you got turrets?" there was bloody so watch up it was so embarrassing, so embarrassing, so funny but so embarrassing.  Poor man. "It's rubbish" oh god I didn't say that out loud did I?

## C

Brilliant  1:23:04

## Maria

It takes a level of trust to tell people what you are thinking and feeling.

1:24:23