

## Bolting Doors, Mending Fences Transcript

ALEX: I stayed in Pollok all my life, had five kids and we thought, (we) need to get a bigger house, so we put in for Renfrew. I went to see this house and the condition of it was pretty bad, it was really bad. For a five apartment, every wall, every skirting, door, sockets in the whole house was all artexed so we asked the local authority were they going to plaster any walls for us. They says you take it as you see it. So I looked at my wife, my wife looked at me. We just went (sighs). If we get a bigger house for the kids... So we took it.

Round the back was the old housing schemes and they used my close as a shortcut. There was no light in the close. Junkies went to the shop next door... tinfoil, in the close... I phoned the police but by the time the police come they're away. So I got the light fixed, got the back door fitted to my close. I put a big bolt, snib. Stopped it that way. I wrote on the back of the door "Door's now locked. Please walk round the long way". Through time they did respect it. I mean I'll be honest, I couldn't do it myself - so I bought a Rottweiler. She was good. She got rid of them. And they got to know "Don't go in that close anymore because the guy down there is just a pain in the backside." I used to get them chapping on my back room window "Can you open the back door?" "No. Walk round". I mean it was unreal.

I just started doing the house and the garden and people were saying to me "Mister, you're wasting your time because the local kids round here will just destroy it." and I thought we'll see what happens.

So a couple of weeks and I'm in the garden doing it all up and there he was, the wee local gangster type thing, young boy "What are you doing Mr?" "I'm doing my garden up". So he came in, gave me a wee hand and the next minute all his pals tried to give me a wee hand. The garden started looking good. The weans (children) took pride to doing it and I took pride doing it.

And I just love kids, I mean kids are so funny. They are so innocent and at the same time they can be a wee bit cheeky. I've built a big waterfall, I've got a goldfish, and all the kids give it names. But there's a certain kid thinks it's his and if anybody calls the fish by a different name he cracks up 'cause it's his fish and he gave it names. And you can see them fighting in the garden!

Some parents take their weans to the nursery, I've got to shut my gates because of kids running to the pond to see the fish and are always late for nursery. So I've got to keep my gates shut. But when they come down the street after nursery the gates are opened. They come in the garden, it's their garden, it's not my garden, I just look after the garden but it's the kids' garden.

It was coming up to Christmas and I thought we'd start doing the Christmas lights. So the first year I put some lights up in the close. They looked great. The second year I thought - let's do Santa in the garden. I knew a gentleman called Bill Smith from Radio Clyde. They were doing a wee kind of roadshow with

Colgate so Bill Smith had some stuff left over—kids toothbrushes and toothpaste. I asked him for some and advertised in the garden "Come and see Santa. Free of charge. Get a wee present". So all the local kids came, some big kids came - to see Santa. And there it was. Santa and toothbrushes. I thought it was a great idea (laughs) the mothers thought it was a brilliant idea. But not the kids. The kids wanted sweeties or something (laughs). They were all like that "A toothbrush and toothpaste! What's this!" LAUGHS.

So the next year I was like "let's do something better again". So I had an old trailer I had made out of a caravan. Cut it all up. Made this trailer. So I made a sleigh out of it. Got lights fitted. So my wee mate Toasty stays up the close, I says "Toasty. You want to do Santa this year?"

"Aye. No bother Alec."

"There's only one snag"

"What's that?" he says.

"We're going to go round the streets in a sleigh, and you're going to be in the sleigh".

He thought "Aye. No bother".

So I done my sleigh up. Got all the lights on it. I stuck this wee guy Toasty in it and went round all the schemes. It was brilliant. See the kids faces. And nobody around the area knew what I was planning this year. So they were all at their windows. "What the hell's that?" this big school bell rattling and there was Santa. Oh they all came down. Brilliant. Fantastic. What a feeling to see the weans.

The last six years I've managed to get selection boxes for the kids. And Christmas there, 162 kids came to see Santa. My best was 180.

In the summer, when the good weather appears, so do the kids with the bikes. They always chap on the door "Alec. Going to fix my bike?" Some of them are dead pleasant. Some of them go "How not? gonna fix it? Aw come on Alec." And they just nag, nag. So I fix their bikes for them but I do it in my garden and I've got a big six-foot fence from my garden to my shed. And the kids know. I go in the hut to get my tools. They stay behind the fence. Because our society, if an adult came out of a hut with a kid, you know what they're going to say.

But there's too many adults feart (afraid) to talk to kids because of this. And I think it's a sin because kids are funny. Every kid's got its own wee personality. I mean some kids, it's kind of, a wee bit cheeky but a wee bit funny. And you get some kids that's dead, dead polite man. You're like that man "but I know your Ma and Dad and they're not that polite.

I've got grandkids and I'm wary with motors stopping. You've just got... I just don't know, I think there's too much kind of, not rumours but if something happens to somebody down the road it all just spreads. Everybody's seen it. Oh that happened to my kid. It's just, I don't know, I think, I do see a decline in kids out on the street. I mean I was guaranteed at least four or five kids a week chapping my door, to fix the bikes, punctures and all that. But now I just might

get one or two. I mean weans are not coming in with sore legs or "look, I've come off my bike, look at my knee, my elbow". It's " I broke my phone" now. "I'm on my laptop, I'm on Facebook talking to my pals at school."

I mean it is a big bad world out there, but I think we've got to let kids be kids. We should get the weans back out on the streets to carry on, chap people's door and running away, the things I used to do. I mean it was funny, let's be honest here, tying string to the letterbox and chapping the door and hiding in the bush and all that. The things I used to get up to. But it was innocent. It was a bit of fun. I mean all the harm you were doing was getting somebody off their fat backside to open the door and there's nobody there.