

Diana Toeman video transcript

I am Diana Toeman.

I'm 78 years old and I've been in several different professions, or sort of professions, semi-professional, for most of my adult life.

I started in advertising when it was in its very, very, very early stages, on television, which was fascinating. I loved that.

And then, I married and stopped working, as so many of us did in those days.

I became an audio describer in theatres and was trained by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and while I was there my husband was reading for Jewish Care here, or rather in its old premises, and my ears pricked up and I thought, "That's what I'd like to do actually, as well as the audio description, I'd like to read books for the blind", and so I started doing that at exactly the time that my husband died. So, I stepped into his shoes, as best I could because he was an excellent reader, and it's grown from there.

After someone dies who is very close to you, we'd been married for 45 years, they take a part of you away with them, and you have to replace that in some form or another.

So, I wanted to make another life for myself and this seemed to be the way of doing it, that this was something that was for me.

This was my life, nothing to do with the children, nothing to do with my late husband, as it so turned out, so that it became, it became a lifeline, I do have to say.

If somebody had said to me, "In 20 years time you are going to be doing all this voluntary work and reading for Jewish Care", I would have thought to myself, "Oh, how lovely. I'd love to do that. Could I please start now, rather than have to wait for the next 20 years"?

It feels liberating, I think now, to have the freedom to do as I want to do, which sounds fairly self centred, but you know, I mean, given that one is still tied up with the family and obviously very concerned about them, I think I now have the liberty to pursue my own interests, and as long as my health stays reasonably stable, to carry on doing what I want to do. Yes, indeed.