

PhD Pioneers: The Living Experiences of The Open University's First PhD Graduates

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Dr Ken Richardson** and **Dr Don Aldiss**

Interviewed by: **Elizabeth Currie**

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Dr Ken Richardson and Dr Don Aldiss Interview Clips

Clip: PHDC003X

Dr Ken Richardson
phd_009_001

I was sharing a laboratory with Aaron Sinner, who was Steven's project officer I think was his employment and Aaron took me under his wing almost like a master apprentice and showed me the ropes of working in the laboratory, wrote protocols for me and got me started.

And of course with Steven as a very gentle guiding hand as my supervisor, having given me a very pretty well defined and clear project, I mean I got off to a flying start. The other amazing thing was the group of people I found myself in amongst, that Steven had recruited to what later become, shortly afterwards became the Brain Research Group. Just the diversity of, I mean Steven was obviously the bedrock of ideas and set the basic theoretical framework of ideas for the research, but the others had ideas too. Obviously I'd come from quite a different background and it was just thrilling for me to be involved in amongst those ideas that were flying around and sparks flying, they fed off each other. Not just ideas about biochemistry or about neuroscience, but also about wider issues in science and also science and politics, which had just never occurred to me that science and politics could be intertwined.

Dr Don Aldiss
phd_001_001

So it was a lovely environment to be in for those kinds of reasons. It was also good because, I mean Earth Sciences at the OU at that time, and maybe since but I don't know it since, but at that time certainly, it was like joining a big happy family. People, I mean a lot of this was down to Ian Gass and his character. He was a very good geologist; he was a very good teacher; he was a very good researcher. He was also a very nice man. He was tough enough and manipulative enough to take on politicians and vice chancellors and the dean of science and all these people and to get his way arguing at that level. And he was very good at it. But he was, everybody liked him because he was just a pleasant bloke to be with. So he walked into the department and there were women, some quite young women doing secretarial work. There were students like me, a few students like me. There were postdoctoral researchers, there were lecturers, there were class assistants, administrative people of one sort or another, and Ian was universally respected and liked. And I think in many ways loved eventually by the people that I knew there. I mean they had a great fondness for him.