

Stories for Lipreading



PIPE TROUBLES by Michael Edwards.

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]

Welcome to Stories for Lipreading. If you haven't used our website before, we suggest you look at our 'How to Use' page before you begin. We hope you enjoy this autobiographical piece called 'Pipe Troubles' by Michael Edwards.

Pipe Troubles by Michael Edwards.

Dad would often undertake quite complex repairs to our home. He was ambitious but thoroughly competent. However, on one occasion in the mid-1950s, I demonstrated my own lack of skills in an outstanding act of incompetence. The mere thought of it makes me cringe whenever it comes to mind. The job was urgent: we needed to replace most of the soil-pipe drainage for the house. This involved the installation of new gulley pipes in the main drain running along the narrow space between the house and the fence. My ever-competent brother was the usual choice of assistant for more complex tasks, especially ones involving pipes and plumbing. But for some reason he was not available, so I was reluctantly drafted in.

To complete the task, a special open channel junction pipe was required, but only a closed one could be obtained from the local building suppliers, and that after much delay and at considerable expense. So Dad would have to cut it in half to make the required gulley pipe. The trench was duly dug through the concrete, with much use of club-hammer and chisel, and the old pipes were eventually removed. There was some urgency about the matter, as no pipe meant no toilet facilities!

My father then set about cutting the pipe. He spent what seemed to be many patient hours, carefully working along the length of the pipe arms with a fine chisel. The three-foot pipe with angled side entry was supported on a bed of sand because any sharp stone beneath, or undue shock, would have shattered the precious pipe. The job was finally completed and the cleaved half-pipe was ready. The other half had been broken during the work, so there was no backup. The trench was prepared, the cement grout readied, and my minor role in the ensuing drama commenced.

“Right!” said Dad. “Hold that end of the pipe and lower it into place with me, but be careful. Whatever you do, don't drop it. That's taken all afternoon to make!” I readied myself, and nervously gripped the end of the pipe. “Right!” he said. “Now!” But my mind had wandered from the task in hand. The slight, unexpected tug from the other end took me by surprise and I lost my grip! Inevitably, the precious pipe plunged the foot or so into the trench and smashed.

I was banished from the scene, loudly urged on my way by my despairing father.

I can't remember how the problem was eventually resolved. I'm not sure I ever found out. The remainder of the saga has been expunged from my memory.

Contact: info@storiesforlipreading.org.uk