



The Tree Surgeon

Charley Hello this is Charly and today I'm talking to Lynn Carter who I believe to be the only professional female tree climber in Brittany. Tell me, why did you want to get into such a male dominated profession?

Lynn Good question. I don't know really. Erm, I suppose it all started because my husband is a Forester and one day he came home moaning saying that he needed some help so I said "I can do that, I'll do that. Let me help you, please." So I started working with him, and I loved it, I, it, it was just absolutely fascinating. I loved the machinery; I loved the chainsaws; I loved the dirt; I loved getting wet. I don't know why, I just absolutely loved it. And we worked on a large private estate and there I did my chainsaw proficiency, and back then in the late 90s, I suppose then, I was the second female to have ever taken the test, and the only other female was the Assessors wife.

So then the local Council were looking for Tree Surgeons and I persuaded my husband and I to apply. There was a Tree Surgeon and a Tree Surgeon's Assistant, well, at the time my husband had done all his tree climbing certificates many years ago, and I thought that would be ideal, we'd have our own truck, we'd go around the town cutting people's trees down and it would be really good fun. So we both applied for these jobs, however, I got an interview and he didn't. So, I went for the interview and got offered a job and sadly left my partner in his old job and I went on to work with the local Authority. And by that time I didn't have any climbing certificates so within a week of being on the Council I insisted that they put me through my tree climbing certificates, which they did, reluctantly, I did have to battle but they did it, they did allow, me to do it and that was within a week of being on the Council and I do remember the Council bosses saying to me after I insisted that I get all this training, they did say to me "oh you know we're taking a risk taking on a female." And at that time I was the first female full time employed on the tools with our local Authority, they'd taken on seasonal workers, but at that time I was the first full time worker and they kept telling me what a risk they had taken.

Then I turned up at a local Agricultural College one day to do my tree climbing and was absolutely scared to death, I have to say. The fir.... I was in a room full of rufy-tuffy blokes and I was the only

female. The Lecturer managed to get me up to the first branch on the first day, in floods of tears, I was absolutely terrified. I really was. I would say "oh is the rope long enough, oh my God I can't do this". But give him his due, he really persevered. I think he just thought it was a bit of a challenge erm and he got me up to the first branch. I came home that night saying "that's it, I can't do it, I just can't do this it's too difficult, I can't do it." And I had it in my mind the very next day to phone up the college and say that's it I just can't do it, I can't do this. But, my husband sat me down and said "look yes you can, it's easy." He said "every night I'll take you out and we'll go tree climbing and we'll get you through this." Because I, you know, I wanted it so badly and it was so hard that first day, I just didn't know what to do. So, that's what we did. We went all over the place just climbing trees, every night I would go out and climb a tree and every night he would make me go one step further, or one branch higher, every night. So when I went back to the college the next week I had a little bit more confidence, I was a lot better and I think the course went on over a few weeks, I think, come the end of it, because my husband made me go out every night and encouraged me every night to go out climbing, come the end of it I was actually better than the lads and say that gave me great pleasure.

Charley You said you worked with your husband, does he do climbing as well?

Lynn He does climb, but, sadly, the reason he didn't get an interview with the Council he's climbing certificates weren't as current as they could have been. Since he did his back, oh, uh in the late 80s I'd say, or early 90s, things had moved on and Health and Safety had got more meticulous and they needed additional certification for him to be climbing with the local Authority or someone like that. So, really, so he had to go back and retrain and get his certificates. But now, of course, because I've got it I do most of the climbing, you've got to have two climbers because if anything goes wrong you need somebody to be able to get you down and out of trouble if you need it. But he actually says and admits that he's got no desire or passion to climb any trees he's quite happy to watch and to let me get on with it.

Charley Don't you ever get scared working at heights?

Lynn All the time, absolutely petrified, and if you ask any climber they'll tell you that

Charley Then why do you do it?

Lynn Well, it does focus the mind. If you've got any other troubles or worries, they completely fly out the door because you're just concentrating on literally six feet ahead of you, that's all you're concentrating on, you don't, you don't think about anything else so

it really does focus the mind. And to be honest after I'd climbed that first tree, there's no other feeling like it in the world, I tell you it absolutely changed my life. It had been the thing I'd been looking for all my life. It's got danger, it focuses your mind, it's got everything. I do believe everybody, everybody, should at least climb a tree.

Charley Just don't look down!

Lynn Well, I don't like heights; I don't like ladders at all. Erm, but, when you're in that tree and you're looking out across the landscape, there's no other place like it in the world. I tell you, it is the best thing, ever.

