

## **Interview for Portuguese Newspaper (Evora), WDR 2007**

How did you start to organize the first event in 1993? How did everything start? - Why did you start to organize it?

In the UK, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of November is dedicated to the Remembrance of all those who have died in wars and the ceremonies involve all public figures – in London the Prime Minister, Ministers, The Queen, Royal family, other dignitaries, all of whom lay wreaths at a war memorial in Westminster; these events are held in the whole country and they also have wide media coverage. There is a national 2-minute silence connected to this Remembrance of war victims.

Because we, road victims, strongly feel that what is happening on the roads is very similar to a war situation, with equally horrific consequences, we felt that road victims too deserved a Day of Remembrance. November is the month of Remembrance, so we chose the third Sunday of November for our Remembrance Day.

What did you do in your first activity? - What do you think about it? Was it successful? - Did people want to participate in it?

We started by holding a special church service, where we read out the names of people who have been killed. We also had people give testimonies and speeches. Immediately we invited the emergency services to take part – ambulance, fire and police officers. We also produced posters, sent out press releases and wrote articles about the scale and impact of this disaster.

In the UK, each year more special Remembrance services were held and the publicity grew. As we were a member of the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims, FEVR, we asked our European colleagues if they wanted to join and this was taken up enthusiastically by almost all FEVR member organisations, who saw this day as a day of solidarity with others who have suffered and are suffering the same and a day on which all those whose deaths were treated so lightly by the authorities and even society would be remembered with love and respect, and their deaths given due recognition.

The families and friends of victims of course are happy that such a day exists on which their loved ones are remembered. The people who are involved in the aftermath of crashes are also glad that the issue of road death and injury is receiving attention in this way, as normally it is an issue nobody wants to mention or do anything about.

- How do you think, do people care about organized activities and Road Safety in general? Do you feel changes in people's attitude, thinking about Road Safety, from first your activity till nowadays?

The public are brought up to believe that death and injury on the roads are inevitable – they are called accidents, which is something we are trying to change – people die or are injured in crashes or collisions and their deaths or injuries are tragedies, which we must do everything to prevent. We think that gradually people are beginning to understand this, but the process is slow.

- - What will you and your organization do this year in the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims?

The organisations under the umbrella of FEVR are all celebrating this day in their countries in different and many creative ways, as does ACA-M in Portugal. They are also using this day to highlight the impact of road death and injury and the general neglect of road crash victims.

Jointly, at the recent FEVR Assembly in Amsterdam, we agreed on several international initiatives:

- The **'Light of Hope' initiative** – where people will burn a light or candle in memory of road crash victims from 6-8pm – this will be done on all continents and a transfer of lights from one continent to another will take place by video-link. This initiative will have a website from next year.
- **International Coalition Against Road Trauma (ICART)**, an informal network of organizations, institutions and individuals who wish to see road trauma, the major epidemic of the present times, managed, minimized and prevented. This initiative is an extension of the Coalition Against Trauma initiative launched by ACA-M in Portugal.
- A call for **'A Day without road crashes'** on World Day

- What did you feel when you find out that your initiative will be international?

We suggested this Day to the World Health Organisation and UN – as an opportunity to highlight and address the neglected issue of road death and injury. We are happy that the UN recognised its importance in the fight against the acceptance of so many preventable and premature deaths and injuries, and that this day has been recognized as World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.

- What do you think about global problem of Road Safety? - How can we improve the situation on roads faster?

The situation is forecast to become much worse than it is already. At present more than 1.3 million people are killed each year on the world's roads, 10 times more are seriously injured. If present trends continue, then a 60% increase is forecast in the next 10 years. We are all potential victims, therefore it is in all our interests to work for road danger reduction. The biggest danger is posed by fast traffic – we need to have lower speeds in order to protect both drivers and people outside vehicles - vulnerable road users. We need to have serious investigations of all crashes, in order to find their causes. We need to have laws that convey the message that the issue of law breaking on the road is treated seriously by governments and so also act as deterrents. We need government funding for the support of road crash victims, which at present is not provided.

- How do you think, this Day and its activities all around the world will improve the situation in the world? Why? - Do people have improved in Road Safety since 1993?

The issue of road death and injury is on the Agenda as never before – this is a first step. By acknowledging that there are many road crash victims and that the affected families and communities suffer greatly – there is the potential created for an improvement in the situation. We hope that it will not take too long for a dramatic improvement, since what road crash victims want to see most of all is that lessons are learnt from their tragedies so that they are not repeated. Many of our organisations work very hard, we feel that we deserve that our work and the loss and suffering of so many people are not in vain.