

Free to Air
Appendix Two
Programme and Interview Transcriptions

Frank Byrne

Appendix 2

Liveline 060509

THREAD A

Dur: 57'48"

(Sting 1850 715815 music)

- JD 1 Hello, good afternoon and you're very welcome to *Liveline*. I'll say it at the start, thanks to everybody over the last three weeks since the accident, especially to Damien O'Reilly who stood in (if you pardon the pun) at very short notice on Holy Thursday into this seat and to the team that battled on bravely and brilliantly. I've had a chance to listen to the programme. Above all to all the well-wishers and the people who sent me cards. Now, another person from RTE, a colleague here – well a colleague just to about an hour ago – George Lee, has been dominating our phone lines. 51551, text and Joe@RTE.ie. Tommy, good afternoon.
- Tommy 2 Joe, good afternoon.
- JD 3 Your politics first? Well, your party politics, sorry, if you have any?
- Tommy 4 I was an active member and a candidate for FG for 12 to 13 years, programme manager with Jim Mitchell, a special advisor to Gay Mitchell in the John Bruton government; not a member now and I'll be going out canvassing tonight for Vincent Jackson in Ballyfermot.
- JD 5 Would you canvass for George Lee in Dublin South?
- Tommy 6 I absolutely would and Joe, before we go any further, welcome back.
- JD 7 Yeh, its great to be back.
- Tommy 8 It really is...it's a fierce shock.... It was a fierce shock when we heard the news, ok? You're in our prayers and we were thinking about you. I'm delighted to hear you back on the airwaves.
- JD 9 I really appreciate that. You know that, don't you?
Gladly canvass for him? You would. Why, if you're not a member of FG?
- Tommy 10 I rang in to *Liveline* the minute I heard the one o'clock news. I was hoping you were going to cover it and I was asking the production team to cover it. I thought it was necessary that Sean put it to George about his reporting and his job in RTE and the national profile that he had, particularly in the last six months when this country was going down the tubes and I'm not talking party politics here when I say that. I work with the health service at the moment and, Joe, you have no idea the impact it's having. It's having an incredible impact on services and, not only that, we're told, the only

thing I believe from people in Fianna Fail (FF), and I don't want to be smart, I don't want to be political to the point of being insulting, but we are told by them and by the economic people that this six months is only a flavour of what is to come in the next two years and we have the EU Report yesterday which confirmed. Coming back to the point, Sean O'Rourke put it to George that was he not thinking about this. Was he not approached five years ago, six years ago blah, blah...

I think that George Lee has been one of the saving graces in this country from the point of view of keeping us informed accurately about the economy and that. I am delighted he has decided to stand. I'm delighted he's standing for Fine Gael (FG) although I wouldn't have been too upset if he had stood for, say, the Labour Party but it would have given him a position in opposition in the country if he is elected. He's standing in one of the most difficult constituencies in the country that has elected.. topped the poll with Garland of the Greens; threw him out; then George Colley's daughter stood; topped the poll; was kicked out.

JD 11 Is it fair to say that it's slightly disingenuous of George Lee now to say (He's obviously become a member of FG in the last hour or so).... It was about six weeks ago on this programme, we got calls about a contribution George had made – once again extremely articulately, extremely passionate and he made this point on the *Late Debate*, presented by Fergal Keane that night. Do you think when George Lee was saying what he said on the *Late Debate* that he had any intention of joining FG? Let people make their own minds up. Lets listen to it.

Lee (tape)12 It gets more and more serious by the day and this is the same rubbish we've been getting from the beginning. We don't know a thing. We still don't know a shaggin' thing and we now know that the bankers are quite capable of cooking the books and pulling the wool over everybody's eyes and we're sitting here bailing them out left, right and centre and its so annoying to hear the type of language that they're at.. We want to bloomin' know. We're the ones footing the bloomin' bill.

JD 13 This was the day when Brian Lenihan admitted that he hadn't read some sections of the Price Waterhouse Report. Now, do you not think that FF can say that they were duped all along? That someone who was Economics Editor of the national broadcaster has declared for FG?

Tommy 14 He's declared for public politics.

JD 15 No, he has declared for FG.

Tommy 16 Exactly, the opportunity has come up there, I mean, Joe, and listen to these words I'm going to say to you. The reality is the opportunity has come up there. If someone from FF said 'good morning' to me, I'd check my watch 'cos it's probably the afternoon and they don't know where they

are anyhow. The reality is.... No, listen...., the reality is we have a situation. Everyone is talking about Brian Cowan inherited the situation from Bertie. He was the Minister for Finance for four years.

JD 17 ***(Attempts interruptions)***

Tommy 18 That in reply to the question you put to me in relation to what George said on the *Late Debate*, this is what we're talking about. We're dealing with a situation. I heard George Lee saying that the banks bailed out the builders and developers and the government bailed out the banks and now the people are being taxed to bail out the government and Richard Bruton repeated that phrase in the chamber. The reality is...

JD 19 Did you participate in asking George Lee in 2002 if he'd stand for FG?

Tommy 20 I did. I met George at that time. It was before 2002 when Jim was involved with the DIRT Inquiry for the previous five years – for three years, sorry. George was keeping a close eye on that and remember, himself and Charlie Bird had been involved in looking at the banks.

JD 21 And what did George say when you asked him?

Tommy 22 You don't ask people. I didn't go to George Lee and ask him if he was standing for FG. On a number of occasions I was in George's company.....on two occasions. One occasion I asked him about the offer that Charlie McCreevy.... About the savings project and I said, "George, is that good?" and he said, "It's money for nothing" and I heard what he said. The second time I spoke to George in Jim's company and Jim looked at George... they were talking about the DIRT inquiry and I indicated to him afterwards when I was walking out. I said, "George, would you ever consider taking this up and standing in public life and he looked at me and I said, "I'm serious – we're looking for candidates?" Now, he may not have taken that as a direct offer.

JD 23 David Bolger then Izzy O'Rourke.

David 24 Hello, Joe. I'm totally in cahoots with the gentleman who's just been on. I'm down in Wexford but I believe that George Lee is a fantastic candidate to be stepping forward and somebody of the ilk that we need in this country to be stepping forward for these instead of the usual FF nepotism and sons, daughters, cousins, aunts uncles etc. that come forward – "Oh well, he did it, my uncle so I'll go forward"! Somebody with a degree in economics, severely lacking in the government at present – barristers, teachers etc. but nobody with the skill we require at the moment and economics is one of the big skills we require in this country.

JD 25 Ok, Jim Connolly is on the line. Text 51551. Jim is in Clare

- Jim 26 Good afternoon.
- JD 27 Go ahead, Jim.
- Jim 28 Well, I have no gripe with George Lee whatsoever but I certainly can't agree with the last speaker. My point is that any presenter on RTE, or national radio, gets a higher profile for the job. That goes with the territory. Neither George nor anybody else can be labelled in any way as abusing his position or whatever. So my proposal, quite simply is this; every RTE presenter's contract should contain a line that would prevent them going into public politics in particular in a democracy within 12 months of their leaving their job.
- JD 29 Why?
- Jim 30 And I think that would probably sort the whole issue.
- JD 31 You mentioned democracy. How would that be democratic?
- Jim 32 It would be totally democratic. It's involved in several contracts that people leave. I believe many high profile people, leaving RTE, have to sign certain contracts that they won't get involved in other companies etc. In a democracy everybody would be starting on a level playing pitch but if you already have a serious high profile because of your job then it's not a level playing pitch and the fundamental basis of democracy is that people start on a level playing pitch.
- JD 33 So you think it's simply unfair?
- Jim 34 Totally unfair, absolutely unfair.
- JD 35 Unfair on other candidates?
- Jim 36 Totally unfair on, not alone the candidates but the way we run our country. It's supposed to be totally absolutely fair. Now, if you're a director of *Bord Planala* you have to sign as part of your contract that for a year after leaving *Bord Planala* you cannot become a consultant in planning in certain issues because you have an inside track and these things appear in order to have a level playing pitch and this is no comment on George Lee or anybody else. RTE itself in public service broadcasting has huge questions to answer in any event about the kind of..... I heard Sean O'Rourke giving a fairly tough interview to George Lee and part of it was a statement from George that he is very reluctant to leave RTE 'cos it is a very close knit family and that is absolutely correct and for instance.....
- JD 37 What's wrong with saying that?

- Jim 38 Well, it gets very, very unfair as time goes on. For instance if you're out there in the world trying to make an impression one way or another as an ordinary person and supposing....and I'll give you an exact example many, many people out there, including myself, might have written a book but you wouldn't have a dog's chance of getting that book presented or looked at in RTE in certain instances, whereas if you're a presenter for RTE or working for RTE, not alone would you get it on one show, you'd get it on every show including Podge and Rodge. So, yes, there is a massive unfairness
- JD 39 Tommy, massive?
- Tommy 40 Well, Joe, there's other high profile people in RTE who are in Fianna Fail and actively in RTE. Paschal Mooney, for instance has his radio programme.
- JD 41 It's a music programme.
- Tommy 42 Music, yeh, but it's high profile.
- JD 43 He's not broadcasting subliminal country and western songs from Minnesota saying "Vote Fianna Fail", played backwards
- Tommy 44 He's standing in the European Elections.
- Jim 45 The gentleman is perfectly correct and there's another issue where the previous gentleman raised about having people with qualifications in the cabinet. This is a serious side to democracy which is actually contrary to democracy because the only people who can get elected is or at least.... the only expertise that is required in any democracy is the expertise of getting elected. You require no other expertise. Once you get elected you have a mandate.
- JD 46 Isn't that Tommy's argument, Jim, in favour of George Lee, that he does have economic qualifications; that he did work in the central bank?
- Jim 47 I'm afraid I disagree with him.
- Tommy 48 Jim, Jim, I could just say to you and I think you're making a very good point... and we're having a discussion about it but the reality is that we're underestimating the ability of the voter to discern here and democracy does have its problems. It's not an exact science but we do have to at some stage hand over the responsibility of people choosing at the end of the day. You take for instance, Jim, Ted Nealon, David Thornley, Una Claffey, for instance, Sean Duignan – they went into private office in a political party. I could name a few others – Liam O Murchu, Joe,

- JD 49 Stood for election. Orla Guerin stood for election.
- Tommy 50 Joe, stood for election four years ago and was on television and the radio – stood for election down below. Pat Cox. Pat Cox made a huge contribution – walked out of Current Affairs.
- JD 51 Yeh, but in fairness, and I think Jim is right in this, I don't think any of them
- Jim 52 It doesn't matter all the individual cases you're bringing up...
- Tommy 53 Look, I'm making the point, Jim can't deprive people from democracy themselves.
- Jim 54 Not at all. I wouldn't deprive them. You're getting me wrong. For at least twelve months... I would say twelve months. By getting a high profile by the virtue of your job, which you are paid for, that you should not then be allowed to go into politics for at least twelve months.
- JD 55 In fairness, isn't part of George Lee's profile due to the fact that he is such a good communicator; that he does speak....
- Jim 56 Not at all, not at all.
- Tommy 57 Joe and Jim, we're having a discussion here as if this man is going to be made Minister for Finance tomorrow, George Lee has given up, not only a good income and a high profile job in RTE.. He's stepping out of high profile into public service. He's taking a risk for this country. He's doing a wonderful service for this country and this is where I disagree with Jim but I understand the point he is making that we cannot deprive people for making a contribution. David Thornley made a wonderful contribution
- JD 58 Stay there for a sec. both of you. Veronica Barnes is in Galway,. Veronica, George Lee, you're disappointed?
- Veronica 59 I am. I really feel it's how the whole thing was handled. I listen to the news everyday if I'm in the office or on the road. I listened to the interview between himself and Sean O'Rourke and I know that he gave him a fairly tough interview but George was well able to hold his patch but that's not the issue. The issue I now feel is, I now feel that me and all the people like me will question a lot of stuff he said in the past and before I never would. I always listened to him and thought that he had a great angle on the economic situation. According to lunchtime report he's on leave of absence, whatever that means. I presume that if he doesn't make it with FF or with FG he won't be coming back to his job in RTE. I don't think that would be tenable if he did at this point

- Tommy 60 Well, Micheál Martin is able to do it with teaching.
- Veronica 61 He does, Yes, I know he does and he wouldn't be the only one. There's a lot of them holding on dual situations.
- JD 62 The sting of your point, Veronica, is "this colours everything I've heard from George Lee"?
- Veronica 63 It kind of does now,. That's not fair really, I'm afraid. I have to look back now and think. I have no allegiance to either of those parties but I would be just wondering..... How could he report the way he did and now find out after all this that he's going to be a politician.
- Jim 64 Veronica, if that's not an argument in favour of what I have just said that there should be a breathing space between the time you give up your job and you run for politics.
- Veronica 65 Yes, absolutely.
- Jim 66 ..and then you have a level playing pitch. Can I just make one comment?
- Tommy 67 Ok.
- Jim 68 You just said George Lee has given the, let us say, factual and accurate account. He has given **one** account. There are many other people who might differ from George Lee so we cannot get away from the principles of democracy and the principles are, it has nothing to do with qualifications. It has all got to do with being expert at getting elected – nothing else. Could I quote Thomas Jefferson? Thomas Jefferson said, "If the people aren't fit to lead themselves, then who is?"
- JD 69 Izzy is in Leitrim. She's been holding the line. Izzy, good afternoon.
- Izzy 70 Howya Joe. You're back in the saddle.
- JD 71 Thanks very much.
- Izzy 72 I've been listening to it all and wondering what all the fuss is about, really. What they've been talking about on the radio and in the papers today is celebrity candidates. Now, it seems to me that a lot of people who are in the Dail today, their only qualification is that their father or grandfather was there before them and a lot of Irish people, until recent times have voted for people on the basis that their parents and grandparents voted for a particular party and it all comes down to what side they were on in the Civil War and it's about time that changed, really. Now, I do not support George

Lee. Unlike your other speakers, I would not canvass for him and I personally hope that people do not vote for him.

JD 73 Why? why?

Izzy 74 ... but I absolutely defend his right to stand.

JD 75 Why do you hope that people won't vote?

Izzy 76 Because he stands for FG. I hope that people are not going to vote for another right wing party.

Tommy 77 They are no more right wing than the Labour party.

Izzy 78 I beg pardon?

Tommy 79 They're no more right wing than FF, the Greens. Politics in Ireland has become homogenized.

Izzy 80 No, they're certainly not more right wing than FF or the Greens. They're about the same neck of the woods but my hope would be that people would start to vote..... A succession of FF and FG governments have really done over working people in this country but I think, in terms of what George Lee has said and the fact that he has been against the government – Now, if there's an accusation of bias against the man that's a thing for RTE to deal with internally. I can see that people might argue....

JD 81 But Izzy, FF might be happier now to have him out of RTE, if you look at it that way.

Izzy 82 They may well be happier and I'll tell you something, people are saying you have to question what he's been saying in terms of government policy. If there's an economic commentator out there who is saying that this government is doing a great job and that the economy has been really well handled, I haven't heard him. It isn't a question of political bias. It's a question of fact. At this stage, that's the state we're in. Now if FF can find an independent respected political commentator who thinks they're doing a great job, I urge them to go out and recruit them immediately and put them up for election and let the people decide.

JD 83 Ok, Maura Reynolds is a FF voter in Longford. Good afternoon, Maura.

Maura 84 Hello, Joe, and welcome back. I have to say I'm astonished that people are so anti poor George.

JD 85 Well it's mixed.

- Maura 86 I listened to George Lee at lunchtime today on the radio on the news and I think he got an awful doing from Sean O'Rourke, or whatever his name is. I didn't think he deserved it, to be quite honest. We need people like George Lee in our government. We need people like....
- JD 87 The point Sean O'Rourke was making to George Lee was, should he not have indicated earlier to the powers-that-be in RTE, given his very, very influential position, that he was considering standing for a political party in an upcoming by-election? That was Sean's clear point.
- Maura 88 Well, I think George Lee answered the question very well. His loyalty is to himself. And why should George Lee be answerable to anybody else? I mean, George Lee is a very independent person. I think he was perfectly right. He made his decision over the weekend. Why should he be telling anyone?
- JD 89 Because we are supposed to be Public Service – impartial. It might not be over one programme but over a series of programmes. We're supposed to give balance – balance of news in so far.....
- Maura 90 I know but the man only made his mind up over the weekend. He had to think very, very carefully. He loved his job in RTE. That came across so well.
- JD 91 So, you're a FF voter in Longford.
- Maura 92 I actually normally voted FF.
- JD 93 Would you vote for George Lee in Dublin South?
- Maura 94 I would give George number one. I would give George number one. I am so thrilled that he is running.
- JD 95 Stay there, Maura in Longford. Marguerite is in Navan and, Marguerite you're a FF candidate in Navan.
- Marguerite 96 Hello, Joe. How are you? Welcome back.
- JD 97 Thanks indeed and, Marguerite, what do you think of George Lee's decision to stand for FG?
- Marguerite 98 Well, unlike that lady I seriously have to question his impartiality and his independence and I actually thought that Stephen O'Rourke did a great job.
- JD 99 Sean (*offering a correction which went unheard*)

Marguerite 100 I was delighted at lunchtime to hear the questions that Stephen O'Rourke was asking 'cos those questions need to be asked and I would really like to know what was his motivation behind the *We Blew the Boom* programme. George Lee did not become a FGer over night. Unlike that lady said, "he only decided today", one of your earlier callers said he approached him in 2002. To me, you'd have to question whether he was in FG all along.

JD 101 Let Tommy respond.

Tommy 102 Such was my recognition of his calibre and the way he had a handle on it. George Lee has been in RTE, as he said himself for 17 years. I have absolutely no doubt and I think we'll have the FF Press Office now going through all the broadcasts to try and pick out and highlight and show this and stick it on Youtube or whatever but the reality is, he may have given an opinion on a couple of occasions but he always presented the facts. Now, I approached George Lee in a gentle way in 2002 and I made comment and I spoke to one or two other people in RTE at the time and suggested to them, would they consider public office? The reality is, it's not a sin to go into public office. Jim, who was speaking earlier, talked about the need to be some kind of contract for people who are in national profile. But you take the opposite to that, I'm saying the opposite to that. I'm saying to you now that George Lee has taken probably a cut in salary - given up a career or taken a break from a career and he's going into public service. I think there's no better contribution.

Marguerite103 I agree, I agree.

Tommy 104 And the last thing I want to say to you, the opposite to that is this. You take a fellow like Tom Parlon and was in the government and now has done very well because he was in government because he's the CEO of the builders and speculators. And what's he doing? He has access to every government department. He has access to the Dail. He can go into the members' bar. He does all that. He has done very well out of it. I think that's where the contract should be signed.

JD 105 Izzy wants to come back in.

Izzy 106 I think it's a bit insulting to the intelligence of the voter, to be honest, because I think if the public feel George Lee has abused his position – don't vote for him. If FG feels there is an ethical issue there and they're not doing anything about it – don't vote for FG. But in the end of the day, citizens are entitled to stand for office.

Tommy 107 Here, here.

- Izzy 108 People in certain public jobs are prohibited from belonging to political parties. If they're prepared to leave their public jobs they can belong to a political party. People in the public service, of course, have political views and are entitled to do so, provided they exercise their duties with impartiality. Now if there's evidence against the man that he hasn't been impartial, let people bring it out but the fact is that every economic commentator at the moment is saying we are in a mess. It is just a fact.
- Tommy 109 Joe, can I make the point? Alex White is a candidate for the Labour party in the same constituency.
- JD 110 A senator, he's been working there for a number of years and he was a councillor there.
- Tommy 111 Absolutely, Alex White has been a producer in RTE for 15 or 20 years, produced Gay Byrne – one of the most prestigious programmes – you worked with him on that programme – and he then went on and worked on other programmes in Current Affairs. Is there anybody telling me or saying now that Alex White is not a creditable individual; that he doesn't think for himself; that he displayed that he was a latent Labour Party activist all those years ago? It was gas, I was always strongly of the view and I picked it up very strongly over the years that Gay Byrne was FF and he never denied it when I asked him once personally and his wife is a member of FF but the reality is we're all thinking adults.
- JD 112 But hold on, you're saying there....
- Tommy 113 The point I'm making, we're all capable of making up our mind and I think Alex White will give George Lee a good run for it.
- Marguerite 114 And what that man is saying is that everybody knew that man was Labour and he declared he was Labour but George Lee never declared he was FG and I go back to the point that he did not become FG overnight.
- Tommy 115 That's a typical FF reaction. I'm sure that Alex White never declared his membership of the Labour Party when he was producing the *Gay Byrne Show*.
- JD 116 Because he wasn't a member of the Labour Party.
- Tommy 117 At the time.
- JD 118 In fairness to Alex White – and I'll do the whole list of candidates – I think he's gone out of RTE for 12 years. He went off. He studied to become a barrister; then he stood for election a number of times; became a councillor; then he stood for election; became a senator. Then he stood

for election in Dublin South, was narrowly defeated and he's standing again in the by-election. He didn't leave RTE this morning, in fairness. Izzy, go ahead.

Izzy 119 I really want to ask everybody there a question, right, and it's to do with what they think about the intelligence of the voter.

Tommy 120 Exactly.

JD 121 Let the people judge.

Marguerite122 Of course.

Izzy 123 Do people really think that the voter is stupid enough to vote for a man just because we hear him on the radio? Now I'll give you an example of a celebrity candidate we had in the past and it's Dana. Now, Dana was a celebrity candidate. I don't share her views in the slightest but I don't think for a moment that the people who voted for her, voted for her because she won the Eurovision. They voted for her because they shared her well-publicized pro-life views. That's why they voted for her and if people vote for George Lee, it'll be because they agree with FG policies. I hope they don't.

JD 124 Stephan Behan has been holding. He's in Listowel in Kerry. Stephen, good afternoon. You're vice president of young FG so you think this is the best thing ever happened FG.

Stephen 125 It's a very good piece of news that I received this morning.

JD 126 And the person who's going to benefit most from this is Enda Kenny surely, regardless of what happens.

Stephen 127 I've no doubt he's incredibly happy but this is all subject to the convention, of course, and ratification tomorrow but certainly...

Tommy 128 ...and election by the electorate, by the way.

Stephen 129and election of course. Obviously George Lee is a huge candidate. I think there is no question at all about bias or records in question. This is simply a very, very good public servant of long standing who is simply making the change. I don't think there is any question whether the change should be criticised. George Lee is somebody who is of vast regard.

JD 130 You think that George Lee would make a contribution on the backbenches equal to the contribution he is making as economic editor of the national broadcaster?

Stephen 131 Well, I have certainly no idea where he is going to be placed if he gets elected, pending the election.

JD 132 If he gets elected, in the short term, he can only be on the backbenches.

Stephen 133 What I think you're mixing up is the idea that the backbenches are somehow irrelevant and that the front benches are automatically places of power.

JD 134 Did you not read what John McGuinness says in his article in the *Sunday Independent*? Among other things he was saying for years about the way backbenchers in government are ignored.

Stephen 135 The attitude in the party is one where everyone is used and the broadest possible view is taken into account.

JD 136 Do you think other people who have soldiered in FG for years; stood for the County Council election; canvassed in the dark, damp winter nights; did the weekends; did the summer work; did everything; do you think they'll be disappointed with a parachute candidate?

Stephen 137 I don't think you're talking parachute candidate. I mean if you look back I was told this morning by a friend, he has a background in FG – in Young FG in particular, that when he was in college in the 80s that he was a member of Young FG. I'm open to correction here. There's no question, that he hasn't, at some stage in the past, had some affiliation with FG but what you're talking about in this instance is and the point that I rang in most about....

JD 138 I think people would have collapsed at lunchtime if George Lee had declared for FF.

Stephen 139 You're right there.

JD 140 Eugene is on the line in Tipperary. Eugene, your point, before the break?

Eugene 141 Welcome back, Joe. Well, first of all I wish George every success for the nomination and in the election but I think if he's so committed as he says he was in his interview with Sean O'Rourke, that he would actually resign from RTE and not take leave of absence. I think the fact that a safety net is held out for him, as it is for many other members of the Dail is unfortunate. I can't see in the private sector how someone would be given leave of absence to attend interviews for another job.

JD 142 We'll clarify that but my understanding is that in the civil service and the semi-state, if you want to become politically active, one, you must declare

it, obviously and two, you must, if you want to stand, take leave of absence.

Tommy 143 It also means that when you go back there is, to quote Sean Duignan, a period of decontamination. Now, that was a joke but the reality is

JD 144 Yeh, but who pays for that period of decontamination?

Tommy 145 There's an awful lot of work. When Sean Duignan went back to RTE... Sean Duignan, if you look and see, he worked in an awful lot of areas. He worked on a lot of research, as did the former presenter of the one o'clock news who became press officer to John Bruton.

JD 146 That was Shane, Shane Kenny.

Tommy 147 Shane Kenny and you say these people have skills in broadcasting; that they can't go back? What sort of society are we living in? I mean this is tantamount to a programme I was looking at on Channel 4 last night about the history of South Africa....

JD 148 But, Tommy, why did you laugh when I said, what would your reaction be if George Lee had declared for FF? That means you knew all along that George Lee was anti FF.

Tommy 149 No, I didn't.

JD 150 You did laugh.

Tommy 151 I did laugh and I'll tell you why. One of the criticisms of George Lee I would have is this; he stuck to his public service broadcasting mandate when he did the interview with Brian Lenihan after the budget. I thought he gave him an awful soft interview there and I thought he let him off hand over fist particularly. I think it's worth taking out and looking at, Joe, and you will see it was a very respectful interview and I think that George Lee knew a hell of a lot more when he was sitting in front of the Minister for Finance. He could have actually, not so much crucified him physically. He could have nailed him because George Lee is a very, very talented and skilled man as is James O'Reilly in Health. You say that people can't bring these skills to public service. George Lee is stepping down. He's going to work his butt off. He's going to be walking every street, looking for people to vote for him. There's not many people in RTE will do that.

JD 152 Thanks to all our callers. Back after this.

Commercial break. One ad. bracketed by the programme sting – “Talk to Joe...”

This is followed by a new thread (2) relating to scams and pressures experienced by small businesses.

The programme returns to the George Lee topic, thread (A) after a two ad. break

JD 153 Another journalist turned politician, Mairead McGuinness has contacted us on 1850715815. Mairead, good afternoon.

Mairead 154 Good afternoon, Joe. Welcome back. I hope you're feeling ok.

JD 155 Thanks indeed. You're very kind, Mairead, MEP, FG, standing again in the June elections, you wanted to make a point about George Lee, that he doesn't know how tough a job it's going to be.

Mairead 156 Well, I suppose I'm listening to the comments and there's mixed and various reactions. I had heard the speculation. I hadn't spoken to George. I want to welcome him to the profession and wish him every success in it but I do think that if George fully understood all that's involved or even if the public fully understood what's involved for somebody like George to make this very courageous decision, as somebody else has called it, he might think otherwise and, I'll be quite honest, In 2004 when I stood for election for FG for the European Parliament, I understood some of politics but I didn't understand the nuts and bolts and the process of getting elected (indistinct) business of getting elected. It is a tough decision to take because I was taken by some of the comments about that he is on leave of absence from RTE. People might remember I worked on a programme called, *Ear to the Ground* and that was contract so there was no question of me looking for leave of absence from RTE. But I was Agricultural Editor of the *Irish Independent*, a paper that I've huge respect for and I went to the editor, Vinny Doyle, and at the time said, "Vinny, I'm thinking of doing this", and without even looking twice at me he agreed to give me leave of absence so that was a private company respecting the fact that standing for public office is not a bad thing to do and there's no disrespect if you fail or succeed and I was given leave of absence by the company. RTE, of course, do take a particular view when somebody who is in the public domain runs for public office and I do recall somebody at the time saying to me that...what was I doing?... that my career in broadcasting was doomed. But I had made the point at the time that my career was very much based on short-term contracts. I had no entitlements within the RTE framework. In fact, I had worked outside it for a long number of years but I had decided (a bit like George, perhaps) that, okay, I could have stayed doing what I did but I had an inkling that I would like to get involved in politics. You can talk about it forever or you can make that leap and I made the leap and it is a tough one to make but if you feel you can do something, I think you should do it and that's why I compliment what George has done. It will be very tough. You've got to get through convention. You've got to get the public on your side and

you've got to do the job. And that's the key and one of your contributors.....

JD 157 What was the biggest surprise, Mairead?

Mairead 158 I suppose the biggest surprise.... It wasn't surprise.... I think the element of a sense in which there are so many pulls on your time and on your mind because, like George, I was.... I had my own space created in life. I had a few kids. I knew what I was up to or doing and, in a sense, when you jump into politics or you haven't been actively involved.... I had watched it and reported on it.... You are then a bit of public property but there are many people who think you should do various things and if there's a little bit of advice I can give to George, 'cos I wish I'd got this myself, you need to hold on to your own space; follow your own gut instinct. I think there was about a month where I declared I was listening to everybody and I wasn't able to do anything and when I sorta came out of that phase, I knew what I was about. I knew an area of policy which was around food and agriculture that I had studied and that I fully understood and I felt that I knew what I was talking about, particularly in that area but I also have an economics background and I went out and I spoke to people about that and they listened. Now they respected me back then and I was lucky to get elected on that platform. But five years later I have to go out again and talk to people and hope that they will vote for me and my track record. So, in one sense, George is leaving something that he could stay in, in RTE, and perhaps talk about all of these things. But he's actually jumping and moving to the other side and it's a brave decision in an Ireland, which I can tell you, Joe – come to Navan, come to Athboy, come to Kells with me last Saturday – the public are furious and they are right. This country is in a dreadful state and, whatever you say about George Lee, and I have no idea of his political inkling, he has told us as it is. And people respect him for that because the anger is palpable out there and one other little point, I mean, this idea of – and I respect the point that somebody made – they suggest, “look, you're public. You almost have an edge on other candidates” but people with family names in politics also have an edge. Nobody asked me how I voted throughout my life. My own husband wouldn't ask that. And I would also say that if I look back on my work – I think George would say the same – my journalistic standards, as far as I'm concerned, are impeccable. I had a great relationship with the FF Minister for Agriculture, Joe Walsh. He appointed me to the Consumer Liaison Panel 'cos he knew I could do the job. Some would say, I hadn't even as good a relationship with Ivan Yates, which is extraordinary, so you can do your job as you are – the commentator, the economist, the agriculturist – and then you can change because, as George will do, he's moving into politics. I don't think it takes from his work in the past one whit. I think people respect you for what you've done and I wish him well.

JD 159 Okay, MEP, Mairead McGuinness, of FG, thank you. Is Ronan there?
Ronan, good afternoon.

Ronan 160 Joe, good afternoon.

JD 161 George Lee is on the other line, George, good afternoon.

George 162 Good afternoon, Joe.

JD 163 How do I address you now – prospective FG candidate?

George 164 I'm hopeful. I can't take it for granted that I'm going to get it but I'm
certainly going to seek it.

JD 165 Who do you have to tell in RTE that you're leaving or going on leave of
absence?

George 166 I would have discussed it this morning with my boss, Ed Mulhall, the
Director of News.

JD 167 How did he react?

George 168 Well, he was a bit shocked because it came so It's such a conclusive
thing to say to somebody. It's like almost a fait accompli and to that extent
it came as quite a blow. I think he would liked to have an opportunity to
talk me out of it or to talk me around it. I don't know but that would have
taken much more time than (indistinct) but I had made up my own mind
about where I wanted to go, given the state of the situation.

JD 169 And you made it clear to him that you could not be talked out of it?

George 170 Oh yes, at that stage, absolutely.

JD 171 Had you written down what you were going to say?

George 172 No, I had not written down. I don't need to write down what is in my heart,
Joe.

JD 173 What did you say to your boss?

George 174 I told him Well, firstly in one sense, I didn't have to say an awful lot
because the newspaper, *The Irish Times* this morning would have used it
as their headline on the front page so the question was, was it true? So I
said, well.... so what else was there to say? You know that I told him,
the time has come for me to play a different role. That's still the way I see
it; that I'd been working in RTE now for 17 years; that I can work there for

another 17 years but that the state of the country and the way I feel about it right now demand that I do something.

JD 175 What is the situation, George? You take leave of absence for a period? For...?

George 176 No, I had to give up my job as Economics Editor and so that's gone and then I think, as an employee of RTE, may be entitled to leave of absence and I'm going to seek that. It does not mean that I'll get back into broadcasting. It might mean that I'll go back to licking stamps – or something like that – somewhere in the organization along the line. That's about the nature of that leave of absence. You're entitled to play a different role in the interest of democracy.

JD 177 We'll let a few listeners put a few points to you, George. Ronan Gallagher, Ronan is in Leitrim. Your point to George Lee, please.

Ronan 178 My point to George is firstly, I'm very saddened he's leaving RTE because I think he gave some very good analysis of the economic situation but I think the difficulty for George is that he may find in the confines of a political party, that certain things which he believes in are not ones the party is in agreement with and he has to keep quiet about them. Sometimes I think that the political party machine sometimes stifles his creativity; stifles new views on the basis they don't want to cause division and everyone has to be seen to be rowing the same boat, if you understand what I'm saying.

George 179 I do. One of the observations I have about that is that I can understand that, that is the way things have been in the past. I don't believe we can continue on with politics the way it has been in the past. I think the country is the way it is because we haven't been challenging about economic policies and economic decisions and I firmly believe that within a party or outside a party, that that's what we need. We need the people who are decision makers to be challenged and open to be challenged and welcoming the challenge.

JD 180 George, do you believe Children's Allowance Child Benefit should be taxed?

George 181 No, I don't believe that. I believe very strongly that it shouldn't be taxed.

JD 182 If there was a general election this year and FG and Labour were returned and they decided that the Children's Allowance had to be means tested, would you leave the party?

George 183 Well, it's a very hypothetical question, Joe.

- JD 184 But I'm saying, what is your bottom line?
- George 185 A general election is way, way, way beyond where I am. I'm trying to seek a nomination to pursue and hope to get a chance of running in a by-election and I don't believe.... I mean, it's way beyond where I am at the moment.
- JD 186 Do you think there should be a property tax?
- George 187 I do believe that the exchequer and the government now, unfortunately because of mismanagement, have to find new sources of revenue.
- JD 188 Okay, so there should be a property tax. (Aggressively) Do you support the Public Service Pension Levy?
- George 189 No, I don't support the Public Service Pensions Levy because people have had a contract of employment on what they do. The levy is being imposed on people in the public sector. I think if they really wanted to cut their wages, they should have the guts to (indistinct)...
- JD 190 Your line is breaking up. Sorry, George **(Beep!)** Is that George's line gone? We'll definitely try and get it back. Stephen, good afternoon.
- Stephen 191 Welcome back.
- JD 192 Thank you very much, Stephen. You want to put a point. Let's take a break and we'll try and get George back 'cos George is anxious to talk.

Two spot ad. Break

- JD 193 I think George is back. George, sorry, I asked you about the pension levy. You're against that.
- George 194 I am against it because it's not addressing the issue. I think if they wanted to cut the pay that they should have cut the pay.
- JD 195 So, you're in favour of public service pay cuts?
- George 196 In favour of government trying to put public finances right and taking appropriate action with regard to how to do that. There are many things they could have done in relation to that. They could have done an awful lot of saving in reforming the public service before they decided to go for the pay.
- JD 197 Do you think there are too many public servants and civil servants?

- George 198 It depends on how you use them, Joe. That is a question it's really difficult to give a straight answer to. It's easy to say, it's grown too much – there must be lots of spare public servants out there, which most likely there are. The thing is what they're doing. Are many of them being wasted in relation to what they are doing? Could they be reassigned elsewhere and God knows there are plenty of things that need to be done in this country so it's not easy to give a direct answer to the question. It's tempting to say there are but that's because people think there are in some areas and therefore not enough in others. We need more flexibility and more creativity in the way they are managed so the resources are used to the public good.
- JD 199 Stephen in Wicklow wants to ask George a question. Go ahead Stephen. 51551, text.
- Stephen 200 Thanks, Joe. George, just a quick question. I have to say on a personal level I do wish you well. I've enjoyed your reports on RTE even though I wouldn't necessarily agree with them all but I think, particularly if what I'm reading on line is correct, it was in 2007 that Phil Hogan and Richard Bruton originally approached you to run. Is that true?
- George 201 No, no. In 2002 there was an approach made to me with regard to the possibility of me running in that election and I didn't run.
- JD 202 Did any other political party approach you, George?
- George 203 No, one time a long time ago the PDs asked me to be their press officer before I joined RTE News and I turned them down.
- Stephen 204 Okay, well, on line on *politics.ie*, it does say from a FG supporter that you agreed several months ago to run which is why Enda Kenny has been so keen to move the writ. But leaving that aside, the main point.....
- JD 205 No, it's not fair to leave that aside in fairness to George.
- George 206 He didn't move the writ 'til last week. He didn't move the writ 'til last week and the first formal request or invitation from FG came after the budget which is only a couple of weeks ago.
- JD 207 When you say 'formal' what do you mean, George?
- George 208 I mean the first time I got an inclination (sic) this time round that there was any suggestion that FG might be interested in even asking me was from newspaper journalists, Sunday newspaper journalists a month or two ago or maybe a little longer and after that in terms of general banter around the place and after that it was suggested to me that maybe they would need to ask me.

- JD 209 So the first formal....?
- George 210 The first formal invitation would have been after the budget.
- JD 211 After the most recent budget?
- George 212 And then what we had after the budget was Easter. I took a week and a bit off and I lay low and there has been nothing of significant economic controversy that we have had to cover since then.
- JD 213 When did you first meet Enda Kenny to discuss the prospect?
- George 214 I have not met Enda Kenny to discuss the prospect or to ask him for anything in relation to this particular venture. I haven't asked for any promise. I haven't asked for any guarantee. I just think it's time for people like me to roll up their sleeves.
- JD 215 But you have met senior people within FG?
- George 216 I have, of course, but I have not met or discussed this matter with Enda Kenny.
- JD 217 You'll be surprised if you don't get the nomination?
- George 218 Well, I'm going to seek the nomination, Joe, but I can't take it for granted.
- JD 219 Why not?
- George 220 I don't know who else is going to seek that nomination.
- JD 221 But you're fairly astute, George, to say the least.
- George 222 But you can take nothing for granted.
- JD 223 I know.
- George 224 I have not been a member of the FG party up until now and I'm coming along now as an opportunity has arisen. I think I can play a role. I'm invited to consider playing that role and now I've decided that I do want to see whether or not the local constituency people will allow me play that role.
- JD 225 Were you ever a member of Young FG?
- George 226 Never in my life, no.
- JD 227 Were you ever a member of any political party in college?

George 228 No, no never.

JD 229 Did you ever canvass for anybody?

George 230 No, never. I've never given out a leaflet or anything. No.

Stephen 231 Can I put a question?

JD 232 Yes of course.

Stephen 233 Again I emphasize this is not personal. I'd say this for anyone in RTE. A key point is taxpayers' money. George has a very high profile. A lot of reporters in RTE do.

JD 234 Licence payers' money

Stephen 235 Yeh, licence payers' money – comes from everyone – has been used to boost an individual so they have a very high public profile. Surely there should be some regulation that if somebody in that position does want to run for public office, there should be a cooling off period of six months or at least a year as opposed to, as it appears, maybe a month or two. That's a key issue and more importantly, without being personal to George, this is again for all reporters. It actually potentially could harm RTE as it puts into doubt all the objectivity of any of the reporters, if any of them can simply turn around, such as yourself, Joe. You might declare for FF or Sinn Fein or whatever next week.

JD 236 I can't even stand, I'm on crutches so it doesn't arise.

Stephen 237 You understand my point?

JD 238 Let George come back on it.

George 239 I can understand how Stephen might be tempted to make the point that maybe there should be a gardening period and so on with regard to someone who wants to consider something like this but the policing arrangement is so But the price a person has to pay to go down this route is enormous. I'm walking away from a very well paid job. I'm walking away from a job that I have for life, from total security to play a role with no guarantees that I'm going to make any impact at all and to get into an area about which I still have to go on a learning curve. That is the kind of thing that not everybody is going to do. The suggestion that When you think and consider the risks that I'm taking and the role that I want to play – the bits of it that are completely un-nice – you'd wonder to yourself, why would you need to worry about somebody being given gardening leave before they make such a decision? I will be taking a significant cut in

pay to do it. Why would I need to I mean very few people will do it. Very few people would be in the situation whereby they may be accused of abusing some taxpayer's or licence fee income to build up their profile. It never arose.

JD 240 George, is there one single act by this government that tipped you towards standing?

George 241 If I analyse it and I look back, it is complete and total economic incompetence and the fear about the future and where the country is heading and the requirement to have a more enlightened base about the economic situation, the economic choices in the Dail and to replace this incompetence. There are things, which when I analyse it, which have motivated me and also when I think of the future for my kids, for myself, for everybody else in the country. I think people who can play a role, need to play a role because we are now in an economic emergency. So in terms of any one particular thing that the government did recently, no. It is a sequence of things. What happened is I got an opportunity to consider whether I could or might play a different role, given how serious the situation has been and I think it is my duty. I feel that is a kind of calling. I must play this role. I could reach retirement age and feel regretful that, when it was put to me, that when the opportunity was presented that I didn't do it. For me to say to grandchildren, to children, to whoever in the future, that we went through these hard times when you could have played a different role; when you could contribute and do something more and you were asked to do it, what did you do? Well, I know my answer is going to be, I made a massive personal sacrifice; took enormous personal risks; it may work, it may not work but I did it with good intention.

JD 242 Pat Whelan is in Wexford. Pat, your point to George Lee please.

Pat 243 Hi, Joe, welcome back and the very best of luck to you. George, if you do make the selection, my only question is, you're taking a leave of absence; you're not actually leaving RTE?

George 244 Well, I'm leaving my post, Pat. I'm leaving my job which I had for the last 17 years as an economic reporter. My on-air post is gone. I will not be back on air. I might be licking stamps in some corner. I might not come back at all but I just know that.....

JD 245 Yeh, but Pat's point is you would be entitled to come back.

George 246 I might be entitled to come back in some role. I might not want to come back. I have no idea. All I know is that the process one goes through because of the Broadcasting Act and it isn't the case that RTE has this there as an offer. It's in the Broadcasting Act that if a person does decide to go down this route and they are in a significant on-screen role like me,

well then they do have an entitlement to come back to some type of employment but the issue of being on air will probably never arise again.

Pat 247 You're actually giving up your post and if you're not elected, you don't get the nomination, you can still go back to RTE.

George 248 Well, what do I go back to? RTE isn't in a situation where they're going to replace my job which I'm doing, for which they pay me a good salary, and start paying the exact same salary or anything remotely like that or similar.

Pat 249 The person who comes into your post will not be a fulltime position, will it?

George 250 Oh it will. My job is gone. My post as Economics editor is gone. I will no longer have it. RTE.... like 2000 people. They might put me sweeping the floor. I don't know what they might do.

JD 251 Okay, we'll let a few more people in. Thanks for that, Pat. George, by the way, you say the country needs a strong, skilled individual to stand for election and go into the Dail. Does that mean we should form a national government – across party, just the best and the brightest?

George 252 Firstly, I think that people who can play better roles...

JD 253 I know that. I know that. Would you support a national government?

George 254 No, I think the problem is I'll give you an example, Joe. We have observed in recent weeks and months how everyone says the banks have been a disaster

JD 255 Why wouldn't you stand for FF?

George 256 Because they have been responsible, in the same way that the top bankers have been responsible, for the ruination of the economy.

JD 257 Why wouldn't you stand for the Labour Party?

George 258 I wouldn't stand for the Labour Party because I don't accept some of their policies. I'm standing for FG because I believe that FG is the best opportunity for a government which will put things right. I think the style of leadership suits because it is welcoming in terms of its overall approach.

JD 259 Okay, Michael O'Flanagan wants to ask a question. Michael, go ahead, in Dublin.

Michael 260 Delighted to have you back, Joe.

- JD 261 You're a member of Sinn Fein, just to get that out to be fair to everybody. Go ahead, Michael.
- Michael 262 I'm very sorry to see George make this move. He's highly respected throughout the country for his opinions across all sections of the community. Have to remind him of some very high profile figures who took up candidacies like for example the piano player from the *Late Late Show* had a disastrous result in the last general election.
- JD 263 But he stood. Frank stood and he ran a good campaign by all accounts.
- Michael 264 He did, yeh.
- JD 265 He was very honourable. That was Frank McNamara.
- Michael 266 You can't take anything for granted. Anything could happen and he paid an enormous price and he said, and I agree with him, that he takes an enormous price.
- JD 267 Yeh, but Michael, the question is, do people now put a different colour on what George Lee says because he's quite adamant when he says, "I'll stand for politics but I'll stand for one party only and that is FG".
- Michael 268 I think they do. It appears now that his views have been coloured in the past. That's the way it looks to the general public, I think.
- JD 269 George, I presume you
- George 270 Well, I suppose people might be inclined to draw that conclusion but it isn't true. I was not involved in politics. I was not asked to run until recently. I did not give it adequate or serious consideration until recently. I think when you look back through the reports I have contributed to RTE, they'll see no political bias. They'll see very many in which I was quite supportive of areas, decisions and proposals. They'll see the fairness in it and I know people want to kind of
- Michael 271 George, George, could I just say you're in the media business. You know the media business better than anybody else and you know that perception is nearly as important as reality and people will get that perception about you.
- George 272 No, I don't accept that. I accept truth. I think people are reasonable. I believe in people. I think people will be aware that throughout all the years in terms of the economy that I was straight; that I told it as it was; that I used whatever economic knowledge and training that I have and I communicated that to people with a view to trying to make the right policy choices and, with regard to economic debate, to improve things. I don't

think that anybody is going to really seriously consider that you can write away 17 years of history when the economy is right down on its knees in a huge crisis and that when somebody decides that they will use their knowledge and when I take the risk that I'm taking and pay the price that I'm paying that in some sense the whole 17 years..... That's a load of rubbish. People are not that unfair because that is completely untrue. But, probably if they really sit and think about it, say what we do need more of in the Dail, people who know about what went wrong, how it went wrong, why it went wrong, so that we can at least have some debate about putting it right.

Michael 272 But George, can I just make one point?

JD 274 Briefly, Michael

Michael 275 One point and it's this. Joe has asked you a number of questions and you found it very difficult to answer those questions about whether there were too many public servants, whether the levy, whether there should be maybe a cutback in social welfare. You're going to have to decide on all this issues and you're going to have to face the electorate on all these issues.

JD 276 The other candidates, by the way, in Dublin South so far are, Senator Alex White for the Labour Party; Green Party, Eileen Davidson; Independent, Ross O'Mullane; Workers Party, Malachy Steenson; Sinn Fein, Sean Tracey and FF, we're told, Shay Brennan. Senator Maria Corrigan and John Lehart are putting their names forward and George Lee it's fairly strongly argued is the FG candidate. I don't think there will be any other candidates at this stage. Okay, Margaret, you wanted to make a quick point to George before he goes – thirty seconds.

Margaret 277 Yeh, I do, Joe. I just want to make... I'm very disappointed that we're losing (in inverted commas) we're losing George. George was there for the ordinary Joe Soap such as me and my family. He broke it down in English. Now he's gone over to the other side and, in my opinion, you know, he's making a major mistake. We need George. The government don't. It's one up for Enda Kenny because George is such a professional, such a knowledgeable person and such a capable person and we need..... The ordinary Joe Soap are at such a loss. They have made such a professional job of it they are better than the mafia.

JD 278 Those points are well made. Sorry to all our callers. George Lee, good health to you and your family and thanks indeed for participating.

(16 participants)

Liveline 150509

THREAD Y

Dur: 14'24"

Third thread in the day's programme. In the previous threads there had been discussion of an attempted armed robbery, which had taken place that morning, and of the practices of employment recruitment agencies. This new thread follows a two spot break and sting.

JD 1 And Joe@rte.ie and 51551, text. Jim Staken, good afternoon.

Jim 2 I listen to your programme everyday.

JD 3 How are you, Jim? You're well? You're in Glendalough?

Jim 4 I'm in Glendalough, yes.

JD 5 And what's the problem?

Jim 6 The problem is that I've been in the Upper Car Park in Glendalough, trading with chips, fast food and that, for the past thirty years.

JD 7 You have a van, a chip van.

Jim 8 Well, I did have but since '94 I have kind of a permanent building there that has never been moved. It's in the Upper Car Park..

JD 9 In Glendalough in County Wicklow, the tourist spot and who allows you sell chips there?

Jim 10 The Wicklow County Council. I get a franchise from them every year.

JD 11 Okay, you buy it off them?

Jim 12 Yeh, The building is mine, its only the ground, you know, the bit of ground it sits on.

JD 13 Okay, so what's happened to Jim Staken's chips?

Jim 14 Well, Jim Staken's chips has gone to a higher tender. I suppose and I have to believe that....

JD 15 Oh, you're being thrown out?

Jim 16 Yes, I've got the 31st May to take my equipment off the car park.

JD 17 When did you get that news, Jim?

Jim 18 I got that yesterday morning. I'm told to take everything away. My new unit is worth £100, 000 worth of equipment on it and I may just dump it if things don't go for me as I hope it goes.

JD 19 And what was your reaction when you opened the letter?

Jim 20 Gobsmacked! I couldn't believe that they could do it to me after thirty (years) and all the work I had done for them for nothing.

JD 21 Like?

Jim 22 Like opening and closing barriers, removing all the litter from the car park and then they have an automatic barrier on it that you put €4 in. People that don't have the money, they'd come over to me. If they have a problem with the barrier they'd come over to me. I cleaned the toilets. There was 14 toilets to be cleaned every day and two or three times a day and they were kept clean.

JD 23 Is that part of your job?

Jim 24 Part of my job, yeh.

JD 25 Did Wicklow County Council insist you clean the toilets?

Jim 26 Well eh, what they done was, at the start they gave me 500 a year to clean them and that works out about 175 a week and it's a fulltime job.

JD 27 That's a tenner a month.

Jim 28 In order to get the franchise at the car park you had to take the toilets.

JD 29 I know what you mean.

Jim 30 You know what I mean.

JD 31 So, you took the toilets. You cleaned the toilets for a tenner a week, less that €2 a day.

Jim 32 Well, it was 5,000 a year.

JD 33 Oh, 5,000 a year, so, a hundred a week.

Jim 34 175 a week.....

JD 35to clean 14 toilets.

- Jim 36 To clean 14 toilets and keep them cleaned. Like, you'd be in there four and five times a day, changing toilet rolls, cleaning floors. We got busloads of kids and you know what they're like when they go into a toilet.
- JD 37 And how did...?
- Jim 38 Bigger money! Money, bigger money has spoken. The fellow that got this, I believe has other businesses and is a wealthy man and they could give that to him and take my livelihood away. I'm an old age pensioner. I'm a fit man, thanks be to God, and able for the work myself and my wife. I lost my pension, the one I had in Irish Life, and that all went.
- JD 39 How did you lose that, Jim?
- Jim 40 Investment.
- JD 41 Investment, I know, like so many people unfortunately.
- Jim 42 So I mean, the way it works out now, I've nothing for myself and my family.
- JD 43 Was it a good business?
- Jim 44 Yeh, well, I made a living out of it, Joe. I don't drive a BMW or I've no holiday homes or anything.
- JD 45 How many days a week would you work in it, Jim?
- Jim 46 I'd work seven days a week, fourteen hours a day.
- JD 47 Ah, for God's sake!
- Jim 48 And I've been called out at two o'clock in the morning by the garda in Wicklow.
- JD 49 For why?
- Jim 50 For to open the barrier that someone got stuck on the mountain and couldn't come down.
- JD 51 And you'd do it.
- Jim 52 Okay, I'd get out of the bed and do it.
- JD 53 You didn't charge them a hundred euro break-in fee?

Jim 54 I done it for tourism in Glendalough, if you know what I mean, because I'm around the fifth generation of Stakens in Glendalough. I'm very proud of Glendalough.

JD 55 Is that where you live, Jim?

Jim 56 Oh yes and anybody that has come to the car park in the last two years will see that the car park is well kept. The toilets are well kept. My food is good.

JD 57 I heard that. I heard that and Jim, is it true that schools used to ring on ahead to see were you open?

Jim 58 They would, yeh, and in the winter time when I wouldn't be open, do you know what I mean, they'd ring to see would I open.

JD 59 Of course, to feed the kids or whatever when they got down there but, Jim, okay they've taken your job away but did they interview you and say what your plans are?

Jim 60 No, my tender wasn't successful.

JD 61 Were there any complaints about you, Jim?

Jim 62 No, nothin', as far as I know.

JD 63 So you reckon you put in a tender to stay there and you offered them money to stay there?

Jim 64 Yep

JD 65 Did you offer them the same money as you did last year or the previous year?

Jim 66 Yes, but from what I can gather, I was the only one that tendered last year and for the last few years but now people have got a few pound redundancy and they're tendering probably big money, you know what I mean, Joe. Joe, It's left me and my family devastated, gobsmacked.

JD 67 And who worked in the building?

Jim 68 My family, my family. I had three other workers then I had part-time workers at the weekend.

JD 69 And you'd be busy?

Jim 70 Oh ay, yeh.

- JD 71 And what do you sell there?
- Jim 72 I sell fish, chips, burgers, chicken burgers, chicken tenders, sausage rolls, hot dogs, paninnis and
- JD 73 ...a cuppa tea.
- Jim 74 Tea and coffee and hot chocolate and ice cream and cold drinks.
- JD 75 Were you doing cappuccinos and lattés and frappes?
- Jim 76 Yes, everything like that.
- JD 77 So, you were up-to-date?
- Jim 78 Oh yes, I had the up-to-date..... The equipment in my takeaway is worth about 100,000.
- JD 79 And you had the food safety cert?
- Jim 80 You have to pass that every year. You had to get a health licence every year and, you know, to get the health licence you have to keep improving your premises.
- JD 81 You say fairness should have come into it.
- Jim 82 Yeh, I mean I suppose Morally it's wrong, if you know what I mean, I think morally it's wrong because in this environment, to throw a whole family out of business for the sake of an extra few pounds, as far as I can gather.....
- JD 83 Yeh well, we tried to get on to Wicklow County Council. Have you been able to argue your point?
- Jim 84 I haven't really. I've been on to a councillor and that I mean, they won't even speak to you, Wicklow County Council. I spoke to one very nice girl yesterday who I had great time for all the years – Ann. She said she was disappointed, you know but I mean there's nothing to do with her.
- JD 85 Did they give you any indication of how many people applied to get the site?
- Jim 85 As far as I know there was four.
- JD 87 And last year, do you know how many?

Jim 88 Nobody. I know that for a fact that nobody tendered for it last year but my....

JD 89 But surely..... Do you know the person that got the job? Maybe he has vans or.....

Jim 90 But no, he is a businessman. He has other businesses.

JD 91 And has he got a food business?

Jim 92 What? That I don't know now but he is a wealthy man from what I can gather.

JD 93 And if you started a petition or something, would that help you?

Jim 94 It probably will help me, yeh. Well, I hope it does anyway.

JD 95 But then again, if the other fellow.....

Jim 96 Ah yeh, ah it's a catch 22.

JD 97 So you've to be gone by when, a fortnight?

Jim 98 I've to be gone by the 31st of May.

JD 99 Sure the 31st of May is

Jim 100next week.

JD 101 It's this day fortnight. That's the bank holiday weekend.

Jim 102 I've a mountain of stock that may just be dumped.....ah, it's devastating, Joe. I'm.... **(audible choking)**...broke up.

JD 103 And what did you do before you did the chipper?

Jim 104 I was a chef for many years and then I worked on construction and I got a few pound in 1979 and I bought a Comer Walkthrough and went to Glendalough.

JD 105 That's a van and what did you do? You did the chips?

Jim 106 I did the chips, yeh and burgers and fish.

JD 107 It's called "Lakeside Fast-food"?

Jim 108 Or "Lakeside Takeaway" even or "Lakeside Fast-food".

JD 109 Why didn't you call it "Staken Chips"?

Jim 110 **(Laughs)** Yeh, what I did do, Joe, like, to make money up there, I put all these gazeboes on it that people could sit underneath. You know Glendalough – 95% of the time it is raining and they could sit in there and have their cup of coffee and whatever.

JD 111 Is that true? 95%?

Jim 112 Ah, it would be, yeh, Glendalough is It's only six months a year.

JD 113 One of the people that you feed - and you feed a lot of walkers and hikers – is Chris.

Jim 114 And I'll tell you what, I've been feeding a lot lately, Joe,... was a lot of foreign people. They come every weekend to me.

JD 115 By-the-way, are numbers up or down this year?

Jim 116 The numbers is down big time now, up to now.

JD 117 That's a pity. Hang on, Chris is there. Chris, good afternoon. You want to give your support to Jim, the chip man of Glendalough.

Chris 118 Yeh, how's it going, Jim? You provide a brilliant service up there in that car park for a long time.

Jim 119 Who is this Chris?

Chris 120 Er..... Chris from Dublin.

JD 121 One of the walkers.

Chris 122 I'm going there a lot, you know and I've spent years hiking up there, going up around the hills and you could come down after a long hike, soaking wet and tired and there'd be a bag of chips and a burger and a drink there for you. Joe, it's always clean, you know the seating area even in the summer time, you could have big crowds up there and there's no messing. It's clean; the car would be safe – never had any problems parking it there and you'd come back.....

JD 123 Chris, that's an interesting one 'cos there's another call on the screen – it's the safest car park in Wicklow because Jim and his family are there working. The gurriers don't come down and break into the cars.

- Jim 124 That's why I lock the barriers at night, Joe. That's why the barriers are locked at night because up to the time I started to lock 'em, the boy racers and all used to be in and burnt out cars and everything on the park.
- JD 125 But people are saying that other car parks in Wicklow, along the Wicklow Way, are notorious for being unsupervised and stuff being robbed but when you're there obviously.....
- Jim 126 We take great pride in it, do you know what I mean? We have done over the years.
- Chris 127 Joe.
- JD 128 Chris.
- Chris 129 Joe, yeh, I had no idea what the arrangements were in the car park there. I thought there was more involved, like maybe there was a security man.
- JD 130 It was Jim doing everything. He cleans the toilets.
- Chris 131 I can't believe it. He even cleans the toilets. I can't believe it, Joe.
- JD 132 14 public toilets.
- Chris 133 Surely he has some kind of rights at this stage?
- Jim 134 No, I wouldn't. I don't think so, legally, I don't think so. It's the way the franchise.....
- Chris 135 Do you have anything in writing from the Council over the years, you know?
- Jim 136 Well, I have a few little bits now. Well, I have it with a solicitor at the moment.
- JD 137 But they would be saying you have it for the next twelve months?
- Jim 138 No, I haven't, no.
- JD 139 No, no, the letters you would have got.
- Jim 140 Oh yes, yes. Now, up to two years ago it used to be only a six months contract because of the winter months but then I never moved that unit off that for the whole twelve months.
- Chris 141 Do you have to pay them a fee to be on that site?

- Jim 142 Yes
- Chris 143 You do, so you have a contract in place with them to be there.
- Jim 144 Well, up to the 31st May.
- JD 145 Well maybe the next question, Chris, to Jim, has your tenure in Glendalough been unbroken for the twenty years?
- Jim 146 Oh yes, since 1989.
- JD 147 Well, that's interesting.
- Chris 148 I'd say you have more right than you might realize, Jim, in that case.
- JD 149 I know a lot of..... well, anyway..... I know the deal, Jim; your case has been heard. I'd say unfortunately Wicklow County Council are out to lunch or having their chips. They're not having their chips up with you... their Friday one and one up with you.
- Jim 150 As far as they're concerned, I've had my chips.
- JD 151 Keep soldiering on anyway.
- Jim 152 Well, thank you very much, Joe, it was a pleasure talking to you.
- JD 153 Okay, thanks for contacting us, Jim. Still more people on the screen saying it's the best fish and chips this side of the Sugarloaf – your side of the Sugarloaf. Okay, mind yourself.
- Jim 154 Thanks, Joe. Thank you, bye.
- JD 155 Bye, bye.

The programme moves into a four spot ad. break and resumes with brief visits to the earlier topics – the shooting and the recruitment agencies. Thread Y is resumed in the final segment of the programme after another ad. break.

- JD 156 Michelle Miley is in Valleymount. Michelle, good afternoon.
- Michelle 157 Hi, Joe.
- JD 158 Back to Jimmy Staken's chips.
- Michelle 159 Yeh, I just wanted to call to express my family's support for him. My dad used to fix his ice cream van 25 years ago.

JD 160 So he did ice cream as well, fair play to him.

Michelle 161 He did. He used to give us screwballs.

JD 162 You know Jimmy's chip van? It's now..... It's a van up on.... He has a building now in the car park in Glendalough. What do you think of the decision to get rid of him?

Michelle 163 It's an awful shock. I mean, the man's been there for so long and he's always been a great character up there.

JD 164 Okay, over 20 years. Deborah, Deborah Lee Marlow, Deborah, good afternoon. That's Michelle Miley in Vallemount. Go ahead, Deborah.

Deborah 165 Hey, good afternoon, Joe, thank you for taking my call on air.

JD 166 You want to support.....

Deborah 167 I want to give great support to him. I first came to Ireland in 1999, hiking those slippery, wet, dirty, mucky mountains and then coming down to that wonderful food and that smilin' face and knowing that my car was safe was really important to me and they're a family business. Good Lord, they ought to be able to stay there.

JD 168 Where are you from originally?

Deborah 169 I'm from Oregon and Alaska.

JD 170 Fantastic!

Deborah 171 And here in Ireland now.

JD 172 So you have camped and hiked.....

Deborah 173 I've worked in the woods for ten years, fighting forest fires and planting trees – but we never got off the mountain and had some nice food like that. That's not how it is up there.

JD 174 But you fought forest fires and I'm sure you fought polar bears with your bare hands, Deborah, but you never fought the Wicklow County Council.

Deborah 175 **(Laughs)** No, and I've heard it's not very pleas..... Excuse me, I'm sure they're doing a good job and maybe made the right decision but.....

JD 176 Okay, okay.

Deborah 177 But I just want to say, when you get somebody like that, with that kind of work ethic and they put their family behind it and they give that kind of hours, it's just not every person... and that should be rewarded in Ireland, in my opinion.

JD 178 Okay, well said, Deborah. I'd love to talk to you longer except I'm over time. That's Deborah Lee Marlow. Thanks indeed, Deborah. Back on Monday. Today's producer was Elizabeth Larrigy. Margaret Curley is the series producer. Myles Nealon on sound. Neill Doherty is the BCO and the researcher, Alana Doogan.

Liveline 110509

THREAD K

- JD 1 Sarah, good afternoon
- Sarah 2 Good afternoon, Joe. How are you?
- JD 3 Good, thanks. It was a fantastic prize, worth what.....nearly €50,000?...
- Sarah 4 I know, yeah, yeah.
- JD 5 A wedding reception in the Parknasilla Hotel and Resort; wedding dress; hair and make-up; honeymoon in Santa Lucia in Sandals; room dressing; pre-spa break in the wonderful Ritz Carlton in Powerscourt; all your stationery; wedding cake; wedding photography. You didn't win the competition with the *Wedding Journal*?
- Sarah 6 No, I didn't, no. I made it to the final ten.
- JD 7 So why do you think that you're now entitled, or someone else is entitled to a share of that 50 grand prize?
- Sarah 8 What I want to get across and what I've been discussing with friends and family as well, (who both strongly agree with me and this is why we decided to go ahead and contact yourselves) it's just that, you know, we entered that competition with good faith and honesty and firstly, the magazine didn't even have the courtesy to inform us about what was going on; that the prize had been revoked from the couple and, secondly, you know, we made it to the final ten. Fair enough, we didn't win, but why not award the prize to another couple, like? You listed all the prizes. It is a dream prize. It's something that if you're a rich celebrity, it's something you could afford...or even split it up amongst the finalists. We'd be happy with the wedding stationery at this stage but it just seems really unfair. In normal circumstances when someone wins a prize and it's revoked - let's say, for example, the Miss Universe or Miss World - if that's revoked, it goes to the runner-up. It's like the sponsors got the publicity and the magazine and they didn't actually end up having to give any of the prizes away. So I just think it's very unfair, like. I do feel for the bride, you know, being awarded the prize and having it taken back off her.
- JD 9 And it was because of a problem. They discovered that the man involved in *The Most Romantic Couple*.....
- Sarah 10 Well, they breached the terms and conditions basically. We were all made aware of the terms and conditions, you know. We had our entry put up on line - the final ten on the web site.

- JD 11 And how did they breach the terms and conditions?
- Sarah 12 Well basically some of the terms.... I don't know them off by heart ...but basically if you've anything that could damage the reputation of the magazine, the prize can be revoked. So, I mean, the guy was convicted last year and he's been sentenced today in court...
- JD 13 But anyway, he was convicted...
- Sarah14 He was convicted, yeah.
- JD 15 Win Pender is the publisher of *Wedding Journal*. Win, good afternoon.
- Win 16 Good afternoon, Joe.
- JD 17 Was the prize actually given out to this couple?
- Win 18 No, the prize hadn't been given out. They just had been awarded the prize. This has really only occurred in the last couple of weeks so you can imagine we at *Wedding Journal* and our sponsors are very disillusioned and very disappointed. We obviously were not aware of the conviction until after the results of the competition was announced. Needless to say, we are totally devastated as are our sponsors, devastated.
- JD 19 Was it in your terms and conditions that you must not have a conviction no matter how big or how small?
- Win 20 Well, really that's not This conviction is against the ethos of *Wedding Journal* and we just do not think it's appropriate and we would obviously like to be awarding the prize to someone and we would really regard this entry in the competition as a breach of good faith because, obviously, these details were not disclosed. So, not only are we disappointed but we would class this as a breach of good faith.
- Sarah 21 Can I ask a question then?
- JD 22 Sarah, yeh.
- Sarah 23 Why not award the prize to a runner-up or split the prize 'cos the prize is still there.
- Win 24 Sorry, I'm sure if you think about it logically, we would love to have awarded the prize to another couple who entered but it is with deep regret and with much, much discussion with our sponsors as well, that we have come to the decision that we will not be awarding any prize this year.

- Sarah 25 **(Interrupting fairly aggressively and talking over Win.)** Well, I think that's very bad publicity on your part, do you not think so?
- Win 26 If you'd let me finish! The episode has really cast a huge shadow over the competition and that's why we have taken the decision.
- Sarah 27 So why not take some positive out of the negative?
- Win 28 We don't feel there can be a positive in this situation.
- Sarah 29 But there can because there's nine other couples out there who are getting married, who buy your magazine and a lot of their friends buy your magazine.....
- Win 30 Sarah, do you want to let me finish? We have decided, in everybody's best interest, that this be concluded. Can you imagine if someone else is chosen.....?
- Sarah 31 You mean, it's more convenient for you!
- Win 32 No, no.
- JD 33 Just hold on a sec, Sarah.
- Win 34 It's not more convenient for us. This is a very devastating experience for us. We would far rather give the prize to someone else.
- Sarah 35 Well then, give it to someone else!
- Win 36 We have already negotiated these prizes. These prizes, you know, as someone has already pointed out, these prizes have already been negotiated, but if you're a sponsor you have to take the risk of gaining a momentum of more negative press. These sponsors have already gained negative press through this. If we go ahead and we nominate another winner can you imagine if the press then go on and they announce the new winner? It's always going to refer back to this experience which... - I don't know you, but if I was getting married, I would not want this experience shadowing anything to do with my wedding. And we feel, as a magazine, we have that responsibility as well but that responsibility for anybody's wedding and we have the responsibility to our sponsors and indeed our sponsors have the right – and some of them have taken that right – to say, 'hold on, too much bad press, you know, I'm not sure we want to be involved in this'.
- JD 37 So did they withdraw before you decided to award the prize?

- Win 38 No, no, no. We actually approached them and made them aware of the situation before it hit the press at the weekend.
- JD 39 But you see, in fairness, in fairness, it's not your fault, Win. By the way, it's no fault either of the young woman involved, by the way, just to be clear, it's no fault of the young woman involved in the winning couple who knew nothing about this.
- Win 40 And as for Sarah, we know how much hard work goes into these entries and we know people enter with great enthusiasm in their hearts and that's why it's so devastating for us not to be in a position to hand this to anyone. You know, we love to cover the wedding. We get involved with the wedding when they win the prize so for us....
- JD 41 Was the prize given out last year?
- Win 42 The prize was given out last year.
- JD 43 And has it been given out every year in the last five years?
- Win 44 Well, we've run This is a different competition. This was a new competition this year which was called *Cupid's Quest*.
- JD 45 Have you run competitions like this before?
- Win 46 We ran previous competitions.
- JD 47 And have the prizes always been given out?
- Win 48 Always been given out.
- JD 49 And have the couples always been happy?
- Win 50 Ach, yes. Couples still write to us and send us photographs of their children.
- JD 51 And what were the competitions called, Win?
- Win 52 The competition was called *Bride of the Year* previously but this is a different competition where people come to our shows and they enter into a different competition. The criteria was different.
- JD 53 And is it fair to say the total prize was given by the sponsors?
- Win 54 Yes, the total prize was given by the sponsors.
- JD 55 And it was in return for advertising?

- Win 56 No, it's in return for They do not just get advertising. They do it for publicity and to be associated with something good.
- JD 57 That's what I mean.
- Sarah 58 So, they're after getting their free publicity.
- Win 59 I'm sure if you were a sponsor, you wouldn't necessarily be thinking like that.
- Sarah 60 But they get free advertising in your magazine.
- Win 61 No, no they don't get... They get an association with the competition.
- JD 62 So let's talk about the final because it does seem a shame that this one individual, who had his conviction, should ruin the competition for everybody.
- Win 63 But unfortunately, if we were able to take in that but you can see the negative press that this has gained. If you were a sponsor....
- JD 64 Win, I also think people are sophisticated and intelligent enough to know that the Parknasilla Hotel, which has a fantastic reputation, and the various wedding dress companies and the Ritz Carlton....
- Win 65 But they're only some of the sponsors.
- JD 66 We'd all be intelligent..... They've nothing..... A gesture of good will on their part to give out a prize.... Sarah, I want you to take me to the final 'cos there was a final in this wasn't there, and you were one.....
- Sarah 67 Yeah, myself and my partner took a day out of our annual leave. We went along with great hope, like..... What's the lady's name from the magazine there?
- JD 68 Win, Win. Win Pender.
- Sarah 69 Win, is it? As the nine other couples did as well and we were all chatting away before we went in and everyone wishes everyone good luck. And we thought we did very well as did all the other couples. So it just seems like if someone wins.....
- JD 70 Sarah, you were interviewed on the day as a couple?
- Sarah 71 Yeah.

- JD 72 How long did the interview last for?
- Sarah 73 About half an hour.
- JD 74 How many people interviewed you and your partner?
- Sarah 75 There was a representative from the honeymoon company; there was a representative from *The Wedding Journal* magazine and there was a representative from the people who dress your room.
- JD 76 Okay, so there was three people?
- Sarah 77 About three or four.
- JD 78 And do you know what way it was scored?
- Sarah 79 Emm..... No. Basically we weren't given any insight into how they were choosing the winners. That was completely down to them. We went in and.....
- JD 80 Win, was it scored? In other words, was there first, second, third?
- Win 81 No, there wasn't.
- JD 82 Did you at any stage in the planning of this competition, given that it was a wedding competition, and given the world we live in, did you at any stage plan for a scenario where the winning couple might not be able to take up the prize for whatever reason – health, emotion?
- Win 83 Well, to be honest with you – maybe it's naïve – but you know there's very, very few people who don't take up this prize and I think these set of circumstances could not be foreseen by anyone.
- JD 84 That's why you have terms and conditions. Did you at any stage plan for a scenario where the winning couple would not take up this 50 thousand euro prize?
- Win 85 No, we didn't. No, no.
- JD 86 No one even thought of it?
- Win 87 Well, we've never had anybody who's not taken up the prize.
- JD 88 I know that.
- Win 89 To be honest with you, these particular set of circumstances, I don't think anyone could have foreseen them.

- JD 90 But it is also fair to say that it is not in the terms and conditions of your competition, that if anyone does have a criminal conviction or receive a criminal conviction, small, medium or large in people's minds or the court's mind, that, that should disqualify them from receiving the prize that they've won.
- Win 91 That's not why we went down the line.
- JD 92 You're not answering the question. Is it in your terms and conditions?
- Win 93 It's not in our terms or conditions.
- JD 94 It's an incredible prize of €50,000.
- Sarah 95 That's why I'm upset as well....
- JD 96 You're saying that no one ever thought in terms of terms and conditions – all the basic things – what happens if the winning couple becomes unwell or they decide not to go ahead with the wedding or whatever else happened – they had a bereavement or whatever? That's one, no one ever thought of that; two, there's nothing in your terms and conditions that eliminated this couple.
- Win 97 We don't have a second, third, fourth and fifth place.
- JD 98 Okay, how were the couples scored on the day?
- Win 99 Well, that's really.... That's something we do and we're not really prepared to outline them.
- JD 100 Why not?
- Win 101 Because I think we score them as how we feel that they.... It's a very, very sensitive situation, Joe, to say somebody deserves this prize and somebody doesn't because, in all reality, every bride there deserves it.
- JD 102 But hang on, of course, when you were running the competition, you are the one who was gaining out of the competition; you were the one that was running the *Wedding Journal* and the wedding fairs. Of course someone is going to win and other people going to be disappointed.
- Sarah 103 **(Talking over)** My entry was up on line on their website for everyone to see as were the nine other finalists.
- Win 104 Yeh, but what I'm saying is, I'm not prepared to say... We judge it as how the couple get on together; the effort they put into the entry. We judge it

on the romantic proposal; what they do together but that's not to say that we are saying that if someone doesn't do it right, they're not romantic because they're all good couples – every single one of them could have been a winner really.

- JD 105 Of course, that's exactly Sarah's point, isn't it?
- Win 106 But unfortunately....
- Sarah 107 Another thing as well, Joe, the finalists.. we weren't even informed of anything that was going on, like, at least out of courtesy, the magazine should have informed us.
- Win 108 This has only come to light. I'm sorry that you feel like this but this has only come to light in the past couple of weeks. It's not like something you just jump into. It's a very sensitive situation.
- Sarah 109 When did you revoke the prize from the couple? Did you not think at any stage then, 'we'll inform the other finalists'? Of course you wouldn't inform the other finalists 'cos you knew this would happen.
- Win 110 Sarah, if you ask me a question, you've got to let me answer it. We only decided...We've been in talks with this and this is only decided come Thursday or Friday of last week. I think your friend emailed us. She got a reply on Friday. You know we are trying our best here in a bad situation. We have talked with our counsellors and our advisors and our sponsors and we feel the competition this year is completely tainted and there is no reproach on that.
- Sarah 111 So we're all suffering because of one man?
- Win 112 Well, you didn't win in the first place, Sarah, 'cos you're not suffering, you know. Okay, it would be lovely to go back and split the prize but that's not the real world.
- Sarah 113 I'm not saying we won the prize. Another couple.... Do you not see my point, that another couple could have been awarded this fantastic, nearly €50,000 wedding?
- Win 114 We don't feel...
- Sarah 115 You think that's okay to say?(garbled)
- Win 116 Would you like your wedding to be covered and in the copy in the coverage of your wedding to be referred back to this?

- Sarah 117 Listen, if it's a fifty grand wedding and I'm getting it for free, you know I don't mind. I won't be complaining.
- Win 118 Neither the magazine or our sponsors would want to relive this. We feel we cannot continue on with this year's competition without this being relived time and time again. As soon as the press covers the next winner it's going to be referred back to this. It is tainted.
- JD 119 Sarah, can I ask you, in your interview on the day, where you didn't win – we don't know where you came – but the other couple did win – and remind people as well that the young woman in the other couple was completely unaware of this conviction as well, as far as we know. She is not the culprit here. But also we're unaware whether..... Let me come at it another way, were you asked in your interview, 'is there anything in your past that might sully this prize if you won it'?
- Sarah 120 No.....no
- JD 121 Were you asked?because it's fifty grand of a prize.
- Sarah 122 No.... We were able to view the terms and conditions on line and if my fiancée was being sentenced today, I would not put myself in the public eye like this and jeopardise, you know, nine other couples.
- JD 123 But what were you asked in your interview, 'cos we presume the winning couple were asked the same?
- Sarah 124 Well, we were asked how we met, y'know; how romantic we are; what would our dream wedding be; what was the proposal? We thought, as all the other couples did, that we did very well and like that, we were surprised that there were no runner up prizes..... And when the couple were announced as winners, it wasn't even told what their story was or why they won it. It was literally, we were all called back into the room – the couple in question that won and the nine other couples. We all sat around and had a chat. We didn't actually see that other couple until they were announced as the winner so they kept very low key and kinda.... I know now why.
- JD 125 David is on the line. 51551 and text Joe@rte.ie. David, your point please?
- David 126 Yes, basically I'm just saying the couple in question have a conviction. I mean, does that disbar anyone from entering a competition?
- JD 127 No, it's not the couple. It's the male member of the couple had the conviction.

- David 128 Yeh, I think it sounds a bit ironic, I mean, like, basically saying if anyone has a conviction they can't enter a competition, like. Is that the way it's going? That's the point I'm making.
- Win 129 Do you want me to answer that, Joe?
- JD 130 Yes, Win Pender of *Wedding Journal*.
- Win 131 It's Penton.
- JD 132 Penton, sorry.
- Win 133 Well, David, it's not really if anyone has a conviction. Of course, everybody deserves a second chance and, of course, somebody has something minor in their past. Unfortunately the nature of this conviction is totally not with the ethos of *Wedding Journal* and indeed to pick up on Sarah's point, you know we didn't decide on the day. We came back and discussed. We didn't get to the stage of putting the winners on the website. Believe me, there was no hidden agenda here and I don't think the couple involved who won the prize were hiding away because..... I totally agree with Sarah completely in what she said. For us, we were not going to ask in depth questions like that because, like, anybody (and I'm sure your listeners out there) would agree.....
- JD 134 Even for such an enormous prize?
- Win 135that who is going to put themselves up for publicity and have this? It's not even in the background. Like you say yourself, Joe, that's up in court today.
- JD 136 The man has been convicted, in fairness, it's for the judge to decide.
- Win 137 It's not something that happened five years ago and is buried and has been brought up. This is something that is current.
- JD 138 But David's point is, what is a conviction? Why should a conviction disbar you from entering a competition?
- Win 139 I totally agree. If it's something that happened..... You know, each conviction would have to be taken on its own merits. We, indeed our readers, as soon as this came out, we were flooded with phone calls up in arms that this should be the case. We took counsel. We sat and discussed it and we felt that this particular incident was totally not with the ethos of both *Wedding Journal* and the competition.
- JD 140 Because it involved public indecency?

- Win 141 Yes, and obviously people others..... **(garbled)** It's a very sensitive subject. We didn't want to be associated with that and quite frankly neither did our sponsors.
- JD 142 So you just dropped the whole thing?
- Win 143 As I said, it's very hard to revisit this at this stage without the next stage being tainted as well.
- JD 144 Gary is there. Thanks, David. Gary, Good afternoon. He's in Swords. Your point, Gary?
- Gary 145 Hi. Hi, Joe. My point is, the people who have all been runner ups to this competition are now going to be so disgusted that they can't avail of this prize....
- Win 146 Well, to be honest...
- JD 147 No, in fairness, let Gary make his point.
- Win 148 Okay
- Gary 149 ...and also I feel as well.... I want to make the point, the full fifty thousand, is that all by sponsors or were the magazine actually putting up some of that money?
- Win 150 I don't really know the relevance in that question.
- Gary 151 I think it's very relevant 'cos I mean.....
- Win 152 It's all by sponsors.
- JD 153 It's all by sponsors.
- Win 154 Number two on your point, we have actually had phone calls today by other people who were in the finalists and they are totally sympathetic and they agree.
- JD 155 Okay.... That's for them but unfortunately Sarah doesn't agree. Gary, what's your reason for asking? It's all sponsorship. What's your point now that you've discovered it's all sponsorship? The magazine is not putting up any money.
- Gary 156 I'd still say there's some cost in it for them if they're so willing to not even put up a small sponsorship or a small prize to put some positive spin on the publicity to this.

Win 157 I don't get the point.

Sarah 158 That's my point.

JD 159 For a wedding... for a hotel to offer a wedding reception as a prize – was an incredible prize, in fairness to the Parknasilla...

Win 160 Absolutely.

JD 161 ...an incredible prize.

Gary 162 And now it's gone to zero.

Sarah 163 Yeh, exactly, the prizes are still there so why not split the prizes?

JD 164 Let me ask Gary as a listener. Think, Gary, when you heard the Parknasilla mentioned then you heard the prize was withdrawn because the male part of the couple had a conviction for public indecency, would you not go to the Parknasilla? 'Cos that seems to be Win's point.

Gary 165 It's very underhanded. It's bad publicity for all the parties involved.

Sarah 166 That's what I'm saying. They're just not willing to do anything. They're just saying we've got so much bad publicity.... So I'm saying, why not put a positive spin on it and have some of the sponsors come back in – renegotiate. I know it sounds like I've got sour grapes, this that and the other. I'm not at all one bit but obviously it's a huge prize. It was very disappointing to hear all this that has gone on so why not let this end with something positive and either award it to one of the other nine finalists, which is the norm when a prize is revoked on someone, or else split the prize evenly among the other nine finalists?

Gary 167 And I also think that all the parties involved had gotten such positive publicity up to the point when all the negative stuff started, that they've already gained a hell of a lot in terms of positive publicity before.

Sarah 168 It's a win, win for them.

Gary 169 This seems like a good way to claw back and renege on giving out the prizes similar to the recession where people are looking for excuses to make people redundant. This is a way of not giving out a prize.

JD 170 Let me bring James in. James, good afternoon.

James 171 Yeh, I'm in Swords as well as that chap. Gary there.

JD 172 Now just be clear on one thing, James, so that's done...

James 173 I don't care, Joe, if he's convicted or not.....

JD 174 It's up to the judge to decide what to do so that's none of our business. That's the judge's business.

James 175 This man has been convicted and, obviously because the people have found out about it, he is deemed convicted and paid his dues to society and the point I am making is that these companies all have had great benefit from this competition. They've had publicity. There's been wedding fairs. A lot of money has been amassed as a result of this and it's just convenient that this thing has been highlighted and as a result the prize has been withdrawn. It's a lot of money. It should be given to people who finished second, okay? And if that hadn't been found out, the competition should be run again and the person who is second awarded the prize. There is no negative publicity whatever. We've had the Miss Worlds who were found to be pregnant or over the age and the person who got it was on quite successfully. It's a cop-out, Joe. It's cute hoor carry-on. It's disgraceful. It's despicable.

(Garbled responses from Sarah, Win and Joe.)

JD 176 Okay, 51551 – text. Is there.....? In your terms and conditions, Win – I'm trying to get a copy of them at the minute – in your terms and conditions, Win, is there any proviso for withdrawing the prize?

Win 177 I'm not sure where you're coming from.

JD 178 No, I'm asking you a question. I'm not coming from anywhere.

Win 179 Yeh, but.....

JD 180 I come from Dublin. You know, is there in your terms and conditions....? Is there terms and conditions that say 'we shall withdraw the prize if you were previously married or not divorced...'?

Win 181 There's no obligation to forward the prize on to anyone else.

JD 182 Is there anything in those terms and conditions, which I presume are drawn up in conjunction with your lawyers.... Is there anything in the terms and conditions which says, 'we will withdraw the prize if anything of the following happens'?

Win 183 The particular thing that did happen is not covered in our terms and conditions, as you can imagine.

- JD 184 Are there other things covered in your terms and conditions for the withdrawal of the prize?
- Win 185 Yes, there are, yes.
- JD 186 What are they?
- Win 187 Our terms and conditions say that we are not responsible if our sponsors decline on the competition.
- Sarah 188 Can I ask you, Win?
- Win 189 Yes, sure, sorry.
- Sarah 190 Can I ask something? I completely know... If you had a daughter that got into the final ten of a competition like this and it was with another magazine and the same situation happened, would you not be like, "hang on a minute, that's a bit of a cop-out"?
- Win 191 If I had a daughter, honest to God, who won the competition....
- Sarah 192 Who got into the final....
- Win 193 ...and she was chosen in second place – and I do realise it's a lot of money involved and I do realise it's a great prize for someone – but I would not want my daughter's picture appearing in the paper with the next line saying and referring back to this situation. I think It's tainted and I think that's our decision.
- Sarah 194 Well, my mother and father are the opposite. They think that it's scandalous that we're not being awarded some form of..... Either reopen the competition or split the prize.
- JD 195 Win, Win, when I heard your voice and I heard the name *The Wedding Journal* something went off in my head. That's why I asked you that question, has there ever been controversy about this competition before and, in truth, there has, hasn't there?
- Win 196 Not with this particular competition.
- JD 197 No, but with a similar competition run by *The Wedding Journal* about a free prize. Have you been on *Liveline* before?
- Win 198 It was to do with our on-line voting.
- JD 199 Have you been on *Liveline* before?

- Win 200 No, I haven't.
- JD 201 Someone, in my head..... somebody from *The Wedding Journal* has been on this programme before.
- Win 202 Not me.
- JD 203 There's a terrible sense of déjà vu in my brain about this. When I heard the details as you enunciated them on Sarah. There was a competition before run by the same magazine around the same type of prize as well – sponsors.....
- Win 204 Joe, we've been running competitions for fourteen years.
- JD 205and there was a problem with the on-line voting.
- Win 206 I don't think anybody could be blaming the magazine on this situation. Now, our sponsors and us have decided and that's really..... Everybody will have their own opinion on this and nobody's going to agree with our.... Not everybody is going to agree with our stance. Now, we've already spoken to some of the finalists who do agree with the stance. Not everybody's going to agree with everything in the world so this is our stance.
- JD 207 But you do understand, Win, and this is the reason why the issue came up before....
- Win 208 Of course I understand. I totally understand.
- JD 209 No, let me finish please, this is the reason why the issue came up before on this programme with the same magazine, your magazine as it happens... Because the prize is so good...is so good.... And the last time... my memory....we're trying to get it out of our data-base..... if my memory serves me correctly, it was about voting and the way the winner was selected last time.
- Sarah 210 Well, I wasn't aware of this. Now, after hearing this now....
- JD 211 Now the issue is that the prize has been completely withdrawn because of something that wasn't even mentioned in the terms and conditions. It seems a little bit bizarre.
- Win 212 Well, it does say in our terms and conditions that the prize is not transferable as well. You know we're in the situation..... We would love to hand the prize..... There's no gain in this.....
- JD 213 (Over her) Of course it's not transferable. That's obvious.

- Win 214to keep the prize. There's no gain on us.... We're not gaining anything by saying we're not transferring it. The problem is we feel that the competition is now tainted this year and no matter what we do that the press will keep raking up this particular situation.
- Sarah 215 Well I guarantee you that if you rang up the other nine finalists and said, "we're going to split this prize, I guarantee you every single one of those nine finalists would be over the moon and there'd be no.... Everyone would be delighted.
- Win 216 But Sarah, unfortunately the prize-winners are not the press. The press, no matter what we do will always refer back to this unfortunately.
- JD 217 So you'll never run this competition again? So you'll never run this competition again?
- Win 218 Certainly it's going to be hard.
- JD 219 It'll be renamed again?
- Win 220 It's going to be very hard to go back to sponsors and, you know, we'll certainly have a tough job on our hands.
- Sarah 221 So that's why you should certainly get a positive.....
- JD 222 Why did you rename the competition, Win, this year?
- Win 223 It was entered through the shows and not the magazine. It was a completely different competition.
- JD 224 But similar prize scenario – sponsors – weddings?
- Win 225 Well every brand in the world always has to rethink things and redo things. It was a competition that was there to promote shows.
- JD 226 And it wasn't following last year's controversy that it was renamed?
- Win 227 It was a competition to promote the *Wedding Journal* shows.
- JD 228 The prize is gone anyway?
- Win 229 The prize is gone anyway.
- JD 230 Sarah, best of luck with your wedding and Win of the *Wedding Journal*.....
- Sarah 231 Thanks very much. Well, I won't be buying the magazine.

- Win 232 I'm sorry, Sarah.
- Sarah 233 Well, your attitude is, 'that's fine'. You think I'm one listener.
- Win 234 It certainly is not.
- Sarah 235 A lot of people from my office here who buy your magazine and a lot of my friends at home... all my family..... There's numerous websites..... You're saying you can't re-award the prize because of negative.... Well, this is very damaging that you're not doing anything about it. You're saying the ethos of your magazine is this, that and the other. I think this is way, way more worse, what you're doing now.
- Win 236 I think, if you think about it in logic terms, maybe you'll come to another way of thought but certainly we've thought about all the different aspects of it and we feel that, unfortunately, this year the matter is better concluded.
- Sarah 237 Very convenient for yourself! That's all I'm saying..
- JD 238 Okay, Rebecca wants to make a quick point before the break. Sorry, Rebecca.
- Rebecca 239 Hi, yeh. I just think that the fact that they're saying that they're withdrawing the prize completely because of negative publicity and everything like that... I'm getting married next year so I'm buying all the magazines, looking at all the different web sites and this is the first that I've actually heard of this happening so if they had come to some sort of conclusion... agreement with the other finalists, there wouldn't have been the level of negative publicity impacting on the competition or the magazine.
- Sarah 240 Yeah.
- Win 241 Believe me there would have been. The court case is today and unfortunately... **(Garbled voices)**.
- Sarah 242 But that's only if you re-awarded the prize. Do you not think that you're doing something good then, re-awarding the prize?
- JD 243 Okay, we've been..... Okay, okay, we've been over that and the points have all been made. Okay, thanks indeed. Jenny, good afternoon.
- Jenny 244 Joe, good afternoon to you. How are you?
- JD 245 Back to this bizarre story, a €50,000 prize in sponsorship from the *Wedding Journal*. They've just withdrawn the prize because,

unfortunately, the man of the couple has got a conviction. Your point, Jenny?

- Jenny 246 Well Joe, I would query, given that the money has been put up, not by the *Wedding Journal* but by the sponsors, I am querying whether *Wedding Journal* are the face of the fact that the sponsors have pulled out and they have refused to put up the money for the other nine remaining candidates, that were effectively runners-up in this competition. My question to the *Wedding Journal* would be, is it *Wedding Journal's* decision or is it the sponsors' decision?
- JD 247 No, in fairness, it's *Wedding Journal's* decision but they did. They say they did but it was a little bit unclear, but that's neither here nor there, the timing of it but they said they did get some negative reaction from some of ... from some of the sponsors.
- Jenny 248 From some of the sponsors. So my instinct would tell me, Joe, that the sponsors are reluctant to be involved in this and *Wedding Journal* are really taking the rap for it; and the other point I wanted to make was in relation to phone-in competitions. You know when you ring one of these 5711 numbers, you know, whether it be Ryan Tubridy or *the Late Late Show* or the *Afternoon Show* or any of these shows, terms and conditions yes, are on the RTE web site but what happens if somebody rings in and they win their two weeks in Spain or their two weeks in Greece, are they told post winning that competition that they can't avail of the competition because there is a pending conviction, you know? (Inaudible)
- JD 249 Okay, okay, well the *Wedding Journal* in fairness, and I'm still waiting on terms and conditions, but *Wedding Journal* did point out that it's not in their terms and conditions.
- Jenny 250 And yes, it was an oversight certainly on their part but I do think they're the face of this competition. They're the ones that are facing the media. I don't hear Parknasilla on the radio discussing their
- JD 251 You know, in fairness – *Wedding Journal*, by the way, is based in Belfast – but they run these wedding fairs and indeed the magazine itself is all over Ireland. They didn't say how they.....
- Jenny 252they adjudicated the competition and, in fairness to
- JD 253 And you know they say every couple is different, like for example, this couple, one of them was from Northern Ireland, one was from the South so they obviously met on holidays or whatever and that was very romantic – North and South and all that carry on. I don't know whether that had any bearing on it but they say they didn't..... on the day they say they didn't

say, “oh, you’re first and you’re second and you’re third”, so they didn’t have a second.

Jenny 254 Well I think they should have had a first, a second and a third but I do think from a publicity point of view they are handling it in the wrong way. I think they’d be much better off in reviewing this situation with the nine candidates that failed to get through.

JD 255 The problem is... Sinead, our producer just told us that the terms and conditions have been taken down off the website. They’re no longer there on the *Wedding Journal* website.

Jenny 256 Well then you would have to.... Could you inference from that, that they’re....?

JD 257 No, you can’t inference, in fairness, you can’t.

Jenny 258 So, I would just say I think from a publicity perspective, *Wedding Journal’s* are wrong in not awarding ... or not doing something in terms of turning this around and turning it into a good publicity story. I mean, you know what they say about publicity – any publicity is good publicity – and you could turn it around and turn it into something very positive and they have chosen not to do that but my point is this; is it their choice or is it the sponsors’ choice that has simply said, “we’re bailing out on this” and these guys don’t have access to the fifty grand to give out to the nine couples any more, you know.

JD 259 Okay, okay, okay.

Jenny 260 And that’s my point.

JD 261 Okay, okay. Do you buy *Wedding Journal*?

Jenny 262 (Laughing). No, I don’t buy *Wedding Journal*. Jesus, Joe, there’s very little chance of me walking up an aisle now.

JD 263 (Both laughing). There’s always a second and a third and a fourth and a fifth.

Jenny 264 Well there is a second and a third and a fourth. I live in hope. I live in hope.

JD 265 Okay, thanks, Jenny.

Jenny 266 Go on – take care of yourself.

(Commercial Break)

- JD 1 Ruth contacted us from France, good afternoon, Ruth.
- Ruth 2 Good afternoon, Joe.
- JD 3 How are you?
- Ruth 4 I'm great, thanks.
- JD 5 You came to Ireland for your holidays at Easter?
- Ruth 6 I did, with my husband and three children.
- JD 7 Very good, and what happened that upset you so much?
- Ruth 8 I rented a car with Hertz at a cost of about €300 for my twelve days holiday and unfortunately when we went to give back the car we noticed a scratch. Well, in fact, Hertz noticed a scratch on the driver's door, which must have happened right at the end of the holiday 'cos we hadn't seen it ourselves and we had no collision. So anyway, they decided that they'd take €1,600 off us at that moment in time and then they'd refund us the difference once they'd figured out how much the cost of the repair would be. So we weren't too pleased about it but we were rushing for a flight with three children.
- JD 9 Obviously..... I presume
- Ruth 10 They have your credit card. We booked it over the internet.
- JD 11 Of course, so they said, "we're debiting €1,600 until we....".
- Ruth 12 Yes,"until we estimate the cost of the repair".
- JD 13 And how big was the scratch?
- Ruth 14 It was one scratch on the driver's door.
- JD 15 Was it the width of the door?
- Ruth 16 Oh no, no, no, well, it might have gone along the width of the door. It was nearly like a key had been scratched along it, but a very, very thin scratch. So I said to my husband, "look, this is a pain but not to worry. We'll get most of it back because it's only a scratch. It'll only cost €200 or €300 to

fix". That's what we thought in our heads. So off we went home and settled back to find out that Hertz charged us €1,000 to fix that scratch.

JD 17 And did they break down the

Ruth 18 Indeed they did. They told us the labour cost €600; materials cost €200; €100 for loss of revenue, which is bizarre; and €100 for transport or recovery fee, which was also a little strange since we handed the vehicle back to its original location. So we really felt ripped off and are very, very angry about it.

JD 19 They say it was €572, nearly €600, for the labour?

Ruth 20 Yes, nearly €600 for the labour, yes.

JD 21 Just to do a little..... Could you see the

Ruth 22 When he pointed it out you could see the scratch alright. Now, we hadn't noticed it 'til then but we could see it and we thought, fair enough, but we honestly thought, "Look, they're going to overcharge us anyway but maybe it might be €300. We're really unlucky. Oh dear, what are we going to do? Well, not to worry. Well, €300, we'll just have to add it to the cost of the holiday". But €1,000 to fix a scratch! It's just

JD 23 Okay, stay there for a sec. Ruth. Edward is on the line. 51551. Edward in Limerick, good afternoon.

Edward 24 Good afternoon, Joe, how are you doing?

JD 25 You're in the auto-paint repair business.

Edward 26 I am, that's true, yeh, yeh.

JD 27 And you're familiar with this.... It sounds to me more like a score than a scratch, but anyway.... I know it's hard to communicate over radio.

Edward 28 Well regardless of whether it's a score or a scratch, the price she was charged seems totally ridiculous. Typical of that type of work would cost between €150 and €250. Occasionally it might go to 300 if there was a lot of damage – panel beating involved or something like that. But for a small scratch it certainly shouldn't be more than €250. A lot of jobs can be fixed for even a lot less than that.

JD 29 Ruth was charged €580 for labour and €200 for material; €100 – slightly more – for loss of revenue; €100 – slightly more – for transport and recovery. I presume that's for moving the car to the paintto the body shop, was it?

- Ruth 30 I have no idea. I mean I emailed, needless to say, Hertz and just explained my outrage.
- JD 31 Ruth, Ruth, Ruth, in fairness to Hertz, can you explain to Edward or maybe Edward can ask more intelligent questions than I can about scratches. Can you explain to Edward, as if you were trying to get the job done by Edward, honestly what was the nature of the scratch so he can give you a fair price.
- Ruth 32 Well honestly, it was on the driver's door side. There was a scratch which ran nearly maybe the width of the door but it was a single scratch and I said to my husband at the time, "it could have been done with a key; it could have been It could have been anything". We weren't sure but there was no panel beating would have been required.
- JD 33 Okay, Edward. Edward what would you want to know from Ruth before you would price that job? I know it's difficult over the phone.
- Edward 34 Just to be clear, it was confined to one panel? Because if you do move onto a second panel or if you move onto the wing or the next panel next door then you're going to increase the cost. If it's confined to one panel, that makes it so much cheaper.
- Ruth 35 From what we could see at the time, and they just showed it to us there – we had very little time... We should have taken a photo but we didn't.
- JD 36 But they said it was the driver's door. They didn't allege.....
- Ruth 37 Yeah, what we could see was the driver's door only.
- Edward 38 Well, obviously in that case it should certainly cost no more than €300, I think myself. I don't see any reason, and charging you €200 for materials alone is I don't know how they could justify that. I'd like to get the breakdown of that because if you look at a gallon of lacquer or something. A full gallon of lacquer would cost you €200.....
- JD 39 How much lacquer would I need for a scratch?
- Edward 40 I would safely say they would use no more than 100 mls probably on that door so it's one tenth of that – 20 or 30 quid's worth maybe.
- Ruth 41 And €600 for labour, which I thought was unbelievably expensive?
- Edward 42 I want to get a job in that body shop.
- JD 43 Hertz tell us the body shop charges them €60 an hour

- Edward 43 Yeh well, two hours.....three hours work (garbled)
- JD 44 In fairness, they say it took 8.8 hours.
- Ruth 45 I can't understand that, Joe
- JD 46so that's eight hours.....forty six minutes.
- Edward 47 Joe, if I was to take eight hours to fix one scratch, I wouldn't be in business too long and that's for sure, you know.
- Ruth 48 No, they wouldn't spend that much time. They couldn't spend that much time on it. I just don't understand it.
- JD 49 Ruth, have you any come back?
- Ruth 50 No, I wrote to Hertz. They told me there's nothing they're going to do about it unless I want to employ an independent motor assessment assessor in Ireland. But, I mean I can't afford to spend any more money on it.
- JD 51 By the way, you've also been given – and you sent it to us..... Okay, the materials were €200 for the scratch; the parts were €15. What parts would you be using? Eddie, can you tell me, what parts do you use?
- Edward 52 I don't understand what consumable parts they'd be using other than the paint and the lacquer and maybe a bit of sandpaper or something like that possibly.
- JD 53 Sandpaper was €15.
- Edward 54 Yeh.
- Ruth 55 And the loss of revenue, I mean, I'm sure the vehicle might have needed a bit of attention for an hour or two but that's part of a car's....
- JD 56 They say, if we had hired out that car for the day, we would have got €102 off it in the event. Isn't that what they are saying?
- Ruth 57 It just can't be how they are justifying it. It's just beyond belief.
- JD 58 Have you come across car rental issues, Eddy, in your job?
- Edward 59 I do. I regularly fix car rental cars – it's part of my business.

- JD 60 Would you do eight hours, forty-eight minutes for one scratch on a door and charge them €600?
- Edward 61 I'd love to be able to but they wouldn't allow it. I'm sure they wouldn't pay me.
- JD 62 Okay, we're trying to get a response from Hertz – they've known about this all morning and we will do our best. Ruth, by the way, are you down €1,000?
- Ruth 63 I'm down €1,000 so I won't be back again this year unfortunately. That's the problem with it.
- JD 64 You won't come back to Ireland?
- Ruth 65 Yeh, the holiday cost us €1,000 extra. It just seems to be... It's just incredible.
- JD 66 Okay, we'll see what response we get from them. We'll try to get them to come on. Okay, thanks, thanks indeed, Ruth. I do hope you'll come back. Remember Aer Lingus and Ryanair have special fares at the minute – do everything to get people to come to Ireland this year – spread the word! Spread the word, okay? Thanks indeed, Ruth.
- Ruth 67 As long as they don't use Hertz, maybe.
- JD 68 Well, we'll see. We might get a response and, by the way, Hertz do employ a lot of people in Dublin, in Swords, in their call centre in fairness and if you ring them from anywhere in the world you invariably get an Irish voice, which can be very friendly. But anyway, I've had..... but that's neither here nor there.... I'm just saying, I'm sure we'll get a response from Hertz and hopefully it's to your satisfaction.
- Ruth 69 Okay.
- JD 70 Eddy, God bless the work.
- Edward 71 Thank you.
- JD 72 I hope it's going okay for you at the moment, is it?
- Edward 73 Well, it's slowed down quite a bit. The motor trade, as everybody knows, has taken a serious downturn but there's more and more private work. More private people are getting their cars repaired so that's....

- JD 74 Okay, Edward, thanks. Is Michael there? Is it about cars? Are you there Michael? Thanks, Eddy. Go ahead, Michael, you're an insurance assessor.
- Michael 75 Yes, Joe.
- JD 76 Do you want to ask Ruth something? Is Ruth still there?
- Michael 76 You were talking about somebody being stuck with a bill for €1,000 for damage to a car and I was simply offering to have a look at it or look at documents or whatever – you know their claiming has been done – and give you an opinion on it, whether it's reasonable or not.
- JD 77 Have you come across bills...?
- Michael 78 I have, yeh.
- JD 79 bills like this before?
- Michael 80 They're being done, it appears, where people are generally hiring their cars on Visa or credit cards and then the cars....
- JD 81 But that's the only way you can hire a car.
- Michael 82 Yeh, that's true. You're right, yeh, but then the problem is you leave the car back and 24 hours or 48 hours later somebody tells you, by the way, when we picked up the car it was damaged and now we are deducting the money from your credit card. One instance I had, somebody was saying that they left the car and there was no damage on it. They were quite certain of that but the car wasn't picked up for a further 24 hours. But the hire company in question said to the hirer, "well the small print says that you're responsible for the car and its condition up to the time we collect it, right?"
- JD 83 Okay, okay, we'll try and get an answer, okay. Thanks, Michael. We'll exchange your details with Ruth in France. Hertz have been on to say, as a gesture of good will, Hertz Ireland are prepared to forego the charges for loss of use and transportation – that would be a total of €204 plus VAT to Ruth, so that will reduce her bill from €1,000 to about €800 but I think it still doesn't..... But anyway, that's the first offer from Hertz, that they take over €200 off Ruth's bill. So, Ruth's in France, we'll contact her again and see how she reacts.

- JD 1 Geraldine, that's a very distressing incident. Tell us what happened.
- Geraldine 2 Eh Joe, eh, a fortnight ago, Monday fortnight ago, 27th April, I went for a walk with a young puppy we got after losing my old dog there, after fourteen years.
- JD 3 It was a little Jack Russell.
- Geraldine 4 ... A little Jack Russell and the other one was a Jack Russell. This was a little she dog – a little beauty. We had her injected and neutered and we were ...eh... enjoying life where she was six months old. I brought her on the lead for a walk down a country road here – a main country road and I passed by a house and I seen this big....like an Alsatian or German Shepherd. I'm not an expert on them but this big dog jumped up on the wall. It was a wall as far as where your shoulder would go. I walked to the other side of the road and, like I've seen dogs in houses but they're all well protected in and there's no way any dog has ever got out. And I passed - beside the house was this big gateway and when I looked up I seen three German Shepherds or three Alsatis running up the drive. I took it they were going up to their house or someone was calling them after hearing them barking. I walked on – proceeded to walk on with my dog and the next thing, they must have cut through some hedging up the drive and into a field beside them and straight out through the bushes – straight out on top of me and grabbed my dog and killed him.
- JD 5 Oh my God! – the three Alsatis?
- Geraldine 6 The three of them. They neither had muzzles on them, Joe. They were able to get out. I screamed and screamed and screamed. I screamed so much that at one stage they let her drop. She made it up the road a certain point.
- JD 7 And you were holding...? What was your dog's name, by the way?
- Geraldine 8 Lady.
- JD 9 You were holding Lady on the lead?
- Geraldine 10 I was, on the lead, yeh. Lady was on the lead and they came out....
- JD 11 And did you try and drag her back?
- Geraldine 12 Pardon?

JD 13 Did you try and drag her back from the Alsatians?

Geraldine 14 I didn't get her... Joe, it was a very narrow road. It's a very narrow country road and they were over on me before I realised....

JD 15 Oh my God!

Geraldine 16 I thought they were gone up the drive, Joe, to the house. I thought they were gone back in. I never dreamt they would be able to get out nor I didn't know that they were after backing around this drive.

JD 17 Did you have to let go of the lead?

Geraldine 18 Pardon?

JD 19 Did you let go of the lead with the force of the attack on your...?

Geraldine 20 Well, Joe, let me put it this way, had I known them dogs or seen them or had time, I probably would have tried to lift the dog up.

JD 21 Of course, yeh.

Geraldine 22 That's what I would have tried to do.

JD 23 But they would have gone for you then I suspect.

Geraldine 24 Oh of course they would have. Joe, if you'd seen these dogs, they were frightening.

JD 25 And can I ask you, did Lady die on the spot?

Geraldine 26 No, Joe, I was screaming. This lady came out. She said.... I said, "Are they your dogs"? She said, "Did my dogs get out"? I said, "They've just torn my dog asunder here on the road. There's no muzzles – nothing" I mean, I didn't say that at the time. I didn't know where I was, Joe. I was screaming. She didn't come out the gate. I went up to see where my dog was. She was lying up on the road, collapsed. She was bleeding from her mouth, Joe, and she was choking. I lifted her up. I could see she was very poorly. I looked around. That lady or nobody was on the road. I then in panic tried to run back up the road where I lived, which is ten minutes up the road. She bled all the way. All my clothes is full of blood – my hands. It was a most horrific memory, Joe, and I'll never forget it 'till the day I die. She died as I just got before my house. She died in my arms.

JD 27 And you knew she had expired?

Geraldine 28 I knew she was gone. Her head dropped back and her eyes went.

JD 29 And what age was she?

Geraldine 30 She was six months old. She was a lovely pet – a lovely family pet. The area here ... All the local children knew her, loved her. I had children come over.... It was awfully upsetting about it. One little girl made her First Communion, ...brought me over a bunch of flowers (**voice breaking with emotion**).... was very, very upset about it , to think that Lady was gone. I rang the Guards and I rang up the County Council and the Dog Warden. And up to now, Joe, I've got nowhere. This man... This man... My husband came back down. The dog was dead. He went down to the house and told this lady that she came out. She heard her dogs were still barking, running around. My husband had to tell her to hold the dogs back and told her that our dog had just been killed by her dogs and she just said, "I'm very sorry".

JD 31 And that's the end of it?

Geraldine 32 ...Just said, "I'm very sorry, very sorry" and he said, "well..."

JD 33 I don't know much about dogs but any dog or any three dogs together... Any Alsatian that would savage another dog is bizarre.

Geraldine 34 No muzzles on them, no muzzles on them, Joe, nothing on them. I would have had some hope or chance. Had I time, Joe, I wouldn't be talking to you now 'cos I would have been down lifting the dog but they were out so quick. Can you imagine what could have happened after that, had I would have went down to lift her? With fright or panic, I probably would have bent down to lift her and I would dread to think.... 'cos they'd no muzzles, Joe (**voice cracking**) and they were vicious and snarling. And when I screamed they even snarled at me and dropped her and she got... But they were still out on the road and I speaking to the lady. I said, "they're down there and three of them sitting together and".

JD 35 Did the woman give you any details about the dogs? Were they three dogs? Two puppies and an adult dog? Were they three puppies? Were...?

Geraldine 36 Em sorry?

JD 37 Did you know anything about the Alsatisans? Did the woman breed them?

Geraldine 38 Yes... Apparently, Joe, these dogs have a history in the area of coming out on the road. There is a history with these dogs, Joe, and it's known. And that's what I'm on about, that it wasn't only that day, Joe. There's a history in the area with these dogs. And this warden who doesn't seem to have done ... I asked him if he'd get back straight on to me. He asked me

where they lived. Four days later we happened to be on to the pound who gave us his number because it's the local pound here and they said, "we'll give you the dog.....". There's actually no mobile number for this man, by the way he's impossible to get, this dog warden. He rang my house and I told him where this person lived. This man, I asked him would he get back on and let me know was ... anything..... Four days later, Joe, as I said, we got this number and this man had still not done anything about it. I have been to the local police station and it went on and on. "Oh, you have to come over and give statements and then it will have to go to a local judge".

JD 39 That's fair enough.

Geraldine 40 I mean, Joe, at this stage I had to go to my doctor because the state I was in after it. It was horrific – the trauma and the loss of our dog. No one seems to have done anything.

JD 41 It's the safety of children and adults as well, I suppose.

Geraldine 42 That's it Joe. What if someone's walking down – an elderly person or someone else. It's summer time now, Joe, people will be out walking and, like as I said, my plight here today is my dog is gone. The trauma that's been done to me will be with me for the rest of my life. But I would just like to say, for that to happen to someone else.... 'Cos no one seems to have done anything, Joe.

JD 43 Yeh, but... Stay there for a sec., Geraldine, 51551, text. Is Ann there?
Ann, good afternoon.

Ann 44 Yes, I am. Hiya, Ann. We have the same problem. I live in County West Meath and I also go walking in Meath and anywhere in the countryside and it's a problem all over with dogs. I was pinned up against a ditch with a dog. I phoned the County Council, the dog warden. Nobody wants to know and it's a pity – the countryside is ruined. There are.....

JD 45 And you go for.... Lots and lots of people, especially today being the beginning of summer by the looks of it, please God – lots of people go for walks. Would you not bring a little walking stick with you or a lump of briar? You don't, no?

Ann 46 No, I'd be afraid. We have Dobermans running out in the fields belonging to people who live in some of the houses.

JD 47 Dobermans?

Ann 48 Dobermans, yeh. I was pinned up against the ditch with a cross between a Doberman and a Labrador and it frightened the life..... I can't go out for a

walk. I couldn't bring a child out for a walk on a bike. Can't do anything. So I'm just waiting for the council to come 'round and see what their response will be.

JD 49 **(Muttered initial response)**. Okay, Geraldine, you say you got nowhere unfortunately, Geraldine. I presume you'll get over the unfortunate death of your dog.

Geraldine 50 Well, Joe, what can I do? She's gone. She's gone.

JD 51 Would you get a new dog?

Geraldine 52 I'm.. I'm.. I'm sure I will, Joe. I've had Jack Russells all my life. I've reared three dogs and, as I said, this has never happened before. I thought in this day and age that people would... you know, particularly Alsatians and German Shepherds would be muzzled. I thought dog wardens were there for the like of when something like this happened, they would be activated. It's well known about these dogs in the area and like, Joe, nothing has been done. So I just feel it's my duty to let people know what's happening there and maybe someone will do something.

JD 53 Or maybe we'll hear stories about people who did actually succeed in getting something done about dogs who are dangerous. By the way, when your dog died, what do you do with your dogs who died? Do you bury it or do you give it to the vet or...?

Geraldine 54 We brought it to the vet first, of course obviously. He said she had bled to death. We have her in the back garden, Joe. We buried her. We put lime and the usual thing you do when you bury a dog at home. Yes, we have her outside and we have her photo there. That's it, Joe, she's gone and I can't bring her back. This is all I can do so that it won't happen to somebody else..

JD 55 It was only a couple of weeks ago – only about the 27th of April so no wonder you're still in shock. I'm sorry to hear that, Geraldine.

Geraldine 56 Thank you, Joe, for listening to me.

JD 57 And thank you for making the point and also thanks to Ann who was on the other line. Margaret, good afternoon. Margaret is in Mountrath in Co. Laois.

Marge 58 Yeh, howya doing, Joe? How are you?

JD 59 Your nephew dogs?

Marge 60 Yeh, its my grandson actually. He was six years of age and we were visiting people and their dog was in the garden. It was a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. Was playing away and it lay down and my grandson was stroking it. It turned on him and grabbed for his face. Now, lucky enough he pulled as it grabbed at him but it marked the whole way down his little face. His teeth marks were right the way down and under his chin where the bottom jaw had tried to grab him.

JD 61 My God!

Marge 62 And when he rolled over to try to get away it grabbed his arm. Lucky enough it didn't cut or tear the flesh or anything but he had these big streaks right down his face and they called the dog and all the rest of it and my husband was so shocked that he had him and he took him – brought him straight home and brought him straight to the hospital and they gave him a tetanus and all. Then we rang the dog warden because the people whose house we were in didn't even ring to see how the child was or anything. So we done that and then my husband and the child's mother had to go and make a statement to the police. We done that. Back to the dog warden – back and forth, back and forth – this is over a year later now, a year and a couple of months later, and still nothing's been done. They can't do anything; that's what we're being told.

JD 63 Is the dog still alive?

Marge 64 Yes, still alive, still lying in the house and there's nothing can be done.

JD 65 Stay there for a second.

Marge 66 The dog has been reported a couple of times by other people.

JD 67 Stay there, Margaret, for a second. Roisin is in Galway. Go ahead, Roisin.

Roisin 68 Hi, Joe, how's it goin'?

JD 69 Good, thanks.

Roisin 70 I think the line isn't great but anyway.... I was walking my dog on the prom in Galway and a lady stopped me and she was obviously extremely shaken and she was covered in bandages – like hospital-type bandages everywhere – and she asked me how come my dog wasn't muzzled. And I said, "well, I don't usually muzzle him", and she says, "well, does he bite?" And I said, "No, no he doesn't bite". She said, "I'd like to tell you what happened to me", she says, "my little dog" – I think he's a Pomeranian or something – it had got caught up in a dog fight with some other dogs. The

other dogs had set upon it and she tried to intervene and she got very badly injured.

JD 71 Oh she was attacked by the dogs?

Roisin 72 No, no her little doggie was attacked.

JD 73 I know, but when she intervened...?

Roisin 74 Yeh, ye, yeh, absolutely and I had heard that you must never ever intervene if a dog's in a fight because the dogs will turn on you completely and they don't really see the difference when their blood is up like that.

JD 75 My God!

Roisin 76 And I've had a dog for eleven years and I've had lots of occasions to see an awful lot of fights and ...

JD 77 Well, have you ever to rescue your dog from a fight?

Roisin 78 Well, only shouting my head off to try and get the owners involved to stop but, you know, I can't really blame anyone because my dog isn't exactly shy and retiring either, so you know....

JD 79 What breed do you have, Roisin?

Roisin 80 Well, he's a Boxer and obviously I keep him on a very short and strong lead at all times.

JD 81 Boxers are very placid even though they might not look it sometimes.

Roisin 82 No, they don't look it, they don't look it. I've had this guy for eleven years and the amount of time..... I've got so good at scanning the horizon to try to judge whether people are going to be bothered by him or not and you get so relieved when you realise people are cool – that they understand that he's not going to do anything. But he looks awful and he does this awful thing when he crouches down like a leopard about to pounce and that doesn't look good either. It's eleven years of mortification to be honest. But anyway, we've a Jack Russell now and life is very easy.

JD 83 What happened? What was your Boxer's name, by the way?

Roisin 84 Well, his name is **(laughs)** His name is Bubu.

JD 85 Bubu! And is Bubu still alive?

Roisin 86 Yes, yes, he's hale and hearty. I was out with him this morning.

- JD 87 And does Bubu frighten people still?
- Roisin 88 Yep, yeh. He doesn't frighten English people. English people tend to know one breed from another but - **(laughs)** my Irish friends are just going to think I'm such a spoofer – but no, he's em..... It's unpleasant. There's always a row. There's always a row with the dog when you go out with him and it makes the walk extremely stressful and I was listening to Gerry Ryan describing something last week about how to stop your dog fighting. And I really said, "right, eleven years too late but I'm definitely going to do this".
- JD 89 And how do you stop your dog fighting?
- Roisin 90 Okay, what you do is you have to try and remember that food is always going to be bigger than anything and this is what the guy on *The Gerry Ryan Show* was saying. I think he's this really big American dog psych... I think it's Ian Dunbar, or something like that. But anyway, every time a dog comes along and it looks like there might be a bit of a row, you keep the dog on the lead for a short period and then you offer the dog food every time he sees the dog and he does his pre-fight stance. And eventually he says – and this is according to the dog trainer – the dog says, "Oh, brilliant! Another dog, I'm going to get fed", and after a while he stops even looking at the other dogs, so I must try it.
- JD 91 It might be a bit late for Bubu.
- Roisin 92 I think it's a bit late for Bubu – **(chuckle)**.
- JD 93 But Bubu is a pussycat according to you.
- Roisin 94 No. Well, he is now. Five years into his long life he had the wherewithal taken away from him and things were great after that. Well, they weren't great but they were better.
- JD 95 So Bubu was made a baba when he was five and doesn't know whether he's coming or going – Bubu.
- Roisin 96 Ah now, poor Bubu. Yeh, it's true, yeh, and he's much better.
- JD 97 Okay, okay, Roisin.
- Roisin 98 And I'm really sorry for... was it Geraldine?
- JD 99 Yeh, God it.....

- Roisin 100 My heart goes out to her. God, to lose your little dog at six months. I... I... My deepest sympathies to her.
- JD 101 To be savaged like that and run down the road.... Okay, Roisin, thank you. Is Mark there? Mark is a dog warden. Mark, good afternoon.
- Mark 102 Good afternoon, Joe.
- JD 103 What can people do, Mark?
- Mark 104 Well basically in regard to the three German Shepherds that the lady rang in about; it actually falls under a civil case. Basically what happens is the person whose dog was killed goes to the local courts. They apply to the courts for what's called, *A Destruction Order*, okay? They are given a summons by the court clerk. They then go to the owners of the dog; hand them the summons; they'll both then appear in court and they put their case to the judge. Based on the evidence he has received, he will then make a decision whether the dog has to be removed or destroyed or certain restrictions are to be put on the dog by the owner.
- JD 105 But why is it up to Geraldine herself, who is already in distress? Has she got to hire a solicitor?
- Mark 106 No, no, there's no solicitors or anything involved. She can hire one if she wants to.
- JD 107 But how....? People don't know how to access the courts in fairness now.
- Mark 108 Well, you just maybe go into the court office in whichever local courthouse it is and you tell the clerk you want to apply for.... You tell them your story, what happened and basically, you know, because they are a restricted breed as well, they are meant to have no way out into a public place.
- JD 109 So, an Alsatian is a restricted breed?
- Mark 110 Yes, it's one of the eleven dogs on the restricted breeds list. It must be muzzled and on a leash in a public place at all times. If not.... If anyone is seen with a restricted breed unmuzzled in a public place, the dog will then be seized.
- JD 111 And have you power to destroy the dog?
- Mark 112 No, no. The courts are the only ones who have the power to destroy a dog. Nobody else has the power to destroy a dog, only the courts. It's for a judge to make a decision but besides all that, it basically falls under a civil case unfortunately.

- JD 113 Stay there for a sec, Mark. Declan is on the line from Kildare. Go ahead, Declan, your point please?
- Declan 114 Yeh, I was just saying to your researcher there that whilst I know people like Mark there are working very hard to try and help the situation, it just seems that a lot of the laws aren't enforced strongly enough and I've often commented myself that there should be a branch of *an Garda* that works on animal control and animal protection as well. I don't think there's anything like that at the moment.
- JD 115 Would those dogs need to be licensed, Mark, for a start?
- Mark 116 Yeh, every dog must be licensed. It's a ... You can actually be fined for having a dog that's not licensed. You can actually be fined so....
- JD 117 And just..... I know you can't deal with individual cases but when do judges order for a dog to be destroyed? What does it take?
- Mark 118 Well basically, like I said, the two parties go to court and they put their case across to the judge and then the judge will make a decision.
- JD 119 I know that, but if three dogs kill a Jack Russell?
- Mark 120 Basically the judge decides three dogs will be removed from the property and they will be destroyed then under court order.
- JD 121 Has that happened before?
- Mark 122 Yes, it has happened before
(Declan tries unsuccessfully to interject at this point.)
 We are constantly under pressure in regard... This is not a once in a blue moon thing. This is an everyday thing. You know that this is a constant thing. We're constantly under pressure to deal with situations like this and when you try to explain to a person, who's dog's after being killed, that there's nothing we can do, they aren't very happy about it, you know.
- Declan 133 Joe, can I come in here?
- JD 134 Declan, yeh....
- Declan 135 I just.... Hearing stuff like that.... I know Mark has a job to do as well and I know obviously the situation, that the dogs cause the damage that they're going to be destroyed, but I think it's an awful shame that the people get off Scott free....
- Mark 136 Yeh.

- Declan 137and the dogs are killed and I'm sure Mark will agree with me, that he sees it every day. I'm certain of it, I just think that it's awful that there's laws there – I know they're there somewhere – I don't know the ins and outs of it. I've had conversations like this before with a dog warden and I know that there are laws there but they're just not being enforced.
- JD 138 Would you like more powers, Mark?
- Mark 139 Yes, I would, Joe, because I'll tell you the reason why. I'll tell you the reason why is because trying to deal with the amount of restricted breeds and the owners, we're constantly under attack. I mean, we're constantly being attacked, beaten up. You know we're even wearing the vests that the *Gardai* are wearing now and it's just getting to be a joke.
- JD 140 Dog wardens are wearing stab vests?
- Mark 141 Yeh.
- JD 142 Why?
- Mark 143 Because we're constantly being attacked by people with restricted breeds – well, not only with restricted breeds but other dogs as well. You know, basically trying to tell them their responsibilities – that dogs in certain places should be on a leash or that dog should.....
- JD 144 Have you ever been attacked, Mark?
- Mark 145 I've been attacked on many, many occasions, yeh.
- JD 146 In what way? Fist?
- Mark 147 I've had my nose busted. I've had black eyes – different things – not only myself now, but my colleagues as well. Only there recently one of my colleagues was set upon by two males who, well, they actually gave him a little bit of a hiding so.....
- JD 148 These were two male humans, not male dogs?
- Mark 149 No, no, two men basically attacked him and...
- JD 150 Over a dog?
- Mark 151 Over a dog, yeh and.....
- Declan 152 It seems that dog wardens don't get the same respect that *an Garda* would get, yet they're being put in positions.....

JD 153 I presume.... Sorry, Declan,I presume... Sorry, I'm being rude, Mark, I presume if someone attacks you as a dog warden they're brought to court?

Mark 154 Well, yeh, certain occasions, yeh they would be, depending on the situation but it takes too long, Joe, sometimes to go to court so you just let the Guards deal with it.

JD 1 Hello, good afternoon and you're very welcome to *Liveline*.

Intro fades

51551 our text. Tommy, good afternoon.

Tommy 2 Good afternoon, Joe, how are you?

JD 3 Good. You were in Marlboro' House in Dublin, the detention centre. You say you're delighted to hear President McAleese on Morning Ireland and saying these perpetrators should be brought to court.

Tommy 4 Joe, I was absolutely, really delighted 'cos there's lots of people now who would be really ecstatic that the President has come out and kind of highlighted the fact that these people are getting away with what they done to us. We were only children, Joe, and what those people done to us is just unforgivable and the fact that we thought there was never going to be any more after the Redress but now I'm glad to see there's people wanting them to be prosecuted and we do want them to be prosecuted for what they done to us.

JD 5 And the argument is One argument put forward today is that you have to consider that they're all too old at this stage.

Tommy 6 Joe, look, they have to consider that we were only children. Joe, you know, we were only children in these places and they literally destroyed our lives, Joe.

JD 7 Okay, Miriam. Stay there, Tommy. Miriam is in Tralee. Miriam, good afternoon.

Miriam 8 Good afternoon, Joe, pleasure speaking to you. Thank you.

JD 9 Thanks for your call. What did you think of what President McAlleese said? You were in Nazareth House in Tralee. What did you think of the President's announce.... statement this morning that she would wish that these people be followed to the courts?

Miriam 10 I had a mixed reaction really because first of all I said that should have been done twelve years ago. When it all came out then it should have been made legal, that any person that was mentioned that was abused(?) should have been brought into court and brought to justice. Taking them to court now, they'd probably bring them in wheelchairs and we'd have to feel sorry for them but nobody felt sorry for us as children.

- JD 11 So, do you think anything would be served by.....?
- Miriam 12 I do appreciate that she has come out now and as being a mother and a woman she must feel....she just left us down, you know.
- JD 13 But do you think the difficulty....? You'd say they'd be very old. They'd come in, in wheelchairs.
- Miriam 14 But sure by the time they're going to bring them into court, they're going to be dead anyway. Do you know what I mean, Joe? It's just that they're prolonging this as long as they can. **(Voice cracking)** They should have done this They never believed us and little did they know it was going to come out 30 and 40 years later.
- JD 15 And how would you feel about having to give evidence, Miriam?
- Miriam 16 I would stand up in court and I would stand for every person that was in an orphanage and I would swear on a bible that these people should have been brought to court and the Vatican knew about it; the Government of Ireland knew about it; everybody knew about it but nobody did nothing about it because you know what we were? Wasters! That's what we were called – Rubbish! I was never called by my name, just by a number and if you look back to the holocaust that's what it was like.
- JD 17 And they even changed your number..... your name when you went into....
- Miriam 18 Yeh, I went in as Mary and I got a name – Miriam. But I love my name, Miriam but the nun that gave me the name, Miriam, was a lovely nun. But she wasn't there for me 'cos she was taken out. The good were taken away.
- Tommy 19 Joe.
- JD 20 Stay there. Tommy, yes?
- Tommy 21 The place we were in, Joe, it was a husband and wife team that ran the place and the guards were men that was taken from the Labour Exchange.
- JD 22 That's right. That's Marlboro House, the detention centre in Dublin.
- Tommy 23 I only spent four weeks in it, Joe but think of those people who was in those schools for seven years or more, what they went through. I mean, we went there for four weeks and what I went through, it's just a nightmare, what those people went through. They had it for seven years. The thing that got me, Joe, was I was taken in for loitering. I used to sell newspapers and that and I was taken and taken to the children's court and I can always recall being in that big waiting room in the court and there

was lots of kids waiting there with their mothers. And I was brought up, Joe, to the judge and you walked up along a red carpet; you stood beside the fireplace and the judge – my mother was with me when the judge put me into Marlboro House. My mother screamed out and I looked back to see her screaming and this man came running up along the red carpet, Joe, and picked me up in his arms in a bear hug and carried me down the stairs, Joe, and my mother was screaming. Another man had her by the arms and we were taken into a room underneath the courthouse and thrown in there. Joe, there was all these kids in there and we were screaming our heads off inside that room to get out. And what would happen? They had these men, either court officials or police, I'm not too sure but there was a sliding hatch on it, Joe, and we used to be kicking the door to get out 'cos we were all actually terrified in it and they pulled back the sliding hatch and told us to stay quiet and when your face was up against the sliding hatch, they used spit in at you, Joe. And here's the horrible thing that I never forget, Joe, when the courts was over at four o'clock all our mothers were outside the court waiting. They drove the big van up; backed it into the courthouse and these people ran in around the rooms, Joe, grabbed us one at a time in bear hugs and carried us out and threw us into the van. And I can remember my poor mother and other mothers screaming, reaching out for us and the police pushing them away and they were banging at the vans as we drove away, Joe. And I was taken into Marlboro House – into that place, Joe, and I'll never forget it, what they done.

JD 24 Marlboro House, unusually on the list of institutions – there were lots of them – was a detention centre; was a prison, basically for young kids. What age were you when you were sent there, Tommy?

Tommy 25 I was fourteen, Joe.

JD 26 What did they convict you of?

Tommy 27 Joe, it was loitering, Joe.

JD 28 Hanging around.

Tommy 29 Yeh, hanging around. Joe, look, the streets were our playground. We lived in the Inner City, Joe, and like, my father died when I was twelve. I used to sell newspapers, Joe, and we used to hang around the streets and things like that but that was the law that they used against a lot of kids to get them away, you know.

JD 30 Stay there for a sec. Tommy. Noel, Noel, good afternoon.

Noel 31 Hello, Joe.

- JD 32 What do you think of what President McAleese said?
- Noel 33 Well, I think that they should be brought up 'cos if that hadda been any Joe Soap he would've been brought up to court and would have been sentenced and I don't see why these should have any favouritism.
- JD 34 And would you go to court?
- Noel 35 I would go to court if I was told that the money I get, I didn't have to pay back, because I'd be afraid if I went to court that they would bring me up and sue me for what they gave me.
- JD 36 I don't think that's going to happen somehow or another.
- Noel 37 Ummm
- JD 38 You were in Clifton and Golden Bridge. You were there, sent in when you were two and you got out ten years later. You were sent there because your da was a heavy drinker.
- Noel 39 Because my da was a heavy drinker and because he was going out drinking all the time. The Social Welfare got involved and they sent me in to, I think it was, Clifton at two years of old. I want to go away to Australia. I am going to have to make sure that my record is clean because I will be moving out of Ireland next year.
- JD 40 That's a point made by Ray Noctor yesterday. He's still trying to get his record, as such, expunged. Let me bring John in. 51551. Joe@RTE.ie. John, good afternoon. You're in Tallaght in Dublin.
- John 41 Hello, Joe, how are you?
- JD 42 What do you think of what President McAleese said – prosecute them.
- John 43 I was absolutely astounded, Joe, I couldn't believe she said that because it's not going to happen, Joe.
- JD 44 Hmm. Why not?
- John 45 Well, I was in Glin. I was also in Marlboro House and I've been through the Redress Board. They didn't let me appear before the Commission – I don't want to go into that but I have a letter from the Guards in Limerick, right, stating that the DPP, having investigated my complaints, right, has decided that nobody is to be charged, right. Now, there was only two of them still alive, Joe, and because it was only for physical assault; that I had only accused them two of physical assault, nobody was going to be charged because of the statute of limitations on that type of a crime. I

honestly cannot see anybody being brought to court now. I think it is absolutely impossible.

JD 46 And do you think because of time; because of paperwork; because of age; because of witnesses.....

John 47 I think the statute of limitations.... Are they going to change the legislation to do it, Joe? The statute of limitations is there on physical abuse. You have to make a complaint within six months on physical abuse. I mean, what happened to me happened over forty years ago, Joe - forty years.

JD 48 Yes, it's longer than six months but the argument the DPP can make from time to time is that there has been such a time lapse between the alleged incident and the accusation.... But the DPP has discretion there in terms of the evidence that's available to him and the interesting thing about the Ryan Commission Report is that a lot of the evidence for the crimes that are detailed there either come from the mouths of the perpetrators or indeed their fellow brothers or sisters in the religious orders. That's the difference I think in this one, that the evidence is coming now and we haven't heard any of it publicly from sisters or brothers who witnessed this but obviously a number of them went forward to the commission and did give evidence.
Miriam, in your case.... Thanks, John.... Miriam, in your case in Tralee, do you know if many of the nuns in the Sisters of Mercy there are still around?

Miriam 49 Yes, they are, but the nun who inflicted the injuries on me, Lord have mercy on her soul, is dead and so is the other nun, she's dead but not every nun is a bad nun, you know. We were beaten. I was twenty months old.

JD 50 And why were you put into the Nazareth Home?

Miriam 51 My Mom was sick. There was a lot of us there and my Dad couldn't look after us so (**Weeps**) Mom just decided, well, I suppose.... Mom being in hospital

JD 52 She had TB.

Miriam 53 ...that we were safe because nuns were holy people and a place called 'Nazareth Home'. What more can you get like and she knew we had a roof over our heads and we weren't going to go hungry and there was five of us there – five girls.

JD 54 So your mother put you in, put the five sisters in, her five daughters in, in the belief that they would be looked after 'Sisters of Mercy', 'Nazareth Home'

- Miriam 55 Of course she did. From the bottom of her heart..... She did it with the best intention in the world.
- JD 56 When did you realise that your mother had made a serious mistake?
- Miriam 57 I never, ever said my mother had made a mistake, ever. I never blamed her. I just said she trusted them, you know. And as children..... I'm saying my mother was treated like I saw my mother about three times and each time I saw her she was in the parlour and everybody who was special was put into the parlour so my only reckoning of my Mom is that she was special. But we couldn't tell her anything because the nun was there constantly so if we did..... You know we were just scared – totally, absolutely petrified - and it was not only that, Joe, it was the way she watched you. She brainwashed us. She'd tell us to get on our clothes on a Sunday; tell us that Mam was going to come up to see us and she'd make us stand at the gate all day and then **(voice quavering)** in the evening she'd say, "What are ye doing?". We'd say, "You said our Mom is coming up to see us" and she went, "Your mother, sure, your mother gave you away". And we believed it always. We always lived in hope that she would come up, you know. She had her ways of cruelty physically and mentally and I think it was the mental abuse of the things that were said to people and the way we were degraded, you know. Older girls and younger girls being laid in a line like we were going to be executed and called by your number and half naked and you got the big girls trying to cover themselves and you got the little ones and they don't know what's going on. And they just laughed at it, like. They just loved it.
- JD 58 The incident about the needle on a sewing machine?
- Miriam 59 Yes, myself and my sister... I mean, don't get me wrong, Joe, we're no saints, right, you're inside in a place with a lot of girls and a lot of fun as well, believe me and a lot of good friends that I still have today but my sister – not my eldest sister but my middle sister - was brutally, brutally attacked. She never went to school. My memory of my sister is being thrown on the floor with another girl constantly by the head, her hair and on the morning of her Holy Communion, I was waiting for her to come down the stairs and all I saw was her being thrown over the banisters on her First Holy Communion morning because she ate a sweet because that's what we were given the night before by my Mom or by my sister – my older sister and she never made her Holy Communion. My memory is just of a pool of blood and she lying there – my sister. **(Weeps)**. And they can do that to a child on her First Holy Communion Day. In a white dress!
- JD 60 And who threw her over the balcony?

- Miriam 61 The nun who was in charge and I'm going to name her and I don't care. Her name was Sr. Mary Enda.
- JD 62 And how high was this balcony, Miriam?
- Miriam 63 You know when you went in you kinda went up the stairs to the dormitory and there was a kind of landing and there was plants around it and it was like a wooden.....
- JD 64 Are you saying that it was higher than a normal stairs in a normal house?
- Miriam 65 Oh yes, now, to me the house looked huge.
- JD 66 Yeh, I know.
- Miriam 67 To me as a child, and I'm small and all, looking up I suppose my image would have been like, say in real terms, *Gone with the Wind*. You're waiting for someone to come out, looking beautiful and all you see is your sister going over the banisters. And the other girl who was making Holy Communion with her made it that day but I know it was a couple of weeks later that she made it. But you know... it was just I mean I was six years old.
- JD 68 And the Dog Yard, what was the Dog Yard?
- Miriam 69 This is a classic. Like they would wake you up in the middle of the night at random.....
- John 70 Hello, Joe....
- Miriam 71 ...and I knew what was happening but nobody knew what was happening. Everything was kept secret because I suppose if you told, it'll be worse and she had pets, so you told nobody. So I was woken, told to come down the stairs, follow her and was brought into the yard called the Dog Yard which was an open space – part of the orphanage that overlooked the convent which was on the other side of the wall. There were plants, like a little rockery there, you know, but under the window was a box – and I swear this on my sister – it was like a coffin and she'd ask you to remove your night clothes and go into the box and lie there and not move because she'd be watching you.
- JD 72 For how long?
- Miriam 73 All night.
- JD 74 And what was that punishment for?

- Miriam 75 But for nothing. It was just total sadistic, now in my eyes, sadistic. Whether some people were looking over the wall. I don't know what was her idea for doing that to quite a few of us – and including my sister that died of cancer in 1994 – that looked after me **(Weeps)**. She was like a Mom to me.
- JD 76 Yeh, your sister.
- Miriam 77 I swear, Joe, I am totally focused on what the government are doing and what they put those people through. The Redress – they didn't believe them and if you went back and appealed, your money was dropped sometimes by a quarter and often by a half so you were punished over and over and over again. You don't not have a leg to stand on. And my sister, Joan, that died of cancer, we were going on a bus trip to Kilshanny Beach and Joan was very ill, sitting on the toilet and she was being dragged out. She couldn't move and left in the back of a bus for seven hours while **(weeps)** we were sitting next to her and while they were enjoying themselves on the beach – nothing to do with the girls – and we had to stop, I don't know where we were – I saw "Bons" or something – and next thing it was up to another hospital. We were left in the bus while my sister was taken in with a burst appendix. I mean that's I'm fine about it but when they say the cruelty that happened... When you see a sibling, your own flesh and blood and she used to protect us, they.... I have a sister that I remember her at two and a half or three singing and when she came to a certain part of a song, she went up and smacked her because she was pretty and she was a good singer and she knocked the cockiness away for years.....
- JD 78 My God! Stay there for a second, Miriam. Mary was also in Nazareth House in Tralee. Mary, good afternoon.
- Mary 79 Hi, Joe.
- JD 80 Does what Miriam's saying...?
- Mary 81 I just spoke to your producer. I was actually ten years younger than Miriam.
- JD 82 And what was your experience in Nazareth House?
- Mary 83 I'm just going on to speak for myself and having gone through my own files and family history, I was put in at fourteen months on the 13th June 1969 with a baby brother that was only less than two months old. My father put us in, myself and my brother, on a voluntary basis, 'cos there were two more at home. My mother suffered, from my files, from a mental illness so she wasn't at home at the time so my father wrote a letter and asked for me and Michael Patrick – there's so many different names for my brother,

Joe, Vincent Patrick – and I have the documentation here now of who his name really was – but getting back to the story, we eventually went home on 20th September, 1969 after my father wrote a very heartfelt letter begging them to let us out, myself and my brother, ‘cos my father was reared in St. Joseph’s. We were a second generation family having been reared in the system by the same nun that reared my aunts above me – my father’s sisters - in the late 40s, I would assume, and to be told or to find out then that I went back in, in the December of that same year without my baby brother. He died three days after being sent home from the orphanage (**Upset**).

JD 84 And this was in 1969? 1970?

Mary 85 1969 and I went in just before Christmas with my older sister and my older brother to be detained until the age of sixteen. I have the court order here – order of detention to a certified Industrial School – my name on it

JD 86 And Mary, what do you think of what President Mary McAleese is saying that these people ... it’s a long time ...but these people should be prosecuted?

Mary 87 Well, Joe, I’ll tell you what, I’m just talking for myself, okay. When I left Nazareth House and I met my ex husband, now five years, I went and after I had my first baby – you do get very emotional. You do. I went a lot of emotion can overcome you when you see you’ve created this beautiful special thing and I’ve been reliving my own life through my children. I was molested at the age of twelve. I don’t know if you’re familiar with this. I was first of all sexually assaulted by an older girl. I’m not saying the nuns. I wasn’t raped by the nuns. I was beaten by the nuns. I was sexually assaulted by an older girl in Nazareth house from the age of six for a couple of years. I was put in her bedroom. I wasn’t allowed to form a sibling relationship with my sister and I feel that, if they had let me in that room with my sister, I wouldn’t have been abused. But the abuse went on at night time and it also went on during the day. We were dragged off the yard to a back cloakroom by these same girls. Like, these are girls and I went to the Guards, Joe, I went to the Guards a few years ago and I’m not discrediting the Guards. I think they did their job, for me anyway. They were very sympathetic. Both files went to the DPP and I was told there was to be no prosecution I was given no reason as to why.

JD 88 You see, isn’t that the problem now. People presume it’s going to arise with the call from the President that there’s to be prosecutions. Isn’t that there’s going to be all this stuff that’s already gone to the DPP and the DPP has decided not to prosecute.
Stay there for a sec., Mary. Ray is on the line. Ray, good afternoon. You were in St Joseph’s in Kilkenny.

- Ray 89 I was, Joe.
- JD 90 What do you think of President McAleese's comments this morning?
- Ray 91 Good afternoon, Joe.
- JD 92 Good afternoon.
- Ray 93 Oh, I welcome her comments, Joe. I was glad to hear.... I wasn't just looking at her as President of Ireland – a mother, a Catholic - . I was delighted she spoke, Joe, from the heart. These people, Joe, should go through the judicial system and be prosecuted by whatever way and means and I don't care, Joe, if they are in wheelchairs or if they go on a bed or whatever, but I mean it has to be done. The man who abused me, Joe, received ten years and as all the victims who have come on to your programme throughout the past couple of years, especially this week – all iterated one solid thing. All they wanted was an apology and for these people to be prosecuted and that's all we ever wanted. It was never about money, Joe. I went through the court system and I'm glad I went through the court system because when I went through the court system, Joe, it wasn't really about me at that stage. It was about who was to blame. I was cross examined but it really was about who was to blame because, at this stage, David Murray already pleaded guilty and received his ten years.
- JD 94 And were you glad you went to court?
- Ray 95 Yes, Joe, I was, but I have to say, Joe, I had a great team behind me (inaudible) here in Carlow.
- JD 96 Did you on a separate occasion go to the Redress Board?
- Ray 97 No, Joe, I didn't. I was offered that option and between myself and my legal team, I decided not to take the Redress Board because I didn't trust them. And, Joe, can I say really what's going on with the Redress Board and people complaining – such as Christine Buckley and what have you – and I have to say this, Joe, the Redress Board are the most shameful people that I ever heard of and they should be sacked; should be investigated and never put victims of child abuse through a system like this again. And, Joe, if I could just say one thing about Bro. Edmund Garvey, when he was on *The Six One News* the other day...
- JD 98 The Christian Brothers' spokesperson.
- Ray 99 Yeh, yeh and the first thing he said, Joe, and I couldn't believe it, "We have to look after our members first". Our members! – the Christian Brothers paedophiles!

- JD 100 The accomm..... the accommodation needs of our members.
- Ray 101 He wants to look after them first and then, what we have left over, we will give it to the victims and see what we have. I mean, how dare he say that or any of the religious parties.
- JD 102 Okay, stay with us.
- Ray 103 The thing they should do, and it is their obligation, is to hand over these people to the Gardai and to the DPP and say, "here they are" and "we know who they are and where they are". That's the first thing they should do.
- JD 104 Give the names up, which is what a lot of people are calling for.
- Ray 105 Yes, Joe, and then they can talk about compensation. They're doing the reverse. Let's hide them first. Let's put them away safe so nobody can get them and they should have been named and shamed and I welcome what the President had said.
- JD 106 Okay, stay with us until after this break.
- (Two spot commercial break)**
- JD 107 Let me bring William Delahunty in. William, you just heard Ray say he would be prepared to go to court again, if he had to, against his abusers, the Christian Brothers. You were in Ferryhouse Industrial School in Clonmel. People would know it there if they travel down past.... They wouldn't see it but they'd know it if they passed down through Bulmers. It's on the other side of those idyllic orchards. But, William, what do you think of the call by Mary McAleese?
- William 108 I think it's absolutely disgraceful.
- JD 109 Why?
- William 110 Because ten years ago I stood with John Kelly and a large number of victims outside the Dail and that's exactly what we were looking for. Instead of giving us justice, they set up the Redress Board and this inquiry. There was no need for an inquiry. Everybody in Ireland knew what was happening in the Industrial School when I was in it. Everybody threatened their children with it. No, I think the time for justice is gone. Don't turn the victims into the abusers. We had enough of that in Ferryhouse.
- JD 111 And what do you mean, "don't turn the victims into abusers"?

- William 112 Well, when we were standing in lines waiting to see who was going to get beaten up and who wasn't to (get) beaten up, this could go on for six, seven weeks. Maybe an innocent fella was in the line. Did he know if he was going to get beaten up or not? Is an innocent priest going to get abused? Who knows? I think the Catholic Church and the politicians and especially Mary McAleese, who many of the victims have wrote to, to have their convictions squashed and she told them it was nothing to do with her.
- JD 113 Well, it is nothing to do, unfortunately....
- William 114 Exactly, but the point is the criminal convictions still stands.
- JD 115 Okay, I know that's a big issue. I know it's raised again and again, William, what....?
- William 116 And, and wait 'til I tell you, the main culprit in this is the Department of Justice. There's no mention in the Ryan Report of the Department of Justice.
- JD 117 Well, there is but it's hard to
- William 118 Very little.
- JD 119 Well, between the Department of Education and the Department of Justice there is.
- William 120 Yes, but the Department of Justice was the ones that sent us into the Industrial Schools and everything that happened after that was down to the Department of Justice and the Irish Government. This was a crime against humanity.
- JD 121 But isn't that the point that has been raised again and again in the past few days? If it was a crime against humanity
- William 122 It should never have been dealt with by the abusers – the Irish Government.
- JD 123 But there's no facility for the Irish Government to take a prosecution without people giving evidence.
- William 124 But what's the point of the Irish Government when they are actually the guilty ones? How can they convict anybody?
- JD 125 That's a good point, yeah. You were in Ferryhouse for ten years. Why were you there? Why were you sent in there?

- William 126 I was sent to Ferryhouse.... I was living with my grandparents, my aunt and my uncle and Garda McMahon arrived at my house with a warrant. I was brought to Clonmel Court House and charged with having a parent absent and I was sentenced to ten years.
- JD 127 You were charged with having an absent parent?
- William 128 I was charged. Nobody believed me when I tell them that. And I have the papers here.
- JD 129 And it says on the papers....?
- William 130 With the help of the NSPCC – they were as guilty as anybody else.
- JD 131 The Cruelty Man.
- William 132 No! The Bounty Man.
- JD 133 ‘Cos he got paid.
- William 134 They got paid. In the ten years I was in Ferryhouse there was never a bed empty.
- JD 135 And William, you made the point here – I know you’re in Manchester living at the minute – but you say when you arrived in Ferryhouse you were three stone, seven pounds.
- William 136 That’s right. After fifteen months in Ferryhouse I was three stone, two pounds.
- JD 137 And you were only a child.
- William 138 We were bleedin’ starved.
- JD 139 At a time when you should have been growing in all directions. You were coming up to being a teenager.
- William 140 As a matter of fact, I’ve been suffering. I mean I’m on supplements from the doctor. I’m on B12 injections for the rest of my life. I’m on food supplements from the doctors here plus heart problems and arthritis and everything else and it all goes back to Ferryhouse.
- JD 141 But to come back to the point you so trenchantly made, you don’t agree with President McAleese? You don’t agree that the abusers should have to come round again and give evidence against those men?

- William 142 No, I think it's time that a proper compensation system is put into place where the victims are properly looked after and their families and this has to die. It has to finish. I've spent ten years of my life on this. It is time now to put closure to this and bringing in these wretched – I don't know how to describe them – but bringing these animals before the courts is not an answer. The answer to this is closure. I don't like the way the bishops and everybody else has jumped on the bandwagon now. Why didn't they jump on the bandwagon ten years ago when we were outside the Dail – myself, Kelly and a few more – when we were demanding justice?
- JD 143 Now the Gardai have just been on to us – the Assistant Commissioner's Office – they say they've just set up, William, a special unit to deal with complaints from the Ryan Report.
- William 144 Look, look, the Guards were involved in this. If somebody ran away from the Industrial School he was dragged back by the scruff of the neck to be whipped, abused, have his hair shaved and you name it. We don't need anymore of this. We need our lives back – ten years in Industrial School.
- JD 145 But how are you going to get your life back, William?
- William 146 What?
- JD 147 Who can give you your life back?
- William 148 Nobody! The only way I'll get my life back; the only way I'll get peace from this is when I'm dead. And I would like to thank Mary Rafferty, yourself, Bruce Arnold, Paddy Ferguson, John Kelly – people that have fought this and let people have their say over the last ten years.
- JD 149 How did you end up in England, William?
- William 150 The day I left Ferryhouse I got a fiver off the priest to get myself to England. I arrived in London. I became a *Long Haired Lover from Liverpool* – a hippie. I spent maybe eight or nine years at that before I settled down. Every day of my life I've suffered because of this and yes, I did go before the Redress Board and the Redress Board is just another form of abuse. The Irish Government, the priests said they were going to put money in a fund for the survivors and the Irish Government said, "yeh, we'll manage it". They are the abusers.
- JD 151 And how do you think....? I know from some of you that the issue is not the money ironically.
- William 152 The issue was never the money.
- JD 153 Yeh, I know.

- William 154 The issue ten years ago was justice but I had a very good solicitor – Stiofan Mc Carthy – and she told me that the only justice I was going to get was the few bob from the Redress Board and she was absolutely right. Stop the witch hunts. Give us back our lives.
- JD 155 And William, if the extra money is going in, to ask this awful question, how do you think it should be given out?
- William 156 I don't know. I don't care but whatever money is given should not be given to organiz.... We've an organization here – oh, I don't know what it's called. It's run by Bailey, right. I received one letter in the last five years from him, the outreach service.
- JD 157 Have you ever come back to Ireland, William?
- William 158 What?
- JD 159 Have you ever come back to Ireland since?
- William 160 I went back to Ireland. I lived there for a few years in Clonmel but I was just a monastery boy.
- JD 161 What does that mean?
- William 162 The blacks of Ireland, that's what we were.
- JD 163 And how many of your family were in Industrial Schools?
- William 164 My mother was in there. My aunt was in there and they were in there because their father died. I assume that they were dragged through the courts as well. Nine of my cousins were in there. Two of them died in the mental hospital so when people say they were concentration camps, believe you me they were concentration camps for the poor of Ireland.
- JD 165 And how did you end up living in Manchester where you are now?
- William 166 Listen, I live on my own, right. I can't settle anywhere. I shag off as much as possible. I go down to London. I go to Morocco. I go somewhere, just I'm running away from myself.
- JD 167 Have you family, William? Did you get married?
- William 168 Yeh, just like many dysfunctional families, I created one as well and, believe you me, they have suffered in their own way as much as I have because I certainly was dysfunctional. And another thing I would like to say; I would like to say that people that were not in the Industrial Schools

that are speaking on your radio station for their own benefit.... A stop should be put to that immediately. If they were abused somewhere else they should be dealt with by somebody else but they should not be speaking on behalf of victims of the industrial schools.

JD 169 Have you children, William, and have you managed to keep up with them?

William 170 No, no, no. Finished. It's life.

JD 171 And how are you doing now healthwise, can I ask?

William 172 My health is not very good.

JD 173 In what way?

William 174 Well, I've too many complaints. I've heart problems. I've arthritis. I've deficiency in all vitamins. My life was over at six years of age. Sometimes I still think I'm a little boy but I'll tell you one thing, at six years of age ... If I was six years tomorrow and was being dragged down to the court again, I would go straight into the river at Clonmel rather than go through the life that I've done.

JD 175 I'm trying to work out your age here, William, because....

William 176 I'm sixty three.

JD 177 I know, yes, much younger than you sound unfortunately, because of your illnesses obviously. How long have you been living in this spot in Manchester?

William 178 I've been living here... This is the longest I ever lived anywhere and that's ten years. I dragged my poor wife and children from one house to another all of my married life. I'm a gypsy.

JD 179 And is that a house you're living in?

William 180 I live in a house, yeh.

JD 181 Yeh, but you do try and travel as much as you can?

William 182 Yeh, to get away from myself.

JD 183 Have you been back to Ireland recently? Obviously for the Redress Board you came. Did you come back for the Redress?

William 184 Yeh, I was back for the Redress Board. It took me three days to recover from the horror that I had to go through and as lot of people here in

Manchester... my mother and my aunt, they wouldn't even tell you they were in an Industrial School. They're still ashamed and my mother is ninety years of age. I have no contact with her still except I ring her maybe once a year to see if she's still alive.

JD 185 But how have you lost contact with your own mother and your own children?

William 186 Pardon?

JD 187 You've lost contact with your own mother and your own children.

William 188 Yeh, that's right.

JD 189 That's a difficult situation to be in, to say the least, now.

William 190 What can you do?

JD 191 I don't know. I don't know

William 192 It's.. It's... It's... This is part of the abuse we went through. We're just not able to cope with people.

JD 193 Do you have friends in Manchester?

William 194 No, I'm a loner.

JD 195 Do you keep in touch with anyone that you met in Ferryhouse?

William 196 No, absolutely nobody.

JD 197 Do you know anyone...? Do you have any contact with people who were in other industrial schools?

William 198 Yes, there's a load of them. I was on the committee here for the Irish victims of child abuse for Manchester. This is when we were trying to get justice. Not money - justice.

JD 199 And how many people turned up at these meetings William?

William 200 Well, there was two groups here in Manchester. One was supplied with money by the government and one like ours – we paid for our own halls. We had a very good crowd turning up.

JD 201 So groups of Irish people who suffered are everywhere....

William 202 Absolutely.

- JD 203 ...as we have discovered.
- William 204 And listen, we don't need any more witch hunts or anything else. What we need now is peace. How do we get it? We'll never get it but that's what we want.
- JD 205 Okay, Richard is on the line. Richard, good afternoon.
- Richard 206 Hello, Joe.
- JD 207 You're in Dublin, I think, Richard.
- Richard 208 I am, yeh, yeh.
- JD 209 You've been through a difficult period. You were in Artane but you've been through a difficult period in the last twelve months.
- Richard 210 Yeh, Joe, probably the last ten years. Last year has been bad too, y' know, but I'm trying to learn to handle that, y' know. It's been a nightmare. One thing you did say, "you take it to the grave with you, y' know". That's when you get peace, y' know. You don't get any peace, y' know. It's eh..... It's a living hell, y' know.
- JD 211 And President McAleese's statement that they should be brought to court?
- Richard 212 Yeh, I was with the Redress Board and I was happy enough with the Redress Board. They treated me very well there, and that. I think when I left I was down for a while, y' know - a good while after that when I came out even though they gave me a few bob and that but I wasn't The money didn't give a damn. I shelled that out on my family. I didn't give a damn about that but I was pretty well down and I think there was three brothers involved with me, y' know, and when I heard that two of them are dead, I couldn't believe it , y' know. I still don't believe it. Even today I don't believe it but there's one of them alive and, yeh, I'd love to see him, face to face.
- JD 213 And would you go witness against him?
- Richard 214 Oh, definitely. Yeh, that would be.... I'd love that, love that. That'd be some sort of closure for me, y' know, but definitely would, yeh.
- JD 215 William's point is – it's a difficult one – that there will be no closure he thinks.
- Richard 216 Well you go to the grave with it. You get a life sentence when you're sexually abused and beaten up, y' know. It's so hard. I think as you get

older it doesn't get any easier, y' know. It gets really tough, y' know. It's everyday something comes back – you see somebody – you'll see a priest, you'll see a church. I went away to England and lived ten years in England and I wasn't too bad. I was able to get on doing a bit of work and I used to do a bit of boxing and into sports and (inaudible) but when I came back home and it all came back. It was mainly on *The Late Late Show* – there was a guy who wrote the book and that brought it all back, y' know, simply because it was all good. It was all good talk, y' know. He didn't talk about..... He probably wasn't able to talk or speak about it, y' know, the abuse, the sexual abuse.

JD 217 Who was this now? Sorry, I'm confused.

Richard 218 It was on *The Late Late Show - Fear of the Collar*.

JD 219 *Fear of the Collar*, yes.

Richard 220 And there's actually a photo of me in that book, y' know, and that brought it all back and myself and me mate and then everything came back. It's been..... Nothing has happened really...

JD 221 And what happened last year that was so traumatic for you? Was there something that sparked that episode?

Richard 222 Yes, just everything.... Everything was going.... I was working well.... Doing well working and everything was going well working for me, y' know, and I just had a bit of a breakdown and I ended up in Tallaght Hospital and the next day my brother came and picked me up. I was after being on a treadmill and I done the treadmill just to get myself back and I was in good form and everything, like. Everybody thought I was in good form but I only wanted to get out. I knew what was doing. I wrote down a few things. I left them for me young fella and me brother. I came out with my brother and I went to Marks and Spencers and to the Square in Tallaght – flew through it and left then. I got the 75 bus and I was.... I had me bag on my back and all. I knew what I was going to do. It was actually my son that saved me, y' know. **(Tearful)** My two brothers went out in a car. I rang them from the phone and they know that I swim around that area, y' know. I don't know how they really found out that I was.... They probably heard the bus in the background or something. Took it they knew where I was heading but my young fella caught me. I was just running. I was pretty well agitated and I believe the police were out looking for me as well.

JD 223 The bus goes to Dunlaoighre.

Richard 224 The 75, yeh, the 75.

JD 225 And that's where you were heading?

- Richard 226 I was heading to.... Joe, I felt great. I never felt as well in my life. I was at peace of mind.
- JD 227 But you were heading to Dunlaoighre to die by suicide.
- Richard 228 I was happy, Joe, I was happy. It was the best day of my life.
- JD 229 Why?
- Richard 230 Everything would have been..... It's the end. I wanted to do it. I knew I didn't have to suffer any more. I knew that was the end. Once I got there I was happy. I was happy as Larry. **(Clearly tearful through this segment)** I was a bit agitated in some ways but when I got there and my young fella seen the look on me, he couldn't believe and he just caught me and brought me home. I had strength.... Bucked me up an awful lot since that happened. Now I had a grandchild – that has made a big difference, y' know. That has made a big difference but now I've gone back to ... Like, a lot of them brothers were okay, Joe, y' know. The people on the Redress Board were okay. I had good respect for a lot of them brothers but there was a few. It was a tough place, I mean, really, really tough.
- JD 231 Even the hurt and the pain you're going through now recalling all this, to do it in a court.....
- Richard 232 No, I definitely..... No, Joe, I think that..... I went to counselling for about five years. I have a good counsellor and that. I have a great counsellor and she'll probably get back on to me now if she hears me on the phone on the radio or whatever but no, I've been through a hell of a lot, y' know. You have to experience.... When you experience what we went through, y' know... Like people put us down – that we're only cranks- and you meet these in the street and you'd never dream we were in there. Some kids you'll see, down-and-outs. I can never pass a young fella on the street without throwing him a few bob, once I had a few bob in my pocket. I'd always bring a few bob and see a lad on the street. I'd always.... I met one lad in Parnell Street. I know he was in Artane and he was crying out and put his arms round me and everything a couple of years ago and y' know, I haven't met that many lads from Artane y' know. I haven't met many but... No. I've been the Redress Board. I'd love to go to court. That's part of it. I'm sick as a dog. They got the easy bit. They probably had the good life and went on and whatever and they probably.... Like, I hear kids crying. You'd see kids coming out of the brother's room at night time. Y' know, crying at night time. I didn't know for a while what that was all about. I was only there one or two nights and the first kid, I seen him coming out and he started, like, crying but that's probably two or three in the morning, Joe. I actually got bet up myself and another friend of mine from me pal (inaudible). He was from Bray. I haven't met him since that

day. They sent him to Letterfrack. We.... Some kid threw a lump of muck at the door. We were coming back after working, Joe. Joe, you got up at half six in the morning. You had prayers and you went to Mass. You had prayers and Mass seven days a week. You had the Rosary five days a week – Benediction. At breakfast time you had to go over the kitchen; set all the tables out; clean up after that; then to school and the same again dinner time and after dinner, then I'd be in the laundry. The weekend you'd be down the farm. You probably worked in the school, like you never got one minute to yourself, y' know. That's because.... But I loved that, that never.....I was great for that.

JD 233 The routine, yeh.

Richard 234 I'm still the same today. I'm still the same. I've got to be working, y' know - up the same time every morning early and do the same thing. 'm up now. I don't sleep.... I sleep a couple of hours. I'm up then. It's all that but definitely, Joe, I'd love to go to court. I haven't seen a brother since.

JD 235 Okay, Richard, thanks indeed.

Richard 236 Thanks, Joe.

JD 237 And look after yourself.

Richard 238 I know how to do that and hopefully, Joe, 99% I'm okay.

JD 239 Okay, that's enough.

Richard 240 But there's that one little percent where I can just take off and go.

JD 241 Well, long may it be overpowered.

Richard 242 Thanks a million, Joe, thanks. God bless you too.

JD 243 William, how are you?

William 244 How am I?.... I'm fine.

JD 245 Okay, okay, I'm just wondering how I'm going to say good-bye to you, that's all. I don't want to say anything patronizing or It's a tough place you're in. You've articulated it very strongly but how can I leave you?

William 246 Well, you can leave me with this, Joe, right. Mary McAleese and the politicians that are now jumping on the bandwagon, where the hell were they ten years ago when we needed the support; when we were outside the Dail – myself, Kelly, Irish Trocaire and a few more groups? We were outside the Dail protesting to get justice. Where were they then? Joe

there is no answer to it. There is no answer to any of this. I mean, the man you had in front of me now, I wish I was like him. I wish I could cry. I never cried anyway. Take care, Joe.

JD 247 You too, take care, William

William 248 All right, 'bye.

Two spot commercial break

JD 249 And Joe@RTE.ie. Harry, good afternoon.

Harry 250 Good afternoon, Joe, can I first thank you for exposing all this. How are you?

JD 251 Ah, I'm okay.

Harry 252 Now then, I wanted to speak to you anyway. It's wonderful to see all this coming out now because the bottom line for people like me – we were never believed, really; never accepted and you have to bear with me now **(audibly upset)**..... I'm okay.

JD 253 Take your time. Take your time.

Harry 254 As you probably know from your researcher, I was in Glin for several months and there was sexual abuse applied to me, which I fought against and fought and kicked and God knows what and put back into my bed and the following morning I went in the yard with all the rest of the boys and just kept shouting, "I'm going to tell everyone; I'm going to let everybody know what you've done". Within ten minutes I was taken from the yard, hit, kicked, and walked to a room and locked in it for six weeks without seeing a soul only a brother coming up to give me my watery tea or a bit of porridge in the morning and a little bit of dinner in the afternoon. That went on for six weeks and every time he came in the room he belted me; that I was a little liar, a troublemaker. I can't remember it verbatim but at the end of the day, it was horrendous. You could look out the window and see the boys playing and all that, and that's all I had for six weeks. They took me out after about five weeks; took me to Limerick Asylum and tried to convince, I think you could call him a consultant, a psychiatrist – whatever they were – that I was mentally ill. He asked the brother to leave the room and I was with him for some considerable time – I can't give you the exact amount of time – and a questions and answer thing. I'll never forget the type of questions; how was I feeling? What was me mam like? – all that kind of stuff – and he said, "are you saying there was sexual abuse? And I said, "yes", I says, and he went on then to ask me what pictures I went to. At the end of the day, to cut that one short, I was taken back, wasn't sent to an asylum. I was nothing mentally wrong with me apparently 'cos he

said when I was leaving, “go away , young man, you’ll be fine”, and he said no more than that to me.

They took me back to Glin. Within a week of being back and getting belted every day they came into the room one morning and said, “you’re leaving here. You’re going to hospital. You’re not well”. Nothing wrong with me; nothing physically or mentally wrong with me and I was taken in to Limerick Hospital and I was in there for up to eight weeks and I was informed that I had pleurisy. I never had pleurisy. I had no treatment or nothing and after eight weeks the Sister of the ward came in and says, “Harry, your mother’s here. We sent for her. You can go home. You won’t be going back to Glin”, and that’s how they got rid of me from there. Now thereafter I went to the – I won’t mention any names – I went to a senior police officer. I was determined to report what was going on there and I was thrown out of the police station – said I was a little liar; a little beggar and should be locked up and all this kind of stuff. I then went to the local parish priest and informed him of what was happening and I was thrown out of the confessional box. Went to confession and decided to use the words I’m using now to expose this and I was rejected there. Not long after that, I used to go out – there’s an orchard outside Limerick called The Lemon Fields – about 3,000 apple trees out there – and I used to pinch apples and take them home and I used to go out with thruppence and buy some Cleeves’s Toffee and dip the apples into the toffee when it was all heated up and go and sell them at a ha’penny or a penny. Anyway, one day police came and it was inquired, “where did you get those apples?” so I told them. I was taken to the police station and who’s in the police station but our friend, the senior police officer and I was prosecuted and brought down in front of the judge – can I mention his name?

JD 255 Yes, yes.

Harry 256 Judge Gleeson, I’ll never forget him and the police came up and the words they were using was, “he’s a very bold boy, right, and he’s going around calling the Holy Fathers Calling the Holy Fathers and the Christian Brothers. It is disgraceful”. What was it the judge said? “Stealing apples – well that won’t be too serious; we’ll deal with that now”, and before he could finish, the senior police officer stood up and said what I’ve just said to you – that this was a bold boy, needed chastising, right, and needed some discipline and I was put into Daingean. Think about it.

JD 257 I know, I know, Harry, stay there. You, please stay there and let me bring Tommy in who’s been holding. Tommy, good afternoon, you were put into Ferryhouse in Clonmel?

Tommy 258 Howya, Joe?

- JD 259 How are you, Tommy? Alright? You can even remember your bed number.
- Tommy 260 It wasn't a bed number, it was me pair of shorts, 163, but I had a number on my sheet – 163 – because of wetting the bed and they brang me down. These was I won't mention the names, right **(Emotionally broken speech)** There was a nurse there – a woman nurse. There was a priest the first day. I got brought down the first day. Next day I went out in the field – a potato field. I never knew what a potato field was. My brother was there – he's doing four years – and I'm stood out of line. I didn't know what was the roaring for and I still wonder what the roaring was for and the priest came down and he got the bamboo with me shorts on me and he whipped me in the field and, not only that, he kicked me on the ground. That was one thing and then another thing, I was very nervous, Joe, you know that, believe me. I didn't ever want to go to Redress Board. My brother before he died, he went two years before me. I said, "Harry, I don't want to know anything about it. I don't want to know anything about it", but when I just heard Bertie Aherne turn around and say ... I know he did come out and say...
- JD 261 The apology.
- Tommy 262 You know what I mean but first he said some were telling lies. And then I got on to Drumcondra – you know, St. Luke's, you know where Bertie Aherne's office is. He wasn't there and I said to the person, "I didn't put in for the claim", but it made me so mad I put in for the claim. But then, Joe, I was up in the Taylors – you know Taylors. They put a board across my leg, you know, like in India. It was on the flat where they had machines. Then you had to sit up on the thing but I'll tell you what they done there, Joe. This man was a layman. What he done was he put his big weight on me. He put the board on my knees and he kept on jumping. He wanted me on my knees on the board 'cos I couldn't sit like an Indian. And, not only that, Joe, he fell off it and he wasn't happy about that so he laid on me but Brother Hanlon Brother Connor hit me once, like now but the priest, he gave me a bad hiding. Brother Hanlon was a bad person but there was a bad person you couldn't understand either. There was a nurse there, you know, she was a nurse and, I have to say, Joe, she came up to your dormitory, you know, every morning and when they checked the beds, I tried to hide it, you know what I mean. I was scared **(upset and tearful)**.... Bastards! God forgive them.
- Harry 263 Joe, Joe.
- JD 264 Harry, stay there, Tommy.
- Harry 265 When you've talked about He just mentioned bastards there. In Daingean, in Daingean, I can assure you, they were the cruellest of the

cruel. I have, as I said to your researcher, a minimum of fifteen scars on my body, ripped open, that I still have. They used hurleys, leathers, belts and boxing gloves. I was once on the yard in Daingean and there used to be a young lad there had fits and we used get hold of him to try and hold him down, which we now know is the wrong thing to do, and the priest came up sorry, the Christian Brother came up to me and said, "What are you doing there?" I said, "nothing, we're trying to help him", and he opened up with both fists. "You think you know it all, do you?" and ripped my eye right open. The following day we were out hurling – at least they gave us a bit of sport – we were out hurling and I broke his hurl by accident, tackling. He took my hurley off me; led at me and there was a loose piece of tin around the boss of it. It ripped my arm open; cut my earlobe off, bar about an eighth of an inch; bruised all my head and my arm was so bad they had to take me to Tullamore Hospital because I believed the main vein had been ripped. They took me in there. He sat me down and said, "you keep quiet. I'll do the talking", and he turned round and said, "he got a clatter of a hurl from one of the lads", and me face all bleeding.

JD 266 My God!

Harry 247 My ear nearly hanging off and they took that at Tullamore Hospital as gospel. I went back and I would say on the average of once or twice a week I got leathered. There was a brother there used to take us up the stairs – a little stairs; make us take our trousers down and lash us with a big thick leather and after about eighteen months of that, among other tortures and bad food and God knows what, I was out and he grabbed hold of me and he said, "I believe you've been at it again, not eating your food". I said I didn't want it. It wasn't food it was pig swill and then he took me to the stairs and I turned on him and I said, "you're not taking my trousers down any more – never again – and I'm not going to cry again". He lashed me, my legs, my head – you mention it, he lashed me. Kept at it and I grabbed hold of him as a young boy and threw him to one side and ran. The following evening at about I'll never forget this ...at about five o'clock he called me to the stairs. "Take your trousers down" I said, "no, I am not", and who came from the top of the stairs but two more brothers. They grabbed me, pulled me, tried to rip my clothes off and I started fighting back using my head, biting, kicking and they shoved me right through a window, arms and all till I'm still left with the scars on the palm of my hand and my thumb and that ear that was ripped was cut again. Another day I got leathered so much because I wouldn't kneel down to get flogged, that my knees were ripped open. Still have the scars here. The calf of my leg was ripped open and the following day I was taken back in and my ankles was ripped open and I had to be taken to Tullamore Hospital again with all their excuses and I'm trying to shout out what they were doing.

Tommy 268 Joe.

JD 269 Tommy.

Tommy 270 And there's another thing - a horrible thing. A chap there – I'm not giving you his name...

JD 271 Harry, Harry

Tommy 272 No, a chap in the place. Harry's me brother.

JD 273 Sorry.

Tommy 274 Now, by the way, Joe, an exhibition was..... Two chaps went away. One was Satellite – that's not his name, right – and it's horrible and we got all put in this room, a big hall. I got a terrible hiding. I got a terrible life down there but these two chaps went out and ran away from the school. I tell you what they done, Joe, they brang us all in. I call it an exhibition – I think there is some other name for it – they put They held the first chap, Satellite. One had one leg and the other had the other leg, right and the other one had the arm and the other one had the arm and what they done was took off his clothes. It's like, you know what you're saying about them shorts, they're only light shorts, and they whipped Satellite first. There was no need for it. And then the other chap... Now, the other chap, he wouldn't cry. He wouldn't give in. They kept lashing him. I tell you, Joe, I done nothing wrong on them. I did not! All right, I was put down there, like you know what I mean, my Harry was younger than me, right, Joe, and it was a terrible thing what happened to me there. Even with that nurse..... There was a nurse, she was an animal now she was because when you got brought down to the shower, Joe, right, when you got into the shower – it's a little (unclear) along the wall – even when you piss and what they....., excuse the language, and they turned around and you had your 163 – that was my number – and you know she done it as well. She's an animal. Like you know what I mean, she was one animal, you know what I mean. And Brother Hanlon, he was no better but there was some.... There was one brother there, a brilliant brother and I always thank God for that – Brother Rafferty.

JD 275 Okay.

Harry 276 By the way, I'll interrupt, Joe.

JD 277 Okay, go ahead, Harry.

Harry 278 Yeh, there was something on the radio on *The Marian Finucane Show* on Saturday morning and Mr. Wood was on and I'm absolutely disgusted at what he said.

- JD 279 That's Michael Woods, the Minister.
- Harry 280 Mr. Wood said,... he stated....., he said, "you know that was the culture of the time" and we're getting bugged, getting whipped, getting kicked all over the place and he said that was the culture of the time and , "don't forget that was all imported from England". In the name of heavens above, what type of man is he? Imported? And these adults, like! They had the Minister beside them saying this is what you do, is it? Is he trying to treat us all like idiots? He was protecting the clergy in my mind when he was speaking on Saturday morning.
- JD 281 Okay.
- Harry 282 Absolute disgrace and good luck to our President and hope that people like me will get the opportunity to stand up and hang those animals.
- JD 283 Thanks Harry and Tommy. Harry, look after yourself and Tommy, you too and I appreciate your calls.
- Tommy 284 Joe, can I say just one more thing?
- JD 285 Briefly, Tommy, please.
- Tommy 286 No one says cruelty man. Well, there's people out in the streets – now that's cruelty..... There's people in hospital. The government said they put the people up front. They're not. They're cutting the poor kids that's handicapped and all. They shouldn't give.... They should give the people the money, the hospital...
- JD 287 Okay, okay.
- Tommy 288 Thanks very much, Joe.
- JD 289 Thanks, Tommy.
- Tommy 290 Thanks very much.

(Two spot commercial break)

- JD 291 And joe@rte.ie. Michael, you've been holding for a long time. Michael was in Daingean from '63 to the following year. He was sixteen when he went in. You're from Dublin. President McAleese's statement, to come back to that first, Michael, what do you think? Have you still got the documentation from your case, for example?
- Michael 292 I haven't, Joe, but to tell you the truth, I burnt the whole lot.

- JD 293 Why?
- Michael 294 I was before the Redress Board. I was three times before the Redress Board. I had to go to Clonskeagh and they made an offer and my solicitor said the offer wasn't good enough and then I had to go in to a place like a court. I felt like I was the one who committed the crime, that's the way I felt. I was questioned and the offer they..... They cut the offer in half and then it was re-appealed again and it went to South.... just off Molesworth Street there – the name evades me now, and I can't think of it.
- JD 295 South Frederick Street, was it?
- Michael 296 South Frederick Street, yeh, that's it, Joe, and in there they gave me an extra few bob – not much. In other words, the first offer I got was cut in half really. I went through all that and it was like I was on trial.
- JD 297 And why did you burn your papers?
- Michael 298 I couldn't handle it any more. I just said that's the end of it.
- JD 299 And what do you think.....?
- Michael 300 I've a serious illness. I still have it. I was weak. I couldn't stick any more of it.
- JD 301 I understand, I understand. What....what,,,what do you think of President McAleese's statement?
- Michael 302 I think it's, Joe, right, fair play to her. She's our president and all that and I agree with a lot she says and if you heard her on the news at one there and she says the lawyer in her says about the inquiry that the names.....
- JD 303 So you would be prepared to stand up in court again?
- Michael 304 I would reluctantly, Joe. I would say I'd be nervous now.....
- JD 305 Yeh, okay.
- Michael 306 'Cos I couldn't handle that Redress thing and Christine Buckley was on yesterday and everything she said is true. It's like being abused all over again and that man from Limerick – I think he was in Daingean – I reiterated his statement. I was very badly beaten in it too, maybe not to the extent he was, but I was beaten and there was attempted sexual assault on me a few times.

JD 307

Okay, thanks, Michael. Thanks to all our callers. Sinead Mooney produced.

Programme ends

Interview Report

First Interview with Joe Duffy

The interview took place in Joe Duffy's home in Clontarf on Wed. 3rd June 2009. I arrived just after the appointed time at 4 o'clock and was greeted by Joe's wife, June, who explained he was upstairs changing and would be down shortly. She seated me in the front sitting room and I used the free moments to set up two recording systems. June offered me coffee.

Joe arrived on two crutches following a recent accident and was concerned that the mic, sound levels etc. were satisfactory. I explained that the purpose of the day's session was to consider the contents of the programmes to which I had been listening for the previous month and to elicit his reflections on them.

We did a few preliminary checks. We discussed briefly the change of attitude of the programme team and launched into the interview, which lasted just over an hour.

It mainly took the form of conversational questions and answers based loosely on a list of topics I had prepared covering the contents of the different threads discussed on air over the month of May. We focused somewhat more on the three threads upon which I hoped to do conversational analysis.

Joe signed the consent form and was furnished with a copy for himself. He agreed to meet me for one further session, most likely on Wed. 24th June. He concluded that the session had been 'painless' and seemed very easy and responsive and anxious to help over the duration.

The Interview

DIVi 1 (In response to a request to reflect on programmes which could be characterized as "Scam Warnings")

We're always watching out for scams. I'm just very conscious of people being ripped off. There would be the pyramid schemes we did a few years ago and 'Tom the Con' who's a regular feature on the programme at this stage apparently and that one during the last month which is the Parish Priest being ripped off with the road marking fellows. I mean, that was a magic call because we got that call around half one from the County Engineer in Carlow or Kilkenny or wherever it was – Carlow, I think – and he saw it as a warning to other Parish Priests and then the whole nature of the scam..... I hadn't heard of it before where they would actually do the line on the main street to give the impression that they were working for the council. That does take some neck and then to say..., to knock on the Parish Priest's door at three o'clock and say, "we're all finished up but we've loads of stuff left over – just done work for the Council". It's a brilliant scam and then the poor PP handed out what? Twelve or thirteen grand?

One to get the County Engineer to talk, which he was willing to do and then to get the priest to talk... He was a little bit nervous, I think, because after that and up to a few

days ago, I'm getting letters in from PPs who've been scammed but won't come on. But anyway, I think the scam is an important thing of *Liveline* and I think it is, we offer a forum for it. We want people to know who've been scammed that if they come to us, they'll get on air.

DIVi 2 (Suggestion that what started as a scam story became a human interest piece about the priest)

Yes well, I was interested in him, given the whole atmosphere in the country generally about priests. He was fifty years a priest, wasn't he? And he sounded old. And by-the-way the connection in my head between that and the van scam – remember we were chasing the feckers – was they done elderly people; they scammed older people. That priest was obviously old and wasn't ..., wouldn't be able to run after them or go and check or whatever. In the same way, those scam fellas, they'd driven an old lady down to the bank and then robbed her money or whatever. I was just interested when I heard his voice. I was just interested to know.

DIVi 3 (Discussion about a call from a woman in Norway on Welfare entitlements, which wandered into interesting and unrelated topics)

Well, the Eurovision thing, well, I hadn't thought about it before. I knew the call was coming. I hadn't thought of it and I hadn't thought of the Eurovision thing until we started talking and then it struck me. I was in Oslo once for covering..., when John Hume and David Trimble got the Nobel and, my Jesus!, I was struck by the prices.

DIVi 4 (Asked about his freedom to explore unexpected conversational avenues – mentioned the last contributor to Glendalough piece)

Aw, don't be talking to me! – from the Arctic? From Alaska? Aw, Jesus, I'm fuming, that she only put up with a minute to go. Ah, we'll do her again, so.

DIVi 5 (Query about the ombudsman / complaint type calls)

One, I value a mix of calls. I hate doing the same type of calls and I'd push if we didn't have a certain call. I'd really push to try and get one, you know what I mean, and keep up the mix. I don't want scams non-stop. I don't want complaints non-stop and I bridle when I read the word "Whineline" or I hear the word. I read it today somewhere, "Oh, don't get on to *Liveline* and whinge about it". I don't think people whinge. I never hear people whinging as such but I think I said this to you before, I say to my gang, "what's the difference between *Liveline* and other programmes?", and that's one of the core differences, that we give people a platform. These people won't get on the *One o'Clock* or *Morning Ireland* or whatever.

DIVi 6 (Referred to one-off contributions which seemed to be part of a wider media campaign. Mentioned one contribution from an unsighted caller in Kerry.)

Now I would have bridled at that. I didn't know he'd spoken to local radio and if I'd known he'd spoken to local radio, I mightn't have been too keen to put him on. I like *Liveline* to own the stuff, you know, it's ours. It can't be stuff from the papers that morning. It has to be stuff that might end up in the papers the next morning. We can't be letting Geraldine Kennedy or Jerry Colleran, the editors of the papers, produce *Liveline*, you know what I mean. I have this thing, that all the drivetime shows are produced by Geraldine Kennedy because she decides to put Fintan O'Toole on Tuesday and John Waters on Wednesday and Vincent Brown on Thursday and that's the day they'll be on *Drivetime*, talking about whatever..... But, that's neither here nor there.

DIVi 7 (Asked to comment on contributions by ordinary callers to two events – the arrival of a new Liffey Bridge and an armed robbery.)

The Lucan one was very straightforward. I'd heard the shooting. I think it happened at twelve. We heard it on the *One o'clock* and I just I don't know if it was a great day on the programme and I said, "we have to get someone on the Lucan shooting", so I rang my brother, who's a taxi man and I said, "where was the shooting?" and he said that he thinks 'cos the wrong address was given out on the *One o'clock*, they said Roxboro Road. There is no Roxboro Road - it's Foxboro..... So, my brother told me it's up at Foxboro. Then we rang. So, we just ring the shops and we googled the database to see had we anyone living there and that man who came on..... I really felt we had to do it – for shooting someone. At that stage he was only seriously injured and there's two of them shot. I'm very conscious, if it's near our show time, you know if it's near a quarter to two, if we can get someone on it.....

DIVi 8 (Reacting to a suggestion that the perspective was non-journalistic)

Yeh, I heard him. I remember him saying the ambulance left – the sirens and all that carry-on – and two ambulances left.

DIVi 9 (And the report on the Liffey Bridge)

Well, the funny thing is, that day I said, "can we get anyone down there?" – with not having reporters, so it didn't arise and then he phoned in. I don't know what prompted him to phone. He just phoned in and I (Reminded that they had asked for a report from the scene on-air). Maybe we did, maybe we did. I know we had it in our heads at half one that if it goes through at the time. I thought he was very good.

DIVi 10 (Suggested that such stories represented nuggets of social history just like the Freddy Boyne thread during the coverage of the Ryan Report.)

That was an interesting story, wasn't it? The whole Ryan stuff... The whole Ryan Commission stuff to me now would be a good case study in itself because it was due out at half past two on that Wednesday we didn't have an advance copy. We'd no idea what was going to be in it, okay, but we had done it before. We did it in 19....., Jesus, I don't know, the date it'll come. I think it's 1999. No, it couldn't be '99. I think it was 2001. Anyway, I'll tell you the reason why we did it before and it's very straightforward. This is

how it came up. John Waters wrote a piece. He was editing McGill, right, he wrote a piece in McGill, right, saying the Redress Board should be very careful about giving out money to those people because all these people have a history of criminality and their word can't be trusted, okay. And I remember reading this and being annoyed to say the least. I just thought it was....., 'cos I'd read a fair bit about it and in my previous life as a probation officer, I knew who was in those places in the main. And Michael O'Brien, of Q & A fame now, had been with us before on the same story so Margaret rang Michael and Michael went out and bought McGill and went berserk and that started..., that unleashed a lot of those people who spoke out and then the whole Redress thing came about the double charging subsequently. So at that stage a lot of those people told their stories and, in one sense, it gave us a lot of credibility with them as well, that they could get on.

This goes back to the current incarnation on the Ryan thing. Margaret was saying, "what are we going to do on it?" and I said, "Jesus, is it going to be the same again?". I was conscious that we'd done all this between the Redress double charging and the McGill article and we'd nothing planned. Then the report came out at half two and Margaret came down with a load of pages from it and we had Michael O'Brien lined up – he could access it on the net – and I just, for whatever reason The first page I picked up had that remark on it. I don't know how I spotted it – it was accidental, nothing journalistic about it – where it said there was, sexual abuse in these institutions was systemic. When I saw the word 'systemic' – systemic or systematic? I think it was systemic – I think I remember saying, "this is shameful" and then it began to strike me that this could be much bigger than just everyone telling their stories. This is a whole validation or vindication (which is the wrong word to use, as was pointed out to me the next day by one of the victims) but anyway. So that came on us, the current...., that set of stories that were generated by the Ryan Report, coming to the Thursday, came at us unexpectedly, I think. We wouldn't have thought.... We knew that they were there. We didn't think the public would engage with them as much because we had done them before and obviously the Ryan report created a milieu or whatever, created a different context so they ratcheted in and got traction there.

Did the Freddy Boyne story distract from that, I ask myself? That's a production question. I said it to the lads. I wondered did the Freddy Boyne story take our eye off the ball over a couple of days.

DIVi 11 (Responding to a construction he had put on the story which was corrected by subsequent callers)

It wasn't the frame I had put on it. The frame I had intimated on the Friday was that the brother went and kept the kids away. On the Freddy Boyne thing, the last call I saw on the screen, which thankfully I didn't say, the last call on the screen was somebody - you talk of all the misinformation - somebody phoned in to say, "Freddy Boyne left Ireland, whenever, when he was seventeen and he hunted down the man that killed his mother and killed him". Now, if I had said that on Friday..... Now, Freddy did..... He didn't do that, obviously. He became the exact opposite. He became a law enforcer, so to speak. And at that stage, I was kind of convinced that Freddy was dead. Anyway, as it turns out, on the Monday he wasn't. He said himself..... I said, "did you ever hear what

happened John Fanning?” and he said, “well, I know he died in London, but it wasn’t me”.

DIVi 12 (Discussing the most poignant of the Ryan stories.)

The one that struck me as probably the most...., was that man living in Manchester on his own, William Delahunt, I think his name was and he had There were three of them in sequence that day, wasn’t there? I thought it was.... The fellow living in Manchester on his own who said, “I won’t get closure until I die”. The guy who was in Artane who had a bit of a speech impediment.....

DIVi 13 (Reacting to a suggestion that he had been cross with a caller from Cappaghquin)

Was I cross with her? I thought the listeners were cross with her but... You see, I was reading.... Ryan came out at half two on the Wednesday and we came back at it then on the Thursday and again, if you look back, - between you and me, I’m telling you this – at about half one..... So the papers had the initial stuff that morning. That would have been the papers’ first go at the Ryan report. About one o’clock I got a phone call from someone I know and they said, “whatever you do, read the Cappaghquin stuff. Nobody’s looked at the Cappaghquin stuff, okay. It’s Una Rafter⁴, right”. This was someone fairly close to the Commission. So I read the Cappaghquin stuff and then we had no one on it, we’d no one on it. We’d no one to talk to about it and it goes back. We rang people who’d phoned us before about Cappagh. Said they wouldn’t talk about that blah, blah, blah and from the beginning of the programme I read – I don’t know who we had on air – but I read out extracts of Cappaghquin deliberately to try to get people to talk about Cappaghquin and that’s how we.... Then it took off from that and then an older man phoned in, said he never saw anything and then that nun phoned in but I was reading from Cappaghquin and I think that’s what made me angry, reading all the stuff about Cappaghquin for the first time. It hadn’t been in the papers at that stage. Una Rafter had never been mentioned and the other thing was that this was quite recent. The most recent thing was... The most recent events in Ryan are Cappaghquin. They are the most recent as far as I can find out and I just wanted to get that, almost stitch it into the record and then when the woman came on.... I don’t remember being expressly angry with her.

The point I was making to her, the difference between the Ryan Report and what previously had been said, is that a lot of people are damned by their colleagues. A lot of stuff in Cappaghquin and a lot of other stuff..... The evidence is coming from their colleagues, their teaching colleagues, their fellow sisters or whatever, their confreres or their sorority or whatever and I thought that was interesting. That was a difference.

DIVi 14 (When asked if there was a strategy for a ‘thin’ day.)

Yeh, there is, yeh. I thought yesterday... You know Monday’s are hard days. Fridays are easier ‘cos there’s stuff going. Outside school term is harder. School holidays are

⁴ Fictional name used here

harder because people aren't... The routine has changed. Summer is harder for loads of reasons. Listeners, people on the beach rather than listen to *Liveline*.... (Inaudible).... The Dail is not sitting, you know, all that stuff, so you're..... There's no product, you know.... Like yesterday which would be a thin day; yesterday which I would have thought was going to be thin day because of, one, the very hot weather, the schools off and I remember I had this tantrum yesterday in work. A call came in about rubbish on the beach and someone said, "we're not doing rubbish on a beach" I said, "we will do anything today that will get us fucking calls" and I said, "because this is a day you will not get calls. If people want to talk about the beach....." I said, "talk about something summery anyway, of the day like, and if we can get people talking about beaches, well then, we'll get them talking about beaches".

DIVi 15 (Reacting to a suggestion that some threads were more magazine pieces than phone-in material.)

That was me going back over something I had in my head, that's all, and it shouldn't have been on. It shouldn't have been on *Liveline*. We couldn't come at it properly. We couldn't come at it properly and it was a wrong item for *Liveline* and I take complete blame for it. I'd known before that Berlusconi..., his wife had mentioned this before about, "I'm not a character in a Catherine Dunne novel", and that Catherine Dunne was in Dublin. No it transpires.... I'm sitting there arguing this to try to come up with a few ideas. I said, "Catherine Dunne", and it transpires, one of the producers on the programme, she's her mother's best friend. She didn't know it. She hadn't made the connection.

DIVi 16 (Queried about another thread.)

Again, you're right – didn't fit either. I think they are jarring now, looking back. Plastic bags got us more than we thought. It is amazing. You get some bizarre stuff in.

DIVi 17 (Asked about the quality of argument on the programme.)

Are you saying we should go deeper or they should be thought out more? Or the bigger issues, should we be raising them, maybe?

DIVi 18 (Suggested that big issues were considered in a programme about motorcycle racing.)

You see, what I would have been looking for there, 'cos that was my idea as well 'cos I'd seen the thing in the paper that three of them.... It was the weekend of Shane Lowrey's golf and I knew by two o'clock on the Monday – remember Shane Lowrey, he won it on the Sunday – and all Monday morning was Shane Lowrey and I knew there was nothing in Shane Lowrey for us, okay, and I wouldn't be big on sports anyway. And I was just going through the paper and I saw this thing in Kerry – that size, I'm telling you (indicating a small pinch between finger and thumb), three people killed in motor cycle racing and I kinda rang Margaret and I said, "do you know there was three people killed at a sporting event in Ireland this week?" and the minute you say that you know people

are saying, “there’s three people killed at the golf”, which there wasn’t. There was three people killed up at Portrush, including one participant. And I knew.... I put that in the promo. I put that phrase in the promo, “three people killed at a sporting event”, and the irony was, because I have a broken leg now..... I can’t get up and down the stairs that easily to the studio. But Sports, they’re in the next office to us – open plan – they have a microphone like this and they can do reports straight into programmes. So I was using it, hoping they wouldn’t hear me slagging.... I said something like, “three people killed at a sporting event, you didn’t hear it mentioned in a sports or a news bulletin”. And I know from doing it before that there are some incredible stories in that whole..... I was talking to a fellow today about it actually....., in that whole road racing, organized road racing. There are some incredible stories. Now we get some of them anyway, which comes back to my point, why? The whole argument about risk and society and are you entitled to and that carry on, versus me looking for stories. I’m obsessed about looking for stories to the detriment obviously of the bigger questions. I’d be saying to myself in my head, “do not close this discussion”, are you with me? And if they say to me, “we have a guy on, the organizer of...”, he didn’t get on air. I said, “we’re not closing it”. You keep it open; you let people tell their stories. That’s what I want to hear and I want to see those pictures and I want to hear those stories ‘cos I think they’re more real on radio than the spirit level discussions. Now, they can be good.

DIVi 19 (Asked about “Funny Friday”).)

It’s a terrible dilemma over Funny Friday at times. I don’t know how it started. The only thing I’d say is this, in terms of me going around, the reactions that probably get most positive stuff is Funny Friday. Is that your type of humour? Now I know it’s been slagged and people think it’s all the old variety jokes – some satire, some good, some weak, some awful – and we try to do it once a month.

Basically how it fits the pattern is..... I’ve this thing in my head - it’s something I heard Jerry Anderson say once - and during the troubles he managed to do a very enjoyable programme without ever once mentioning the troubles. No, he could come on the air the following morning after the McGurk pub bombing or Enniskillen and he didn’t mention Enniskillen, which I always thought was..... I was baffled by it but thought it was brilliant and this particular Funny Friday, which was last Friday, wasn’t it? It came after a week of the Ryan Commission and I remember saying to them on Thursday....., and this was half out of mischief as well, ‘cos I knew we were going to do it but we hadn’t made up our minds whether to do it or not and I also knew that if I’d phoned at five or half five on Thursday evening and said to Margaret, “Margaret, I think we’re mad doing it”, that she would have, unless she had strenuous objections, she would have gone with it but anyway I remember standing up to leave and hobbling out on the crutches and Margaret wasn’t there and I said, “do we do a Funny Friday tomorrow after the week that’s been in it?”. I said, “there’s a brilliant dilemma for any producer. There’s a brilliant dilemma for any producer”, and I remember ringing the woman who used to produce the programme – now produces Marian – and who was with me when we started doing the Funny Friday, and the Funny Fridays were built around two people – three people initially – Brush Shields, Clint Valour – Paddy Cullivan, who had not been on – this is important now – I’ve staked a claim on it – I heard Paddy Cullivan on Newstalk in the afternoon. There was a programme with Owen something-or-other. It was before Sean Moncrief

and I heard him doing a ditty called *Boy Bands are.....* whatever-the-word-was, but I thought it was hilarious and I remember saying to whoever was on the programme at the time, “any way we could get this fellow on?” and we got Paddy Cullivan, Brush Shields and Doc Savage, who used to do Christmas Eve with us in his old style and that’s how it started. But anyhow, I rang Ann Farrell who used to produce the Funny Friday and I said, “will we do a Funny Friday tomorrow?” and she said, “absolutely not, you can’t” and I said, “why?”. She said, “all the abuse stories...” So then I was inclined not to do it and then I actually saw an interview with Pat Kenny about the *Late Late Show* and he said one of the skills you need on the *Late Late Show* is to be able to go from heavy to light or vice versa and I said to myself, “well if they’re able to do it within one programme, why can’t we do it within one week?”. So we went for it.

I wanted to go back to the Redress yesterday and we had a very good Redress call yesterday but he wouldn’t do it. Now, we would have gone back yesterday – about his money is paid in instalments. You know this thing; you can opt for your money to be paid in instalments. Well, if you’re lucky enough to get a hundred grand and you say, “I want my money paid in instalments because I’m on the drink or something”, what they do is take your money and they fucking invest it and it’s gone. This fella’s money was a hundred grand; it’s now worth sixty. The Court Service invests it. Now, we did this a year ago where wards of court who had got awarded a million, they got this thing every year, “It’s now worth....”. It used to be worth one point two million; it’s now worth six hundred grand. So anyway, that, to me, would have been the gamble of Friday is that you put a stop to it and should you put a stop to it? Now, it had gone on for eight days.

DIVi 20 (Noting that a different conversational hook was offered on each of the eight days.)

Whereas one producer said to me...., a previous producer on *Liveline* said to me, “why didn’t you go, for example, one day you had a Christian Brother, ex Christian Brother and a priest” – the priest wasn’t great, as it happened – but he said, “why didn’t you just focus on that and go for a programme of clerics?” – which we didn’t do. We were kind of going the way of the listeners. And should we have gone bigger on naming them? We tried to name Una Rafter on the first day and we got on to our Legal Department. They just say no, anyway, they couldn’t be bothered. At this stage, you just give up getting on to them. Should we have focused on that? That has become a big thing now– they should be named and shamed. McAleese made the prosecution thing a big thing and I thought the most pertinent argument I heard that day, which convinced me that they should be prosecuted if they’re still there, was when people say, “Oh, they’re old”, they say, “well, we were young”.

The other thing that came out was our figures came out in the middle of all this and the figures, at this stage, I think are baffling. I just think they are baffling. They’re like the whole thing of John Lonergan saying about Mountjoy. He stands in Mountjoy every morning. He knows 50% of them shouldn’t be in the place but he doesn’t know which 50% and if he did pick one 50% it would be a different 50% tomorrow and it’s the same now with *Liveline* figures. I do not know what is driving them.

DIVi 21 (A suggestion that a thread on dogs worked well.)

Jesus, I'm raging about that one as well and the reason I'm raging about that one is, that when they said to me, "there's a woman on about dogs" and I normally don't (do?) lost dogs. You'd be doing them from here to Christmas and I said to them, "oh, c'mon, it's not Après Match, we're not doing that – dogs!" but what they didn't say was the woman herself was brilliant – absolutely. Her voice! She wasn't talking about a dog at all. It was a fucking child she was talking about. And if I'd known... This came up in the The dog thing was in the back of my head during the Ryan Report stuff 'cos I was saying to people, "we have a situation now, where obviously someone rings in. You ring back Jerry and find out where the story is and I'll ring back Mary". But there's three new people on the programme and we don't know.... They don't know each other that well and they haven't been on *Liveline* before. They shouldn't have put three new people on *Liveline* anyway but that's management in there. And I said to them after one of the Ryan Report programmes that when you get all your people together, one person, preferably Margaret, has to, under a pretence, ring them all. One person has to hear them all and the pretence is, "you'll be on at a quarter to two", or whatever and one person gets a sense of which is the best speaker and that made a difference. So, you need to do that. Whereas there have been two incidents recently I can remember. One of them is quite a while ago, about a woman who lived over a pet shop in Dun Laoighre and she was complaining about the noise from the pet shop at night. And I remember hearing this call being taken by a new person and I said, "what was that about? A pet shop, great, people see snakes". I'm never out of Whackers. All the stuff you see in there is just incredible – the smell! "Ah, she's no great talker – she's just a bit of a crank or something". And she was put down the list and when she came on at twenty to three she was 92. She was incredible. She was just an incredible little voice and this whole thing with snakes and all living below her in Dun Laoighre, in a little terrace in Dun Laoighre and how the pet shop had come to be there; how she'd come to live there, but anyway.....

DIVi 22 (Reacting to a remark that callers seemed very comfortable sympathising with him on his recent injury.)

Now, I would have asked my gang to ask people not to say anything to me 'cos I don't like... I hate all that personal stuff. That's why I would never mention our figures on the programme. I'd never mention I'd say thanks. I did say thanks to people, yeh, but that was because someone prodded me beforehand in management to say thanks but I didn't want everyone distracted by "how are you?"

DIVi 23 (Asked to comment on politeness as opposed to controversy as a phone-in dynamic.)

A thing came up recently and I seldom do interviews. I did one interview after this accident with the *RTE Guide* and they brought up the article that was in the *Sunday Times* – it must be two years ago. And it was Kevin Myers and John Waters basically saying all – the circus and stirring the shit and Kevin Myers said I was a skinhead or a Bootboy, just stirring it up. "It's all contrived", and I bridle at that; I do. I think we're more On the one hand, I think we're more of a service, you know, but also that we have to

get listeners. Also there's two sides to most things and it's really important to try and get the two sides preferably at the same time – preferably. You're doing what looks like a totally one-sided position. Like how could anyone possibly argue against this? And then suddenly you have someone totally out of the blue saying, "hang on a minute. Do you not realize...?" and they're I remember one of the most bizarre stories on *Liveline*, I think, in terms of all this digression – the floods last year. They were during August, wasn't it? They were a funny time of year. The graveyard in Palmerstown flooded and this guy sent us in a photograph of the headstones just coming up. It was the most bizarre eerie photograph. And he was saying there should be better drainage. He was the flower-seller outside. He came on and said, "it's terrible the way they do drains", and said, "people are all distressed. The graves are All the flowers are gone and sinking", and all this carry on. Then George McCullagh, who runs Dublin Cemeteries, he comes on, right, to explain that they'd sent fellas out with pumps; they were doing their best; they thought they'd got to the bottom of it blah, blah, blah and then he realized who the other guy was. He said, "Is that Mick the flower-seller?" And he said, "yeh", and he said, "How come you're still selling flowers illegally outside the graveyard?" And this ding-dong began between the two of them. While George accused the flower-seller of pissing in the bushes, pissing in the bushes; being unhygienic and all this carry on and he shouldn't be there and blah, blah, blah. And that went on, ding-dong, right, and then George revealed that his own house up here behind the airport had been destroyed in the self same floods. I said to George, "Jesus, George, you're on a short fuse or something". He said, "Why wouldn't I be – my own house flooded. And I said, "what happened?" and he said, "Thanks to the DAA, who when their runway got flooded on Saturday – it was a Saturday, was all the floods – their runway got flooded on Saturday. They sent one of their fire engines from the fire station at the airport there and he pumped the water over, out of the runway and onto the road. "Ran down into my house". And with that, Siobhan Moore, who's been on last week about the bags, she came on to take on George McCullagh. So something that began as submerged headstones in Palmerstown ended up with a right barney. So I'm just saying – a service but also I'm very conscious of entertainment, trying to keep people listening, you know, especially after the few weeks I was off, as I was at home I listened to it. Well, I wasn't great at listening to anything and I'd say to myself, "how do we expect people to stay listening?" You can not assume..... Nobody has any obligation to listen to *Liveline*. You've got to make it listenable; you've got to make it listenable, you know.

DIVi 24 (Reacting to a suggestion that he did not appear to be threatened by assertive callers or interruption.)

The back story on the victims thing I got again annoyed one day 'cos I came down with a long running order which can be but people wanted to talk and we got to two people on the running order and eight people and I went up and said, "Listen the thing I'm really worried about, these people have been given the fucking run around anyway by the religious orders", and I said, "We have got really to be careful not to give them the run around". You know what I mean, we've got to be careful that lining them up; telling them they're going to be on and then letting them down. And I'd make this point to Margaret – that would be her job in many ways, to make sure – and there was the one

person who wouldn't take the explanation; that was very upset, you know what I mean, and I think they got on the next day. But I'm just saying, you have to be conscious as well of These people have been victims and we don't want to start abusing them or exploiting them by saying, "you're going on today to tell your story", and they're sitting at home. I know what it's like, you know, from a previous incarnation – "oh, we'll ring you at....".

DIVi 25 (Asked what became of the principal caller in the 'Glendalough' thread.)

Oh, he's gone. He's gone. When we did the beaches yesterday we got a call from somebody who was in Glendalough on Bank Holiday Monday and it's gone and there is no replacement. The place in flitters and people are starving and dying of thirst coming down off the mountains. And I said, "Would someone ring Wicklow County Council and see what's happened?" So they've thrown him out and they got a replacement but the replacement isn't there for what will probably turn out to be the busiest weekend of the bloody year. I thought it was a brilliant story. That's the magic call!

DIVi 26 (Discussing how displays of emotion get handled in the programme.)

Yeh, I was annoyed at that (Previous weekend's *Sunday Times*, Radio Review column). I thought that was unfair but maybe.... The thing None of these people have ever met me. I remember the first – it was a Friday. The day after Ryan, or whatever – there was a woman on, who was very upset, Goldenbridge. She got very upset and I said to her, "Now you don't have to do this; you don't have to do this if there's ways you can tell the story – other ways – someone with you or whatever and she recovered and she was fine.

The reason I'm able to say that now is because I'm comfortable in knowing, one, that I try and empathise with the woman for a start but, two, that other people will come on and tell their stories, you know. We don't need to put people on air who don't want to be on air, who are unable to be on air and I thought I made that clear and that's why I can't repeat it for everybody but when the people did get upset that day.... I had known by that stage that people wanted to tell their story and that before ringing *Liveline*, they probably knew they were going to get upset but they still wanted to do it 'cos this was a week into the story so I wasn't.... Your man said I milked it. Those pauses would be to let those people recover. By that time of the week I was very, very conscious that victims were not getting on anywhere except *Liveline*; that we had the same five or six brilliant people – brilliant commentators – on all the programmes across all the channels; across all the channels, the same brilliant people and not the victims themselves. And I remember saying it's just a forum for victims. We had no experts, no commentators, no analysis of the church or ... just people to tell their stories. On one of the days someone wanted to do a breakdown of the money. I said, "No, that's not us; that's being done everywhere else", and, in fact, someone in *The Sunday Business Post* picked that up – that *Liveline* was the only one.... That all the other programmes.... The same group of experts going from one radio studio to another, and it was almost as if some producers were afraid of putting up the victims just as the Ryan Commission were afraid of letting them into the press conference and the only programme that did let them, that gave them a platform, was *Liveline* but that's our job as well.

DIVi 27 (Commenting on an on-air disagreement.)

What was that about? I didn't see it coming, you know. I did not see it coming. I actually thought, from reading your man's call, that he was totally supportive of Christine (Buckley) but obviously there's a history and that happened once before with Christine as well when she came on – I think it was Colm O'Gorman she kept getting in a row with. But anyway, that's the nature.... They're all hurt and people They're not professional lobbyists so... There is going to be stepping on toes, isn't there and different positions taken.

Second Interview - Joe Duffy

Interview Report

The second interview took place in the RTE Radio Centre at 3 o'clock on Wed. 24th June 2009. I arrived about ten minutes early and waited at reception until Joe finished the day's programme. I had heard most of it travelling over in the car. Joe had arranged for the uninterrupted use of an administrative meeting room where I set up two voice recorders. After some pleasantries we began. The session ran for just under an hour and the atmosphere was again cordial and informal. I explained as we finished that this would be our final session; that Joe's cooperation had been essential and that I would furnish him with updates on the work and with the conclusions of my research. He indicated he would be interested in getting a copy. He also indicated he would be willing to help further if necessary.

The Interview

DIVii 1 (I explained the purposes of that days interview and asked first what he considered to be the principal aim of the programme.)

To make a good radio programme that people listen to and keep listening to – that's the main aim. In the current atmosphere, and it's never been any other way since I started *Liveline*, it's trying to get a lot of people listening – get a lot of people listening across the country. And that has a two pronged effect; one, it becomes a popular programme that can sell advertising but, two, I've always argued that it is essential for *Liveline*; that good Public Service Broadcasting in *Liveline*'s case means a good audience. – a big audience – because if we're trying to compare and contrast; trying to look for somebody or trying to find out what the situation on the dole is for someone in Mulraney versus Mulroy Road in Cabra, you can do that. If you're looking for a conman and he's last seen in Dublin, you will be able to find him in Kerry. So that is a difference we can offer – that nationwide spread - and that's really important. So good strong numbers mean good Public Service Radio as well.

DIVii 2 (Asked what makes a good programme?)

A good mix. Obviously the underlying thing, the difference in *Liveline* is we're punter orientated. We did that before – a good mix; a good lively discussion; stories – good stories; pictures – very good pictures; the “I remembers, I remembers, I remembers”; animation; geography – spread across the county; class – spread across classes; unexpected conversations – unexpected. You know the absolutely fabulous scenario where the conservative is the eighteen-year-old and the radical is the fifty eight-year-old. Unexpected things like that; unexpected voices delivering the opposite to what you might expect. In other words, a middle class person or whatever delivering something that could be considered as being very radical or very different or an older person

delivering something vice versa. But voices – different voices, different sounds, different geography – and then trying to make sure that if people are listening in their car, that they won't get out of their car, you know – trying to create those moments.

DIVii 3 (Is there a tension in balancing the ingredients of a good programme?)

Every programme is full of tension – tension between the producers; tension between the producers and the presenter; tension between one producer and two other producers, you know what I mean, there's always.... Now, I'm a great believer in creative tension. I'm a great believer in people standing up at great speed because it happens every single day. I mean, people forget that about *Liveline* – all other things being equal, we produce programmes 52 weeks a year, 5 days a week for 75 minutes a day and we can sit here at twelve o'clock any day arguing the principles and prospects but the bottom line is, we've got to have a programme at a quarter to two. And it happened today, we got this big long solicitor's letter at half one on something we'd been doing on the programme and everyone got into a tizzy. And I said, "hang on a minute. Forget about that. We've got to go down and do a programme. We can't just put on music and say, 'Oh, by the way, we got a really long letter. We're going through it because we're all in shock or something'". We still... and that's *Liveline*'s weakness, as well you know, people say to us, "why did you do the price of chairs in Arromount or whatever two days in a row? And I actually say to some people, "actually, we'd nothing else to do", you know what I mean, it's either that or dead air. Obviously you try to steer away from that but that is the reality that you're doing, what? – six and a quarter hours a week of live radio, no music. No music allowed on *Liveline* now under the new regime for a long time now. Very seldom pre-recorded except for exceptionally difficult legal reasons; no time delay despite what The number of people who think there's a time delay on *Liveline* shocks me, including people in here. It's unbelievable; it's a myth; it's a myth. You know they've investigated and apparently can't be done, but anyway, that's the bottom line. Sometimes, you know, it's like that scene in one of the *Indiana Jones* movies where they're in the square in Marrakech or whatever and Indiana Jones is about to be beheaded. This fellow takes out....and does a long ritualistic dance with a sabre flying over his head and a dagger in the other hand. And everyone thinks Indiana Jones is done for and after the seven minute thing, your man just takes out the gun and shoots him and says, "get on with it".

DIVii 4 (Asked if he was conscious of the power of the programme.)

I am and I amn't. I tell you something, when I was out sick this year – I was out sick on the flat of my back – and for various reasons I wasn't listening to the radio and it does get out of the ether fairly quickly. If you're not listening to *Liveline* it does mean very little to you; it does mean very little to you. So you wouldn't want to believe you have a lot of power. You wouldn't want to believe your own publicity. I've said it before, "you're not as good as the papers say you are and you're not as bad as the papers say you are". But you wouldn't want to start believing that, "oh hang on a minute, everyone should listen to *Liveline*". I wish they would but I mean there's no obligation on people to listen to *Liveline* so I back off from that stuff where people say, "do you realize how much power you have?" I don't think we've

DIVii 5 (Does the clout of the programme encourage a sense of responsibility?)

I tell you the sense of responsibility it imbues is, that when people come on, especially who are in a difficult position – victims or underdogs or whatever, people who feel they've been badly done by – I think we have an obligation to do our utmost to let them on air and I really go berserk in here when, for legal reasons or people get scared or whatever, that people pull away from that and I really have this sense that we should do, as producers, journalists We're supposed to be a broadcasting organization and we shouldn't be an organization obsessed by money – that as a broadcasting organization, it's not just to broadcast music we're here for, it's actually to give people a voice and we should do our absolute utmost if people feel they have been run down and we can stand up as best we can, as best we can. If we were to employ some of the limits that some of the guidelines in the organization, you'd never put out a programme. You'd just put out music non-stop. That's the safest way to carry on but we shouldn't be a safe organization. We should be against..... We should speak without losing the run of myself. We should speak truth to power and that's what *Liveline* should be about..

DIVii 6 (Whose opinion of the programme matters?)

It varies. It does vary – the listeners. You know, I read all the messages every day. You try and get a sense and you see, the other good thing about *Liveline* is the longer you're on it the more you can calibrate and you can judge; you can compare and contrast the level of reaction – this event compared to that event; the level of negative to negative; positive to the level of positive, 'cos if you came in just one day and started trying to judge *Liveline* on one day's calls, you'd be skewed every which way. It takes a long, long time – years, I think – to get a balance. So, I'd say without being too pofaced, I'd say it's the listeners, the listeners, yeh.

DIVii 7 (Commenting on the input from home and friends.)

No, I have some conversations. Some of my pals don't like it. They don't like it because they don't like people. Some people are – not misogynistic in that they hate women -..... I take a balance in that I wouldn't overly, because in a conversation, they've got their own lives as well.

DIVii 8 (Feedback from peers in RTE?)

Seldom, but you'd know when a programme really clicks 'cos you would hear that. You wouldn't want to be... You would not want to be in this organization waiting on praise from your peers 'cos you'd go home depressed every day.

DIVii 9 (Approval from management?)

It changes from manager to manager. Managers can be very good; other managers don't see it as important. They kinda know you're putting out a programme every day and they know, thanks to the great staff in here, regardless of all the pressures you're

under and all the abuse you take, that you will actually put out a programme the next day come hell or high water. And the most important programme is the next programme, not Friday's programme – you've got to do one in the meantime, you know..

DIVii 10 (Any particular programme he is proud of?)

The most recent was Tipperary Town. I just thought that was an example almost of a story from the Wild West where people have been scared out their lives by this gang in the town. Almost one main street in the town, they terrorised it on St. Patrick's Day; bet up people left, right and centre; people scurried and scarpered back to their homes and were afraid to go public. And then someone broke the silence on *Liveline* and I think *Liveline* was distant enough from them as well. It wasn't local radio but it was distant enough from them and then other people start, which is great in terms of our audience, that other people were listening, had also been affected. And then this chap in America that had been assaulted And that just grew and grew and grew and I can know for a fact that story is going to get bigger and bigger about what was happening in that town and what was being allowed to happen and why certain people in authority were afraid of these guys. That to me would have been a sleeper; that to me, you would have said, "that's another post-weekend Temple Bar.... fellow beingunprovoked attack...."

DIVii 11 (Might programmes produce unforeseen consequences?)

I like to have a bit of an idea if we go looking for somebody. I like to have a bit of an idea that we have a chance of finding them. I'm not a great believer in just putting on everyone who comes on looking for a relation or whatever 'cos you have to have some sense that there is a chance. One of the most surprising ones recently was after the Ryan Report – that Freddy Boyne story.

DIVii 12 (Job satisfaction?)

Job satisfaction is high, I'd say. Now everyday I walk out of the studio, everyday at three o'clock, kicking myself over something I did say that I shouldn't have said; something I said arseways or something I missed – something we missed.

DIVii 13 (Asked to rate the factors that might contribute to job satisfaction, including helping people and making a difference.)

Yeh, you try and do that but I also say to people, "we're not social workers, you know". I used to be a social worker but I'm not a social worker any more. That's not our job. Our job is to get listeners and to keep people listening. That is our fairly fundamental job in the context of what *Liveline* is – a phone-in talkshow. Make a difference? I think the making a difference thing can be exaggerated, you know. I think politicians go out of their way not to quote *Liveline* because they'd be afraid of giving *Liveline* credit for stuff. They (the opposition) don't want *Liveline* to be perceived as doing their job either 'cos that's a reflection on them, isn't it?

DIVii 14 (If he could change some things about the programme.)

Well, I would try and make us more – I know this is a mantra but it has to happen – I would try and expand the *Liveline* brand a bit. I think there should be *Liveline* message boards. I think there should be *Liveline* twitters. I think there should be *Liveline*....., given that it has got credibility as a national forum. There are ways. I wish the *Liveline* website was more accessible, which it's not. RTE bury it. I wish the programme was promoted more but because the programme is doing well, we're not promoted. Other programmes are promoted *ad nauseum*. *Liveline* isn't because we're seen as doing well. You know, you do have to wait until you fall before they cop on. I'm telling you, trying to find *Liveline* on the RTE website is a task in itself.

I think there will be message boards and blogs and all that carry-on. And the other thing I wish I could do more is go out – travel more. That's primarily for me and for the team. That was one of my great benefits of doing nine years on *The Gay Byrne Show*. That was, I was somewhere different every day and I can revert back. If you say to me now, "Castlebaldwin", I can tell you. I've got a bit of a picture in my head of what Castlebaldwin looks like and various places around the country that I visited. Whereas on *Liveline* I'm studio bound. Now also, I'd be very clear that if you're bringing *Liveline* out, you're doing the same *Liveline* but you're simply doing it from an O.B.⁵ point because the great danger in here is, because we're going to Limerick and then immediately, "Oh, we have to do a Limerick story – or Waterford". We don't. We'll do the best programme coming from Limerick as if we were doing it from Montrose and if there's Limerick calls on it, well and good, but you don't start.... That's what happens. Everyone goes, "Oh, we're in Limerick or Waterford and then it's death", but from the programme's point of view, I think we should move it around. From the staff on the programme, in terms of seeing even the one journey from Dublin to Cork, you pick up loads of stuff. I think that is a great thing about the job is that nothing you do in your life from looking at this bottle of water in front of me to talking to you, nothing you do in life is a waste in terms of your job. We could be talking about Glenpatrick water tomorrow and I'll tell you what it tastes like. Or there could be someone looking for Frank Byrne tomorrow and I'll say, "Hang on, I know where Frank is", you know what I mean. That's the great thing about this job; nothing you do is ever wasted, you know – going to Mass, parking in an underground car park. You'll always pick up..... You mentioned one of the unexpected things. I'll tell you one of the unexpected things that came up. I was in Waterford with my kids. It was about eight years ago. They were quite young. We were rambling around looking for something to do in Waterford. I remember going in. We rambled into Waterford Cathedral and I saw this little leaflet in reception saying, "The relics of Saint Thérèse coming to Ireland", right, and I said, "The relics?" What do they mean, the bones on a procession around Ireland? So I did it. I put it out on the promo on Monday. "The relics of Saint Thérèse coming and er..., some people say it's daft to be parading around a coffin around the country" and the phones took off and by the time the relics came it was just.... We had arguments for and against. We had people who had been touched by other relics – Padre Pio, the whole shebang, Valentine. It just got bigger and bigger and bigger and, as it happens, nothing to do with us. We had tapped into something because when the relics did come to Ireland there was outpourings of joy and great fervour everywhere they went; everywhere they went and that was in the

⁵ Outside Broadcast Unit.

middle of the Celtic Tiger. And then there was a whole sociology built up around it, people saying the reason so many people turned out was, in the middle of the boom, there was a need for community and people coming together and worshipping something that was different. That would have surprised me now. It's interesting, the relics of Saint Thérèse came back this year – 2009 – and they didn't get the same crowds. They came back during the recession.

DIVii 15 (Does he have an image of the *Liveline* listener?)

I don't. I have this thing in my head obviously people are listening alone – car, factory, walkman, out walking, house – but that people are listening alone; sitting in their bed, having their afternoon snooze or whatever, if they have that luxury. I have that sense that people are listening alone. But I don't have a thing in my head, no.

DIVii 16 (Has he an image of a typical caller?)

No, no because I see.... A thing that struck me recently because some one said... You know that stuff you might read in the Sunday papers when they've nothing better to be writing about. They take half the stories from *Liveline* and then some columnist always writes of how he hates *Liveline* or finds the callers, what's the word, vacuous or whatever? I never..., I never..., I say this with great honesty, I never found anyone vacuous on *Liveline*. I haven't. I've disagreed with people. I get annoyed with people but I've seldom said, "Oh God, that caller shouldn't be on air".

DIVii 17 (Does he consider himself to be politically aware?)

Oh yeh, very much so, yeh, oh totally, at all levels – community.... I do my best.

DIVii 18 (Formal political connections or family traditions?)

No, No I don't. I'm not a member of any political party, no. No, I can't tell you what way my father voted. I can't tell what way my mother voted and none of my brothers or I've one sister are involved in any way in party politics.

DIVii 19 (Are there issues close to his heart?)

Poverty would be big, you know, that type of thing. Injustice, that type of oppression and hurt; people being downtrodden; people being victimized. Even in my reading or whatever, about history, people get a raw deal – the underdog, people who are trying to better themselves. Social issues would be big now.

DIVii 20 (Asked if he is a member of groups, clubs committee etc.?)

I'm a member of the Fire Brigade Society of Great Britain and Ireland. My activities are, as someone pointed out to me recently after this thing, my activities are very solitary. I swim, I walk, I paint, I read and each of them has one thing in common. You don't engage with any other human when you're doing it.

DIVii 21 (Has he brought ‘pet’ issues in to the programme?)

Oh yeh, absolutely – I’d do that on a regular basis. Yeh, I’d hear stuff or something. Yes, because of the public profile people would stop me and say it to you. People stopped me on the street yesterday about the drug use on the boardwalk but we’ve done it and I would come in and say, “Hang on.....”. Like, that is the other addition I would bring to the team. People would know – some people would know – that I work on *Liveline* whereas they don’t know the producers when they see them on the street or in the back of a taxi, that they work on *Liveline*. So people say, “Why don’t you do this? Why don’t you do that?” Even after Slane on Saturday night, I was getting calls at home on Sunday from people saying whatever was being said about it. I get cheesed off with newspapers or whatever ringing you for every class of comment, which I don’t give. I’ve kept out of that food chain totally.

DIVii 22 (Suggestion that his column in *The Irish Mail on Sunday* was a minor anomaly.)

That’s just time and chance. I used to write a column for *The Star* and then the fellow who edited *The Star* moved on to *Ireland on Sunday*, as it was, and he asked me to go. *The Star* finished anyway. I was dropped from *The Star*. When I lost *The Gay Byrne Show* thing so that profile went. So the man started *Ireland on Sunday*, said would I write a column for nothing first off and I said, “yeh” ‘cos I liked him and then that morphed into *The Mail on Sunday* and I just stayed with him. More than anything else, I do enjoy it. I like writing, yeh. I try not to feed off the programme because I think by the time Sunday comes, people don’t want to have *Liveline* or anything else regurgitated. I’m a great believer in that. As I said, if I’m not going to regurgitate on *Liveline* what’s in the morning papers and I try not to regurgitate on Sunday what I’ve heard on *Liveline* all week. I try and watch stuff but I do like writing. It’s a great discipline.

DIVii 23 (Suggestion that he avoids the ‘celebrity’ lifestyle.)

I stay away from that one because the year I got my first break on *The Gay Byrne Show*, 1995, that’s the year my three kids were born at the same time. I started doing Monday and Tuesday on *The Gay Byrne Show*. Then in ’99 I got *Liveline* but at that stage my kids were four. I just couldn’t go out. You couldn’t go out ‘cos they’d only be ringing you saying, “Where are you?” and, “Who’s coming home?”, you know what I mean? So I didn’t. A lot of it is vacuous anyway. I was married with three very young kids at the same age so I just stayed away from that and still have. And, by the way, the more you stay away from it, the less they’re interested in you anyway, are you with me? If you just don’t attend; if you just don’t respond to the invites, the invites stop coming – the openings and all that carry-on - and that’s the way. Sometimes there’s some things I’d love to go to. I won’t be invited. Oh, and the other thing is as well - it comes back to this thing - because there is nothing out of bounds on *Liveline* you have to be really careful that you don’t end up getting free tickets for concerts and for Slane and all that carry-on, which I don’t, ‘cos you could be complaining about them. You could be listening to

people complaining about them and I think the worst thing to say is what I heard recently. Someone was going on, raving about some Irish football match to a presenter in here – and Irish football match. And one of the callers said, “Well, hang on, how much did you pay for your ticket? I paid €85 to stand with my kid who paid €85 as well. How much have you paid?” And, of course, he hadn’t paid anything. So, without being po-faced, you have to be a little bit careful on *Liveline*, you know, because it is very transparent. Radio is very transparent. It’s live; it’s there; what you say is what comes out. It’s not cut back. Your best lines are not picked or your worst lines picked or whatever and *Liveline* is unedited, in that sense.

DIVii 24 (Asked the extent to which he shapes or filters programme material.)

I’d say to a significant extent – more so than other presenters because I have been a producer. That’s what I came in here as. I didn’t come in here because of my voice, as you know. I couldn’t announce the death of Eamonn DeValera. Even DeValera wouldn’t believe it so I came in here as a producer so I would have a big input, a big input, yeh and I think that’s something I add to the programme.

DIVii 25 (When asked to react to a number of facets of his job – firstly Therapist?)

What, am I seeing one? (jocularly). Up to a point. I am a social worker. I am a qualified family therapist so I would use a bit of that stuff but I would say empathy rather than therapy.

DIVii 26 (Performer?)

Oh yes, absolutely. You have to. I remember Syl Fox, believe it or not, he was a comedian, giving me one piece of advice which I treasure, and that was I went out to him and I was doing a gig or something – the first gig I was ever offered – and I was as nervous as..... And he made a point to me. He said, “Listen, there are probably 52 Joe Duffys in the phone book. You’ve been guaranteed 51 of them are probably funnier than you; 51 others are probably better looking than you are; 51 are probably more relaxed than you are in different ways but the thing is, you’re the Joe Duffy that they asked for out of that phone book, right, so you’ve got to get up there and perform. You know you can’t be When I go in to do *Liveline* I do deep breaths. I do go to the loo. I have a routine. I do go to the loo. A little mantra – “entertainment, libel; entertainment, libel, you know, try to entertain, try and keep people listening and watch out for the libel. Do a few “lilly lallies, lilly lallies”, which are vocal exercised to get your voice up a bit. And that you are performing? - that’s your job. You have a job to do and that’s why I dress the way I do for *Liveline*. I dress every day in a suit and a shirt, a double cuff shirt and tie and that’s because I believe in..... I’m not going to slouch in. This is my job. I’ve got to keep people listening so ‘performer’, yes.

DIVii 27 (Professional?)

Yeh, I think professional in terms of trying to be honest and decent and not to hurt people, yeh, definitely.

DIVii 28 (How professional standards apply.)

In the main, yeh, but none of us..... The thing I come back to is, you've just got to shoot the enemy like in *Indiana Jones*. You just can't do a forty minute dance. You've got a programme to do so some days you just say, "hang on, let's go with it. Let's wing it".

DIVii 29 (Listener?)

Yeh, I'd be a good listener. You say 'listener'. I listen to a lot of radio but I don't know if that's what you mean. I think I have an intimacy in my head when people are talking to me - this whole thing, the one lone person, single person, headphones on, very much in your own world.

The shuffling of the studio can be an interference from..., can be a problem depending on who the producer is. You know, it can vary and people have to ... Newer producers would start talking to you when you're talking, which is the most incredible gobbledygook. You can't, it knocks you off your stride. Some people talk too much in your ear. Some people come in too much but there is a concentration there.

DIVii 30 (The programme considered as drama?)

I think so, yeh – What's going to be on? What way are things going? Different calls that are coming in. One day, it's today actually - I'm just trying to draw back on that - there's a woman on talking about her company going under. It was her father's company going under and then. Then one of the employee's spouses phoned in – so, I mean, there's a drama. I didn't expect that to happen. Now, there's a drama there. You get unexpected calls; unexpected angles on things, which is the brilliant thing about *Liveline*. That's why it's so critical that the numbers keep going up because you've a bigger well to draw on and you've a better chance of finding the employee or the employer or the lost person or whatever.

DIVii 31 (Referee?)

Yeh, up to a point. That wouldn't be all that strong now. I would often say, being straight with you, I would often say like someone comes on telling a story about say, an event that they were unhappy with. Now if the event organizer rang up immediately and said, "I want to explain that", I might say, "Hang on for twenty minutes. Just leave it off and see can we get more stories first. Don't kill the story. Don't kill the story right at the start. We can hold on for another day, you know, but if there's more stories out there let them come in". Or if someone comes in saying, "I went looking for social welfare and they wouldn't give it to me because of this; because I'm blind in one eye or whatever or I was going on my holidays", which is a recent one, and you can give the answer to that fairly quickly on paper. Say, "Social welfare says you can go away for two weeks but not three or whatever", but you don't give that out. I wouldn't give that out there and then. I'd wait until we got more stories; see is there more angles in it. I didn't (moderate) there today because I thought that woman was unfair. I wasn't expecting someone to attack that woman 'cos I thought she was very genuine, the

daughter of the.... At the end of the day, I think they had the same agenda but I just thought she came at it from the wrong way but anyway and I felt it was a strange call.

DIVii 32 (Thoughts on radio as a friend / companion?)

Well, I love it as that. I just know it from talking to people, Frank, that people would say to you, you know, in my sick bed or in hospital or long journey or whatever. I have this thing – keep people interested. You know if there's one subject Well, if they're bored about Glenpatrick water, well then they might be more interested in something else that's going on. Keep moving it, changing it.

DIVii 33 (What about managing the programme activities?)

On the one hand, the management is decided outside in that I don't see all the calls for a start. I only see the calls that someone else has chosen to go on air so I don't have any of that overview, which I would like to have but I The ultimate management is, I think, deciding , not just who goes on air but who doesn't go on air. You know, when I come out I'd start second guessing. "Why didn't we put that person up and why didn't we put that person up?" Invariably there's a good reason.

DIVii 34 (Asked to comment on the strange postponing of the first ad. break.)

I know, it's mad. That's gone mad. I think I started taking it about half past two for some reason because I saw these figures which said that come the first break we lose people. I presume it's people going back to work or whatever. I try and hold but I think I'll pull back on that as well because they're getting very messy towards the end. Every now and then we're reminded. There's less listeners at ten to three.

DIVii 35 (Public servant?)

Yeh, yeh I would in a big way – in quite a significant way yeh.

DIVii 36 (Power vis-à-vis callers?)

(hesitant) I wouldn't have total power. No, you seldom decide not to take a caller only you might spot something legally that the producer hasn't spotted and that would be your own experience. You'd seldom not take callers. You'd seldom not take what's given to you.

DIVii 37 (Asked if he feels constrained by working for a public institution.)

For example, I'd be careful about what I'd write in the *Mail*. I try not to be party political or at least balance it – give out about all political parties – making a generic point. And in here there is, we know there's one of the few decisions that the Cabinet actually makes fiscally, as opposed to the Minister for Finance, and that is what the licence fee should be. It's a cabinet decision, you know, whether it's €160 or €161, which is an amazing scenario we're in but that's the situation. But then again, you'd be caught out.

You will be. If you start being biased to one, being unfairly biased, you will be caught out – people saying, “Why did you say this?” because it is transparent.

DIVii 38 (Does he see himself as a spokesperson for the common man or woman?)

I wouldn't lose the run of myself now on that; you know what I mean.

DIVii 39 (Is he in a place halfway between the production team and the listener?)

The presenter is the celebrity chef; the researcher is the person who goes off and gets the ingredients; the producer decides what way the ingredients should be....., what amount of ingredients and the way they should be mixed; and the celebrity chef is the one who delivers them and gets all the credit - public credit anyway, or the opposite, public opprobrium. I do see it, whatever way it's developed and you get all this gobbledygook in here, you know. “Oh, stand up to Joe. You have to.... You have to have producers who are able to stand up to him”, which is nonsense because I have only one interest at heart and that's *Liveline*.

DIVii 40 (So, does he consider himself a team player?)

I'd be regarded as being fairly – what's the word? – short and cantankerous, you know what I mean. I often use the phrase, “Why does that deserve to be...?” – this is before the programme – “Why should we have that on national radio? Why did we miss this? Why are we not doing that? How come we can't get someone on this? How come we can't get someone on that? Did no one even think of this?” What I intensely dislike is someone just getting a phone call; looking at the phone call and blankly just using the phone call instead of saying, “Hang on a minute, there's going to be a consequence to that phone call. We need to ring. There's added value there. You need to find out. Or, that woman is giving out about whatever; you need to get the other side on, you know. What can we do that's different? What can we add to it?”

DIVii 41 (Asked to talk through the *Liveline* day.)

My day, in terms of *Liveline* would be; I listen to the radio from seven and I monitor the radio. I go from whatever's around – what would it be? – *Morning Ireland*, *Newstalk*, *Tubridy*, *G.Ryan*. I flick from one to the other; get newspapers; talk to Margaret around nine o'clock everyday; see what's around. At that stage I try and have seen *The Indo*, *The Times* and *The Examiner* especially the letters pages. (indistinct sentence) You get a sense of what's going around; have a chat with Margaret – “What's around? Any ideas?” I might suggest, “Did you see this? Did you see that?” or “I heard this” or “Don't forget after yesterday's call about X. We should be doing Y or whatever”. Then, that's about fifteen minutes and then Margaret and the team have a meeting at ten o'clock. Now, I still see my job as listening to what's on radio. They don't 'cos they can't. – on the phone or whatever – so, I'd be listening. I arrive in around a quarter to eleven. It's different since this thing happened; it's around forty minutes later but that's neither here nor there – about a quarter to eleven and then you get a sense of what's up and what's

down. If there's any briefs written, start going through them; potter around – papers, emails – you're hunting for stuff, listening, getting a sense of the day rather than, are we going to do Ryanair or A&E again and again and again? We can but you'd have no listeners. Then, twenty past twelve, the promo; write the promo; go down and do it. Again the promo, you're beginning to.... That focuses the team a bit more. Come back up; at your desk all the time. The funniest thing I ever heard was a new *Liveline* producer came in one day – seriously asked what time he could go to lunch for. For God's sake, go now! Down to the studio at half one; in the loo at half one. Put the running order down in terms of what's... There is a running order every day. There's what calls one, two, three and four are. If I see a long running order I get worried that there's no I have this thing about one o'clock. I don't want to see anyone doing a running order at one o'clock. I want to wait 'til half one – twenty five past one – waiting for the magic call; waiting for the magic call; waiting for the magic call, you know, which invariably doesn't come, you know, in terms of something out of the blue. And down to the studio at half one and you're at it then 'til three o'clock.

You go for a cup of tea afterwards. I'd be fairly – that's a thing I got from Gay Byrne – fairly up front as well about saying, "That didn't work and this didn't work and why didn't we do that?" And I do that to try to unbundle people. A lot of people, you say that for the first few weeks and they get very defensive and, "Ah, it did work. Some people thought it worked", which it may have but you need people to say after a while, "Hang on a minute, that didn't work or this didn't work" or why it didn't work. You're trying to get people to think more about the process.

DIVii 42 (You frequently refer to the screen.)

Those that are actually on air; those that are phoned and ready to go on air.... I don't see anything. The minute I see a call I can say, "Hello, Mary". There's four lines now. It's not great either.

DIVii 43 (Referring to a caller on that day's programme.)

That wasn't a call on screen. That was a call I got on a bit of paper. I said off air, "Where's this fella?" and I was told he was gone AWOL or whatever, so I read it out to try and get that figure into the ether. I said it that way. I said it was on the screen but that's a turn of phrase.

DIVii 44 (Asked if records of the programmes were kept.)

I know on *The Gay Byrne Show* every now and then they used to take all the files away and bring them over to Montrose House or something. I don't know what the Now, we've a database, which is most valuable. The *Liveline* database should be much more securely tacked down in here. It is a most valuable piece of real estate. Yeh, so if we say..... Someone phoned in recently – "Two Chinese fellas are stabbing each other down in Parnell Street". And we can immediately bang in Parnell Street and see has anyone called us from Parnell Street. You see an address and you can ring that person, which happened, ring that person, "Are you in Parnell Street? Yeh, in my flat. Would you look out the window there. Is there a fight going on? You know what I mean, God,

that is just so valuable. It's maintained here, just automatically maintained. I don't know who can access it. That's the other thing; obviously there's a password on it and all that carry on.

Interview with Marian Finucane 28th Oct 2009-10-31

Notes

The interview took place in the City West Hotel at 1.30 p.m. Marian had expressed a willingness to be interviewed back in August but with holidays and missed telephone messages it had taken this long to set it up. The location was noisy in the hotel reception and I decided to use only the smaller and less obtrusive of two recording devices. I checked that Marian was happy to have the interview recorded but forgot to have her sign the formal consent form. This was emailed on to her within days. The tone was informal and cordial all the more so in that we had a number of acquaintances both inside and outside radio in common.

FIV 1 (Was there a direct connection between *Women Today* and *Liveline*?)

No, no 'cos I left *Women Today* after eighteen months and I headed out into the world of print and I came back in and was working on telly at that point, I think on religious programming and I was doing *Saturday View*. And Hilary Orpen, who was the person who dreamed up the whole idea, herself and Michael Littleton – at that time people used to ring us in on *Women Today* and indeed to Gay (Byrne) and to all of the others and we would read out their calls and very often at that time people would write to you and alarmingly often they would really not want anyone to know who they were. So it was all the more secretive in that sense and there weren't any phone lines then. And Hilary had this idea and RTE's description of it was called 'access broadcasting'. As we went through it we figured out that it took listeners about four years to get the hang of it so in terms of production when you were saying it was a magazine programme, it was and it wasn't in that it was all designed to facilitate people ringing in on air and people giving their point of view on matters. Now we had a reporter, for example, for the first few years, which is now unimaginable on *Liveline*. And a couple of times – once under Julian (Vignoles) – we thought, 'Well, will we try opening the airwaves and see what they want?' Didn't work – fell flat on its face. So it evolved slowly, slowly and then big issues would come up like..... I was on that for the first Iraq invasion - I think I was anyway – and suddenly people began to see it as a place where you could have fairly I mean, I remember walking out of the studio sometimes gob smacked at how informed and well-read and that, people were. Now equally you come out thinking. 'That was a fair old dingbat, y' know'. I remember Pat Kenny saying to me, "How do you listen to those idiots?" and I said, "Listen, Pat, same blood; same thing runs in your veins and mine – part of what we are". The other thing we always wanted was to leaven it with humour so that it retained an element of the unexpected. But when they realized what it was for it really took off.

I did it for thirteen years and the last programmes that I did were very different to the first ones. It all evolved and then it began to get its own clout in terms of moving and shaking things, y' know. Well, it's the power of the listener too, you know.

FIV 2 (Is the programme continuing to evolve?)

Well, I mean it's Joe's personality and style. It's his programme now you know, whereas when I was on it, it was very much my programme. It's absolutely his programme now and he's made it his own and I think it's brilliant.

FIV 3 (Asked if 'Confessional Ireland' had run its course by the end of the 20th Century. Had the discourses changed?)

Well, we got some amazing personal stories from people, you know, which you don't hear that much now. I never thought about that: I suppose because certain ground was covered; I mean really amazing stories from people, y' know. Like I remember coming upstairs a couple of times and saying, "Jesus' did I have a normal childhood – apart from getting gave out to, y' know? But, quite amazing personal stories from people and that was another change; if you take all that secretiveness that hung around *Women Today*. "Please, nobody must know I contacted you". "Please, certainly my husband mustn't know I contacted you" - not so often *vice versa*. When we were talking about starting the programme I said, "Are you sure people are going to allow their voices go out on?" So the personalthe very personal evolved. Like initially it was about issues or about events or whatever and then that very, very, very personal stuff came later – very often at a particular run of years, people would ask you to change their voice, which we did.

So we used to change them but we couldn't guarantee people anonymity. We'd let them listen back. I don't suppose anything is pre-recorded now but for those kind of things, we did pre-record in order to get the distortion right but still listenable toable, if you know what I mean because it was very irritating but actually, now that I think of it, I haven't heard that for ages now, so maybe it's because people aren't talking in the same way. They're talking about issues more than.....more than....I don't know. I remember one woman - she was so distraught – her husband, whom she loved all her life, had died and after he had died she discovered he had condoms and he had never used condoms with her. She was absolutely distraught. It was like a whole life had been wiped out, you know. So, you don't hear that much of that now.

FIV 4 (Asked where she would get the sense that a programme had been a 'good' one)

I know this is very unsatisfactory to you but you just know it...and you know when it's as flat as a pancake. Sometimes they say – but don't quote me – when the sound op is listening.

Well, I suppose when you know yourself that you're listening to something that you think is compelling, that you're not that different to everybody else and if you find this that compelling, there's a pretty good chance that they will too. There's a lot to be said for the gut, you know.

FIV 5 (And would the same apply to a 'flat' programme?)

Oh, kill you! Oh yes and they just stay with you. It's a real downer and then you have to start for the next day and you have to say, "Look, it's gone out on the ether". Mind you,

it stays in the ether now because of the Internet, you know. I mean, before, at least you could say, "Oh God, it's gone!".

FIV 6 (What about the ratings figures – twice a year?)

Four times! It's like doing your Leaving Cert in public. Well, if they're talking about it in the kitchens; if they are talking about it in the pubs, you know you are making a connection.

When colleagues tell you that something is great it's always very nice. John, my husband told me he ran into a neighbour the other day and the neighbour said to him, "Jesus, we were trying to ring you the other night from the pub" and John doesn't go to the pub and he said, "why?" "Because your missus had a thing on the (inaudible) So when you think you have made that connection.....

FIV 7 (The perception of the programme as doing good)

You don't like to go around all worthy, do you know what I mean. I mean, it's great if you're involved in a campaign and it builds up but it's the connection really that you want with the listeners.

FIV 8 (Had she a picture of the ideal listener?)

Now, when I started in telly you were recommended to pick a person that you weren't too close to but that you respected and when you were talking to the camera to talk to that person, which was a very useful thing when I started off. I think I don't do that consciously at all now.

FIV 9 (Does she have an image of callers?)

No, it's funny working on *Liveline* because all you have is sound. I went into an empty studio for thirteen years and you just put the head down and you get a sense of them. Now it's done on a screen. Before, people would come in and hand you sheets with comments or, "caller on line....", or a synopsis of what they might want to say so you go quickly to the heart of what they wanted to say and then get your own sense of it and maybe do a little fishing, y' know, but I don't have a sense of them, no.

FIV 10 (Asked to recall any outstanding programme.)

It's very hard to do that you know. There was a time..... By the time you come up from the studio, you'll have forgotten what had been in the programme and you were on to the next day. I should have given that some thought now before I met you. There was one which was There was nothing particularly uplifting or anything about it and I remember the producer in question saying to the woman before she went on air - I heard him talking to her upstairs – "are you sure you want to do this? Are you absolutely sure?" She said, "yes, you can change my name". "But your voice could be recognised". "No, no, no", and this insane person in retrospect wanted to talk about the

fact that she was having an affair and that it was good for her marriage. Now I have to tell you it was highly entertaining and it was bravado and it was..... Two days later she was saying. "if you get a phone call from somebody will you promise to tell them that it wasn't us and that it wasn't me that was on the radio. We had a lot of ethical discussions actually about that and we would from time to time. I remember one in particular where a fellow who had been convicted of some kind of paedophile crime, wanting to make his own case, you know, those kind of things. You'd have a lot of chatting around that before you would do it or merge in the middle of it.

FIV 11 (The programme can have huge impact?)

I think it can.

FIV 12 (Does presenting the programme bring with it a sense of public responsibility?)

I've always hated celebrity.

FIV 13 (But both herself and Joe Duffy present a civic persona off-air)

I wouldn't be conscious of that at all. I would be very conscious that if I were drink driving that it would be derrang!, so that puts manners on you. I think that what you hear – what you see – is what you get, that, that is who you are. Like I remember when working with a team that I didn't like, which hasn't happened that often and that's not nice, and the place I felt most comfortable was on-air. I think if you are kind of respectful of, no matter who-the heck gets on to you.....

FIV 14 (Would she consider herself to be politically aware or active?)

Not active but very aware; not a member of a political party. I was an activist when I was in college and I suppose you could say that I – what's the word I want? – that I'm an advocate on behalf of hospice services. We have our own charity now, *Friends in Ireland* and that takes up a lot of my time but in terms of actual politics, absolutely not. I suppose you have to come back to what is political. I think I would have a fairly strong sense of justice and injustice – you know those kind of things which are not party political or anything like that.

FIV 15 (Asked if she had used *Liveline* to champion a position.)

In as much as possible, I try to avoid that, you know, but you are who you are. Well, I mean, I've been a card-carrying feminist all my life, do you know what I mean? So that's going to slant what you do. They're all political things as well and I think the idea of complete objectivity is for the birds. You do your best to be even-handed as much as you can but like somebody..... I thought I was imagining things yesterday when I turned on the radio. What time of the day was it? I can't remember and I hadn't heard the main event and I heard somebody saying, "Well perhaps it was offensive to say that Africans breed like rabbits". I thought, "Am I imagining this?". Now that's a situation where I'd

absolutely be in like a.... That's what had me so shocked is that whoever I was listening to wasn't sounding shocked, y' know. I don't know what it was. I must find out 'cos I'm sure there will be an outcry about it, but anyway....

FIV 16 (Asked the extent to which the presenter shapes or filters the programme material.)

I suppose you do. It's just the simple fact of it because once the red light goes on it's you and the listener or the caller so it obviously has to go through the filter of your head and your voice-box and hopefully your heart as well, you know.

FIV 17 (Does the production team outside do the main selection?)

They're not going to send you in something that's an obvious libel or anything like that but it happens really fast; that's the thing about *Liveline*. It's just going like that and the calls are coming up and there was one producer and his aim was to have more calls per hour on air than anybody else but ultimately the presenter is the one with the red light.

FIV 18 (The presenter as therapist?)

This is the agony-aunt concept. Well it was alleged at one stage that it had taken over from the confessional. I don't know if that's satisfactory. I think people being able to speak through you; generally speaking they find it helpful. That has been our experience.

FIV 19 (The presenter as performer?)

To a certain extent. Yeh, you're keyed up; you're on show. You don't kind of think of it like that. To a certain extent. I remember Nuala O Faoilean eating the face off me because there was an ad done for drink driving and I did one of them and I also did an insert for something that was an imaginary programme that was fifty years hence, or whatever, and I went in – I can't remember what the scrip was – but it was an insert into a play or whatever, and she said, "You sounded like yourself". I said, "Well, I was". She said, "Does that mean.....? But you weren't yourself. So you're putting on an act every other day kind-of-thing" No, I suppose it is kind of performance to a certain extent but it wouldn't be the high thing. For me listening was always the big thing.

FIV 20 (Asked to comment on the notion that callers care more about their on air performance than the point they are making.)

Some do, some do, not the majority – by a street, not the majority – absolutely not. Just to go back to that performance thing ' cos I'm always being asked to come to places and make speeches and stuff (which I absolutely hate doing) and I always say to people, "I don't talk for a living; I listen for a living", which certainly on *Liveline*, that's the skill – to be able to listen.

FIV 21 (*Liveline* host as journalist or entertainer?)

It did both. It did both but as it evolved it tended to be reactive, if you know what I mean, and to bring something on as opposed to go about a big investigative event. That's not the beast but you would pursue it in a journalistic fashion.

FIV 22 (The host as provocateur – stirring it up?)

Sometimes (laughs).

FIV 23 (As public servant?)

Well that's what you are essentially. I know this sounds very boring but whenever there were rows, y' know, which inevitably there always were, I always figured out that you're under – and it was on the recommendation of a very, very kind boss that I had early on in radio – the Broadcasting Act; what your role is under the terms of the Broadcasting Act; how you apply that role; and that's the job that you deliver within the terms of the Broadcasting Act.

I really don't think of that in a po-faced way because you would go bananas if you didn't have humour and pace and all those other things that matter in a programme as well. I mean we did – I don't know, with Julian at one stage – I don't know how many days on the shape of the tea bag.

FIV 24 (Host as entertainer?)

Well I think that all programmes should be entertaining. Now, I mean if you're bawling your eyes out you can't really call it a barrel of laughs but in another (sense) it's connecting, y' know. I mean, 'worthy but dull'; no thank you!

FIV 25 (Host as physically managing the studio?)

You're completely focussed on what's going on in your ears – just completely focussed. You just kind of Carol Louth was a great producer. I remember we got another one in, who used to use the talkback, which used to drive me nuts and I was trying to figure out how I would say to this producer, "A better way to use the talkback is....". So I remember two days going down to studios with Carol, saying to myself (didn't tell her), "I must watch how Carol uses the talkback", and on both occasions, I came up and I couldn't remember. She just used it so well – just didn't intrude at all, but now it's all on messaging.

FIV 26 (Host as representing the man-in-the-street?)

To a certain extent. Like I was saying to Pat Kenny – the same genetic package flows through all our.....one way or another and also you feel you are facilitating people who are not experts or professionals. Oh, they're allowed on air too – but you are facilitating people in getting their point of view across. To that extent, yes, you certainly are.

FIV 27 (Any thoughts on ways *Liveline* might develop?)

To bring a visual element into it? I'm not sure I'd like a visual element in it because I often wondered why people felt so comfortable to talk about things that were very private – that's in the stream of the programme, shall we say, and I think it was the familiarity that they were in their own space, on their own phone and that it had that intimacy and privacy and I'm not sure.... Though maybe if they saw the presenter they'd feel they were making a contact more. See, I think the wonderful thing about radio is its immediacy and its intimacy and I think that facilitates people's comfort zones.

I think that people have a lot to thank the programme for and I'm not looking for any gratitude for meand indeed the way Joe does it; if you take the over seventies medical card, that was an opportunity for people, who if *Liveline* weren't there, could not have got their point of view across in the manner in which they did and I think that it works very effectively that way.

Interview with Julian Vignoles **Previously Producer and Series Producer on *Liveline***

Interview notes

The interview took place in Buswells's hotel at 9.45 p.m. on Thurs. 12th Nov. 2009. The interview came about because of a chance meeting while shopping with Julian and his wife Carol, both of whom I knew to have worked on *Liveline*. We chatted about my interest and they both agreed to make themselves available and we exchanged phone numbers. My revised plan had been to use only the interviews with the two programme hosts but this opportunity to gain additional insights into the evolution of the programme and into the production practices and perspectives seemed too good to pass up. I had known both Julian and Carol in the days when I worked in RTE radio and our relationship was cordial and friendly. I followed up on our initial meeting with a text and later an email to Julian and we agreed to meet as specified above. Carol unfortunately could not join us. Julian explained that she was still upset by a recent death in her family. I used only the simple voice recorder and though I thought the location was relatively quiet, I picked up a lot of background noise. Julian's speaking style was relatively soft and he has a habit of not completing his sentences, assuming that I would catch the drift. This did not detract significantly from the import of what he wanted to convey. At one point he covered the mike in the recorder with his hand, while speaking, I assume confidentially about a particular individual. The recorder picked up his speech but I have used discretion and not transcribed identifying references to the individual in question. The interview lasted over 45 minutes. I thanked Julian and we exchanged a couple of social drinks after which, I drove him home. Neglecting to bring along informed consent forms, I promised to post on copies for his information.

The Interview

VIV 1 (Enquiring about the beginnings of *Liveline* I asked if the idea originated with Michael Littleton and Hilary Orpen.)

Yes, I think there was a kind of a process between those two people. I think it came out of the whole idea, you know, *Women Today* was a grand experiment and it was heavy on the feminism and all the rest of it and it was time to change. Then it was a kind of magazine 'cos I remember we had reporters at that stage and then the phone-in element was not..... It was a part of it but there were set-up things – tapes and inserts and all the rest. And I joined it; 'cos I got liberated from 2FM, or Radio 2 as it was, sometime during '85 and I came over and I joined that team and it was Ed Mulhall, who is now head of news, he kinda sprung me 'cos he knew I wanted to break out and then I joined the team and that was it; one thing led to another. The incident that catapulted us was this woman who rang up one day and said she was at mass in Dingle and a priest called Fr. Dick O'Connor had a go at.....made a very, as she thought, anti-woman and right wing sermon, you see, and she walked out and a couple of other people walked out. Then we rang Fr. Dick O'Connor. He was a youngish priest actually, when I say he was only

in his twenties, and then he came on and she came on again and then one thing led to another and then he called.... Barry Desmond was Minister for Health at the time and he (the priest) called him an advocate for abortion and he very generously didn't go to his lawyers. He says, "I'll come on the show", so we said "great". So he came on and so that would date it around '89. Coalitions kept changing around that time. And then one thing led to another and it became more the potboiler show. I mean we dropped the tapes. They just seemed to disappear and we would take things out of the paper but it had to be a phone call. We didn't want people in the studio and then one thing led to another and then the question was how much you could set up stuff and how much you let the callers take it but I think if I had a fault in those days..... And then I went back as series producer a few years later. It would have been in the early nineties and I think Marian always felt that I would go down to the studios winging it and hoping that things would happen whereas others would be more prepared, even if you're throwing stuff out and dropping it.

VIV 2 (Responding to Marian's remark that it took about four years to cultivate a *Liveline* audience.)

That's right. I think she's right and now it's kind of..... I don't think we ever had regulars in those days but certainly, of course, you could never know what could spark.. sparkle – start people off. Often a big story didn't and it was little things. I think Marian might have mentioned this to you; it was when they introduced round teabags. Did she mention that to you? Yeh, three days spent – the shape of teabags and it was amazing. And the stories were coming in like.....amazing! Then we had....there was a phase where people would ring up with a story and say "I can't really talk about it on the air" and there was a little gizmo that was in the studios at the time. I think it was a piece from Yamaha and it was kind of a reverb machine of some kind and you could distort the voices. So this is what we did and we had a lot... but I think it got rather tiresome for the listener after a while. But then a couple of people said they were recognized 'cos. I mean, it didn't distort people's manner of speaking; it only distorted the pitch of your voice.

VIV 3 (Asked if these distortions had to be prerecorded.)

No, you couldn't do it on air. And there were some spectacular abuse ones – a woman complaining about things her husband did to her. It got very graphic and very gruesome sometimes and I think we had an incredible appetite for detail. That's my recollection of it. But then there were great lighter moments and I remember the time there was a referendum – one of the EU referendums – and there was a big row because I had gone off to some conference in Europe and before I left, your man, who has since died, the anti-EU guy – what do you call him? He was leading the 'No' campaign and he's said, win or lose, he'd come on the show. That was the deal and I was away and he arrived then at 2 o'clock to come on the show. And the newsroom.....and he wouldn't talk to the newsroom and he was really principled about this; he would only do our show. The other time was, do you remember when Sinead O'Connor took a page ad in the *Irish Times* for her poem and she wrote this poem about her own situation and she took a whole page ad.

VIV 4 (Was this pretty much accusing her father?)

Yeh, yeh and I always think it was one of those nice little stories. I was passing by reception that morning about...just after Gay finished and there she was and she was writing a little note and I said, "Hi, Sinead, Julian is my name". "Oh, hi, I was just writing a note to Gay". I said, "That's fine, by-the-way, you wouldn't be interested in coming on the show and reading your poem?" "Of course I will". I said, "We'll send a taxi for you about half one". She was living in Sandymount. "Oh, I'll walk up" says she. So I said, "that's grand". I went in to the others and said, "well, Sinead's on the show" (laughs), "oh, Sinead's on the show; she'll be here at half one". And sure she was and she read the poem but all hell broke loose and she was on for the whole programme and in fact came back the next day.

VIV 5 (Are there particular pressures from a producer's point of view?)

Well the main pressure was getting a decent show, getting stuff to fill it and getting contributors who were good and not getting into trouble legally if you could avoid it. And that whole thing of judging how good somebody was – everyone got really down or Marian got really pissed off if you said somebody was good and this was a good story and they went on and on and on. These would be the usual things, you know.

VIV 6 (And what made a good show?)

When the phone calls would just come in, in their droves; you'd go down to the room where they were taking the calls and there were stacks of them and you'd know this was interesting; people were engaged by this and you could never predict what that would be. Well, you could but it was often the test. If someone came on and was very warm and people were touched by them and that would spring a lot of stories and would bring people out and I think it gave people confidence. I think if somebody told a story and revealed something about themselves it provoked other people into doing the same, you know. Whereas if some one was just ranting or somebody was giving a very contrary opinion about something or a very, very, particularly conservative opinion on something or was very dogmatic, that would spark something in other people. But world affairs never rated – never rated at all – never. Party politics didn't really either and it's 'cos it's kind of boring.

And how representative *Liveline* is...., I mean even in our day if there's a referendum on the EU, our callers would be two to three times to one against the referendum, when the thing would end up being passed, in those days, being passed by two or three to one, so you wondered how representative it was. And then people with an axe to grind or more motivated.... Then there was the theory – the current DG used to express it – the Sherry! He had a sherry theory – there were all women in South County Dublin who were on the sherry and there's an element of truth in it – (mimics posh tipsiness)

"Marian, I have to say....", "Do you really....?"

An example of it would be, they were doing auditions last year for *The All Ireland Talent Show* and I was down there and everything seemed to be going smoothly but yet *Liveline* found one or two people who hadn't a good experience. There was a big crowd – hundreds of kids. They wait a long time naturally, no more than the *X Factor* or

anything, you wait a long time and how representative is one or two who were giving out, you wonder, and you know that's a kind of an issue. That was an issue in our time.

VIV 7 (Asked if he thought what people wanted to talk about had changed over the course of time.)

Oh no, I think that's true and I mean the kind of stuff I'm talking about - bad marriages and stuff – I mean we were doing a lot within the late 80s early 90s. It doesn't seem to figure. Maybe it's all been told.

VIV 8 (Asked if there were voices missing from *Liveline* – missing points of view.)

I don't think, for instance, the super wealthy ever would come on and defend their...y'know. I can't remember any of that. We've had people in prisons; we've had every kind of criminal or ex-criminal or whatever. Has anyone ever done an analysis of the class... socioeconomic...?

VIV 9 (Do other things matter – the figures, for instance, when they come in?)

Oh God, yes! Well, you see, the amazing thing about it, in the 80s it was always perceived that the highest audience was always in the morning and there was a steady decline right up until seven o'clock in the evening with a little bump – the (midday) news – and then I remember the period there where *Liveline* actually, when first of all its first quarter of an hour was ahead of the news and now it is actually.... Is it level with the morning? Moving up all the time... (Confirmed that it was now second only to *Morning Ireland*.) I think that's partly a decline in the mornings since Gay (Byrne) left. The morning has never been.... The global figure is going up but the share is never like it was with Gay – that nine to eleven (slot). It was an interesting thing that people thought it wasn't possible. "Oh, the women are taking the kids and everyone's at work", and all this kind of stuff. All these arguments were used but of course if you have the right product you can change the listening habits of people, which I think is a great testament to Marian and Joe. And also the access thing, I suppose like in an age when people like to have less and less things imposed on them.... All the other programming was imposed whereas this seemed to be the voice of the people – manipulated largely by us but still at its purest form it is an access programme.

VIV 10 (Asked what he thought Joe's strengths are.)

I think his knowing what will work, knowing what people want to talk about. He has a great instinct for it.

VIV 11 (Asked to what degree programme hosts need to be managed.)

Much more, I mean they're different people. Joe is much more interventionist and Joe wants to produce. Marian was happy enough to let others do it. I mean she could put the foot down and she could be very stroppy some of the time and she'd say, "I don't want to do that and why are we doing this?", but she wouldn't be ringing you at nine in

the morning, whereas Joe apparently rings at nine in the morning – (mimicking Joe) “Ah, no, I don’t think we should do that. Ah, fuck it, we don’t do that and let’s do this” and the thing, I think, that always annoyed producers about Joe is, he’s obviously right. His instincts are right. If they weren’t, you’d be doing something stupid. You’re saying, “Fuck him! He’s right”. He’d be down the Bull Wall with the dogs ringing up whoever it was. I still have dreams. You know they way you have dreams about your Leaving Cert, which I still have, well I have dreams about being back on *Liveline*, producing it. “No, wake up; it was only a dream!” Theoretically, in one way, why wouldn’t you. I can do it.

VIV 12 (Asked his reaction to the programme being lengthened by 15 to 75 mins.)

No, I think it was her (Anna Leddy) just wanting to get, as near as possible, programme changes on the hour and also, I suppose the show was going well. Joe had reservations about it ‘cos he used to talk to me – he had strong reservations – and I agreed with him and it survived it. I used to like that thing where you’d be just bursting – you’d get tons of calls and the sig would be coming up..... I put that sig together - Stockton’s Wing. And the “Joe Duffy”; I remember Ian Wilson was doing one of the sessions and there was a band in called *The Intoxicating Rhythm Section*. I always remember the name and I came into Ian and said, “Listen, any chance the lads could do ‘Joe Duffy’?” and the boys did it. So that’s great – took ten minutes and they still use it and Joe loves that. He loves that kind of.....

VIV 13 (And his reaction to the fact that the show had recently attracted sponsorship from Specsavers?)

I don’t know. I think it’s a pity. You’re charging the license fee and you’re a public broadcaster to have programmes like that – for the sake of a few bob. I mean, they’re probably not getting an awful lot of money. If television is anything to go by there is probably not a huge lot of money in it. It’s still a fraction of the cost of the show. I’ve a funny feeling though, the public are much more tolerant than we are when we think of sponsorship. The public complains about everything to do with RTE and I’ve never heard a complaint about it. Or indeed, the plugging of Newbridge Silver on *The Rose of Tralee* and the girls wearing it – never heard a punter complain about it, so maybe it’s all in the

VIV 14 (Was it important for him to feel that *Liveline* had accomplished something?)

I think, in my experience, it always was, yeh. I mean you’re a kind of professional and you’re cynical and you’re story driven and you want people to kinda empty their hearts but at the same time the human being in you always likes when something is uncovered or something is revealed and there’s always that great satisfaction you sense that people have when they say something or they tell Marian, as it was in my time. It was a good feeling you had about it.

VIV 15 (Reacting to a suggestion that both Joe and Marian foster a civic persona.)

I do think they have a problem though in their wages and I don't think Joe is immune from that and I think he is quicker to take a cut than anybody else as far as I know. They're still vastly over rewarded for what they do in my opinion and that goes for all of them and it does compromise you.

VIV 16 (Asked how he thought *Liveline* sat within the Public Service brief and if RTE was proud of what is achieved by the programme.)

I've never heard it stated but I think that *Liveline* is tolerated for its indiscretions over the years; its campaigning when...and certainly its attacking of a lot of RTE stories and I think it's tolerated because it does just that and there's no other programme like it. And every time it gets into trouble over maybe unfair reports – what was the last one they were ruled against? – all those kinds of incidents, then they suddenly come on and highlight some injustice and so they're saved for another time. I think you really need strong production on these shows. Sometimes they haven't always got it.

VIV 17 (Feedback from colleagues / management about a good programme?)

Yeh, I remember when I worked on it Tom Manning was in charge of the daytime schedule and Tom was great for feedback. And if Tom said, "What are you doing? what's the story?" and certainly in the Kenny Show, "And what about doing such and such?" he'd generally give a good notion, you know, whereas people have come along since – didn't have that same instinct for what was.... But I mean, then again, it's the old story. You might go months and months and nobody would say.... They might say at the end of the year, "The show went well, good season, not bad". Whereas somebody might make a one-off, and even I might have done it – made a one off, and they'd be singing your praises. That daily schedule is taken for granted.

VIV 18 (Asked if he remembered any totally outstanding shows.)

That Sinead O'Connor one is always one I remember and I always remember the one where I was away, as I mentioned to you. He won the referendum; that was the thing – a surprise win. He was leader of the ... and he wouldn't talk to anyone else 'cos he had made a deal only to talk to *Liveline* and there was satisfaction in that – Raymond Crotty! And that Fr. Dick O'Connor – that was a great run of shows.

VIV 19 (Any poor shows?)

Ah, there's days when you come up and nothing has gone; nothing has taken off and the calls had kinda gone really quiet and you were taking absolute rubbish and you know it just hadn't worked and you just kind of.... The great thing about the five day..... Next! And then the next show, if it goes well, the old show is a memory.

VIV 20 (Things he might develop or change in the current version?)

(Long pause) I dunno. I really don't know. I'm naturally conservative. If a thing works, I think, "If it ain't broke....."