INTERVIEW G07: DON PALMER

Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interviewee: Don Palmer
Interview date: 10th August 2020
Location: Virtual
Transcriber: Naomi Wells

Textual Note: Annotations and observations appear in square brackets (e.g. [pauses], [laughs]). Partial, interrupted or unfinished utterances are denoted by a dash. False starts, filler words and non-lexical utterances (e.g. 'um', 'hmm') are not generally transcribed. Time codes appear at ten-minute intervals in square brackets in bold type.

JC: Well, I've hit start on the record there, so just before we start, I know you've sent me the consent form, but can I just get your verbal consent as well, that you know this is being recorded and you're okay with that?

DP: That's fine, I consent to this interview.

JC: Brilliant, and could you just then start by stating your name and today's date?

DP: My name is Don Palmer and today's date is the tenth of August 2020.

JC: It is indeed. Alright then, so can you start by telling me when and where you were born, then?

DP: I was born in Belfast in 1960 in the Ulster Hospital, I don't know the time, and I grew, I was originally, my parents originally lived in a, a large town called Bangor which is about ten miles to the east of Belfast and then after a few years moved to east Belfast, so I grew up on a, an area called Dundonald, which is on the way out of Belfast on the east side of Belfast, for as long as I can remember, since I was about three or four, something like that, I grew up in east Belfast.

JC: Okay, and what type of area was your neighbourhood like at the time, your part of east Belfast?

DP: It was a kind of a, what we'd classify today as a kind of middle-class suburb, you know, there, there were lots of, there's lots of little communities that, particularly go out the east side of Belfast, I mean, the west side of Belfast, tend to be a lot of Catholic communities live there, the east side was largely Protestant, you would see flags and whatnot, we didn't paint the footpaths in those days of course, that came much later, but yeah, quite a typical middle-class community, you know, people would, would stay there who worked in the city, you know, very, actually quite a peaceful area, not, not a lot of trouble, or you wouldn't really see street riots or buses burnt out or anything like that in the area that we lived. There were cert-, that was quite localised, so I remember when I was growing up and, you

know, people, not that we travelled much cos we'll maybe get to that point, but people say what's it like, you know, is there just gangs everywhere and that, well, there wasn't, it was actually quite a peaceful suburb and you never really felt a lot of danger or threat, certainly, yeah.

JC: And that was the case even after, I mean, we'll come onto this, but even after the Troubles started do you think, yeah?

DP: Largely, yeah, I mean, will come up, I had specific encounters with paramilitary organisations that were quite traumatic, and, and, I, well, I think when someone encounters something specific and we'll come to some specifics from me, it becomes more acute, you become more acutely aware of the danger, rather than this general sense of, oh my goodness, you know, somebody might break into our house or someone might start a riot in my street, you don't think of that, many people didn't think of that until it came close to home in their own family, and that would, I would say that was the case for me, so I was eight years old when the Troubles began, and so the first eight years of my life growing up in the sixties, you know, I've no memory of any trouble or anything, and even when it did happen in the, in the late sixties, end of '68, you know, '69, again, it was quite localised into particular communities in, in Londonderry and in parts of Belfast, it wasn't something widespread across Belfast.

JC: Okay, that's interesting, and can you tell me a little bit more just about your, your family and stuff, like, what did your parents do for a living?

DP: Well, interestingly, before I was born, so in the 1950s my father had joined what were called the B-Specials, and the B-Specials were a kind of a, for sake of a better, a reserve police force. I, I don't know if they were armed, I haven't researched enough into them, but they were kind of an extra group of men, they ended up getting quite, quite a bad name amongst the nationalist community because they were, they were almost regarded as a group of enforcers, you know, a Protestant section of the police force who took care of Catholics who rioted, so my, my father was part of that, but that was a kind of, an additional job, his main job was in the food business, so he trained in the, in the food, the supermarket business as a manager, so he was a manager of a large supermarket chain and always worked in that, and when I was, during the sixties, until the early seventies, he was, he was in one of the hotbeds of Northern Ireland, he was the manager of the Spar supermarket on the Shankhill Road, so that's where I first kind of encountered a lot of the, the violence and the vandalism and my father would be called out every weekend almost, because the windows of his shop were, were put in by rioters, and of course in those days there were no shutters or anything like that to protect the windows, so windows were being smashed all the time as riots broke out, so he was in the food business. My mum was in the shoe business, she worked in a number of shoe shops and then eventually she got a job with the Northern Ireland executive up in Stormont, an administrator position, so yeah, both worked and I was an only child. My mother had complications after I was born and couldn't have any more children, so grew up an only child but very loving family, good mum and dad, dad worked hard, very hard, you know, didn't see much of him during the days until about seven o'clock at night when he would come home to get his dinner, but yeah.

JC: And did you have any other, like, extended family living nearby?

DP: Yeah, we, we did, my uncle and aunt, so my mum's brother, I was always closer to my mum's relatives, her side, my, my father grew up in a small fishing village which is quite interesting cos growing up there was quite a difference in the political views and the, and my mum and my dad, so my mum grew up in east Belfast, she was born in one of what became one of the hotbeds, the Lower Newtownards Road, where organisations like the UDA and UVF had their headquarters, my mum was born in that community and grew up in that community. My dad was born in a small fishing village, and so very, very different, my dad had no political views at all really, never spoke about politics, whereby my mum could see something on the TV or hear of something and flare up immediately with very, very strong views, so yeah, my, so on my mum's side, my uncle worked in the shipyards with my grandfather and of course the shipyards were largely Protestant men working in the shipyards. There were Catholics who worked in the shipyards, but my uncle Sam used to tell me they knew who the Catholics were, the Catholic guys stuck together, had their lunch together, worked together, watched one another's back, and all the rest of the guys worked, so on my mum's side I had an uncle, an aunt and they had two children and one of whom eventually was caught up in one of the IRA bombs in 1974, so mainly my mum's side I had, I had siblings, cousins and that that I was close to. I didn't know my dad's relatives that much.

JC: And you said your mum had sort of quite strong political views, then. I mean, so she'd talk about that a lot, would she?

DP: She would, Jack, when something flared it up. She wouldn't go around the house during the day, you know, talking to me about politics, she, she never did that, but if she saw something on TV, alright, so if she saw a riot, or if she heard about a bomb going off, or, or she heard about somebody planting, you know, a bomb under a policeman's car, or, or when, when Lord Mountbatten was killed, something, something horrendous like that, she would go crazy, absolutely crazy, and, and, and I think part of that was the kind of, the soil that she grew up in, the, the air that she breathed growing up. She grew up in a, in a very, very strong loyalist community, and so she, she kind of picked that up and, and when the Troubles broke out I guess that was already within her. I mean, she, she wouldn't demonstrate or write letters or, or march or anything like this, but when I was a little boy she insisted on taking me on the Twelfth **[00:10:00]** of July with my picnic and my, and her flask of tea to watch the Orange, Orangemen, to watch the bands, and I went faithfully, it was like going to the circus, you know, you know, you might as well have taken me to the circus to see some spec-, spectacle, you were taken, you sat there with all the other kids that grew up and you waited and you watched the Orange parade coming up the Castle-, no, not the Castlereagh Road, one of these roads in Belfast, so that was my life growing up as a, as a little boy and then when they, when you went to see the bands that was the start of your summer holidays, then you went off to, to enjoy the rest of your summer holidays.

JC: And did you have a sense then, when you were at the Twelfth and watching the bands and stuff, like, of, of what the meaning was behind it, or was it just, like, as you say, just a day out?

DP: No, no, it was a day out, you know, and not a day, it was colourful, it was, I mean, it was a band, it was a procession, you know, I mean, I, I lived, we'll probably come to this, I lived in Canada for eleven years, I've been to Canada for two extended periods of my, well, three extended periods in my life, first when I was nine and then when I was twenty-two and then my whole family, we moved to Canada in 2001, so, I've, I've been in Canada there and I've seen marching bands on, you know, Canada Day. I've been to America on the Fourth of July and you see marching bands and you're caught up in it, you know, no, I had no, you knew it was something to do with being a Protestant, but if someone had said growing up, what does that mean, you wouldn't really know, you know, I, I [laughs], I, I remember much later on in life when I moved back to visit, these were the, of course by this time you've got people from other cultures who've moved into Northern Ireland and you would have, you'd have people who kind of grew up in Muslim countries or, or Chinese culture or something like that, but particularly people who'd moved in from Middle Eastern countries who were Muslims, and this guy said to me Don, I still remember the day I was walking down a street in Belfast and someone said, you know, what are you, a Protestant or a Catholic, and he said I'm a Muslim and they looked at him as though, what does that mean, as if to say are you a Protestant Muslim or a Catholic Muslim [laughs], you know, you'd no real sense of, of the roots of that and what that meant either religiously or even politically, you know, you, or, you'd, of course when you go to high school, you don't study any of this in primary school, at least I didn't, but when you go to secondary school you start to study a bit of Irish history, but again, you don't really get the big picture. You learn the names and the dates and some of the events, the, you know, the Easter uprising and some of the names, De Valera and Connolly and, and these guys, but you don't really dig deep into it that much, at least I didn't, so the answer is no, I didn't, except if you went out of the house with anything green on you were immediately slapped around the ear and told to change your clothes, but not, no reason why, why I am not going to wear a green T-shirt today, mum [laughs], you know.

JC: So did you, you went to school locally, then, did you?

DP: Yeah, I did, I went to Elm Grove primary school, which is still there today, which is, yeah, in, in, again in east Belfast. I, because my mum and dad both worked and worked full-time, I had a close relationship with my grandparents, so on a, on a Sunday night my mum and dad would take me to my grandparents' house which was right near the school that I attended, the primary school and then I would, you know, I would really stay during the week at my grandparents', and mum and dad, they would come and see me and whatnot, but because they worked full-time it was, it was hard, it would have been hard to kind of go and stay at home, so very close relationship with my grandparents and they were a big influence on me, especially my grandfather growing up. My grandfather was not at all a political man, he was a, he worked in the shipyards till he retired, and he was a lay preacher in one of the evangelical churches in Northern Ireland, so he would preach a lot in churches, really good man, very loving, told me lots of good stories and, and that's where I guess I, my faith was kind of stirred through my grandfather, and I would say I grew up quite neutral, I mean, I, I knew I was a Protestant, if I had to put something on a piece of paper I would say that, but I didn't know what that meant, really, so primary school was, yeah, a very positive experience, and yeah.

JC: Yeah, I was just, yeah, going to ask, like, if you enjoyed school and stuff and, like, did, if, you know, presumably if it was a local school you would have had friends and stuff that lived nearby to, like, play out with and things?

DP: Yeah, yeah, certainly primary school, but again, see I went to primary school until 1971, so actually one of my memories from primary school was when the Troubles started in '68, it must have been 1969, so they'd been going for a while and the civil rights marches had started, and I remember my primary schoolteacher, so I must have been, oh started, I must have been about seven years old, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, '69, I would have been about nine or maybe ten years old, my primary schoolteacher gave the class a project to do and the project was on the civil rights movement, and she, she taught us why people are marching on the streets, what are civil rights, why do certain people feel they don't have them, why do other people hold those rights back from people, and we had to do this project. I must have been primary five or maybe primary six, something like that and I remember going home asking my mum, and of course [laughs], my mum kind of opened up, why are they asking you that, what do they want to know about Catholics and things like that, I said mum, mum, mum, mum, they just want to know, so can you tell me a little bit about that, so that was one of the things that would, as I say an example of something that would spark off my mum, you know, whereby my grandfather, he was more sensible. Well, Don, I'll tell you why they're marching, my mum would go they're crazy people, they shouldn't be marching, they're just troublemakers, they need to just be like the rest of us and be content with life, so, so that, that was a memory in the latter part of primary school growing up, but largely primary school was quite a normal experience. You had, you had friends, you would never know whether someone was Catholic or Protestant, you just played in the playground, you ate lunch together, you hung out, you walked home, you know, we always walked to primary school, walked there, walked home, no adults with us, you all walked with your friends, very safe environment.

JC: And do you know if it was a predominantly Protestant school, then, or, or, were, were there Catholics who went to your school?

DP: No, it would be, it would be, Jack, like, like, even, even today, even to this day in which we [indecipherable], Northern Ireland, and Belfast is, is quite a, I use this word very carefully, okay, because it's a loaded word, it's quite a segregated community, it's a self-segregated community, okay, now, now there are, there are areas of the community and I can tell you what they are, I drive past them still [doorbell rings], sorry, excuse me, Jack.

JC: Yeah, no problem, we can, we can pause for a second if you need.

DP: Can you just pause for a second.

JC: Yeah, no problem.

DP: Sorry about that.

JC: Yeah, no, no problem at all.

DP: Someone was coming to the building, because it's a kind of, as I say, self-segregated community, the, the area of east Belfast I grew up in would be very much a unionist or a loyalist, well, probably more unionist, I mean, unionism and loyalism are, are not quite synonymous, you know, loyalism is more the fundamental or the, even the more violent part of the unionism, unionism tends to be more political and, and you have views on it, but you will engage with one another, so yeah, most of the people who lived in that area would be Protestant, but you see if I'd grown up in parts, maybe in north Belfast or west, but particularly west Belfast, you would be asking a different question, you'd be asking, were there any Protestant children in your school growing up, Don, you know, and also because Northern Ireland had a separate Catholic school system and still does, a lot of Catholics would choose to send their children to Catholic schools, because there, obviously there was the religious element of it, the prayers etcetera, the priest would, would kind of come in, but they would, they would get a particular slant on Irish history that they wanted to make sure their children would hear very clearly, **[00:20:00]** so yeah, so short, short, short answer is mostly Protestant kids, but again, I can never ever remember, in primary school anyway, having conversations about, you know, is so-and-so a Catholic or a Protestant, never, and even at secondary school, when I moved up to secondary school, it was a town called Holywood, with one 'l', and, you know, again, there would be some Catholic students in that school, but you see again, there was a large Catholic school near us and most Catholic people would send their children to Catholic high schools, so the, the whole education system was quite segregated too, and, you know, that, that's just what it was.

JC: And how do you think Catholics were viewed amongst sort of your peers and, and your family, was there suspicion, or did you just not really know enough about them?

DP: Was there suspicion, not really, Jack, because, again, because most of the communities were segregated, so you're not, you're not growing up in a street where you s-, where you think, okay, in number six, number eleven and number twenty-three, that's the O'Learys and the Kellys, alright, who are Catholic, you, we, you just don't grow up with that, and so you think, oh my goodness, the Kellys at number eleven are Catholics, I'm not, I certainly won't be, you know, playing with them, or you won't be having them, you, you just didn't grow up with that and when, and again, in the workplace, no, there was no sense of that that I heard of my, and certainly my dad and my mum in, in the workplace, but again, see that, that was one of the reasons of course the civil rights movement began was because even in the workplace there was a lot of segregation, there were certain jobs that Catholics couldn't get, and even getting housing, good quality housing, you know, many times they would be overlooked, so their basic civil rights, their benefits, housing, education, etcetera, employment, they felt that they were being overlooked because on, on a form, when you go for any job, one of the things they will ask you is your religion, and Christian was not enough, you had to put whether you were Protestant or Catholic, you had to put that on a form before, for an interview for a job, and that was again one of the things that the civil rights movement was alerting to, like, why would you even ask that, because then the, the inference could be, well, if you don't get this job, maybe it's because you put down you were a Catholic, but no, no sense of suspicion, no, you know, when I, again at school, secondary school, close friends who were Catholic, never had any kind of conversation with them or anything.

JC: So you did have, you did make quite good friends who were from a Catholic background, then?

DP: No, no, I, I wouldn't say good friends in that friends that I played with, but that's the other thing, because you're growing up in, particularly since 1968, '69, you're growing up in a culture where violence is on the increase, okay, so I, I remember, no sorry, you don't socialise the same way, okay, so you, you don't really move beyond your own street, like, we lived in this long street growing up, I can, I can very, very seldom remember going down my street by myself, you would go with someone, because even though you felt safe on your street, once you moved into a different part of Belfast, so my, my grandparents for example, they're, they're close to my primary school. If I'd walked the same distance to the west of my primary school that I walked to the east to go to my grandparents' house, I would have been in a hotbed, an area of a lot, a lot of violence. Every weekend there were riots and cars burnt out and that was a, maybe a ten-minute walk from my primary school that way, rather than that way, so you tended to stay in the areas you knew you were safe, so you didn't socialise a lot. You wouldn't kind of have friends who were Catholic and Protestant and, like, you know what, let's go down to the park and play football together, you just didn't do that, you know, even when you're kind of growing up, you, you don't go to clubs and things because there was just a lot of potential violence, so you've a smaller circle of friends, you know, you wouldn't meet guys from, you know, three streets away or four streets away and, and go there and, and that would very seldom happen, just because of the whole environment that you're living in.

JC: Sure, yeah, and you–

DP: But again, not, not a sense of suspicion, there were, I didn't have any gangs in my area, so you're like, that's a Catholic gang or that's a Protestant gang and you hang out with these guys as opposed to those guys, there was nothing like that in the area I grew up in, but there were other parts of Belfast that would be.

JC: And you went to secondary school in Holywood you said, yeah?

DP: That's right, and the interesting thing about Holywood, again, typical middle-class Protestant, largely Protestant town, it had an army barracks, so one of the largest barracks, so there was a whole bunch of housing that had been put together and there was of course a great big barbed wire fence put around it, so any day when you're going into school in the morning, there, you, this army barracks was there and, and that actually led to problems for my father, because when you grew up in Northern Ireland the, the nationalist community weren't just opposed to the security forces being there, you know, they felt they were living in an occupied country by the security forces, so when the, when the British Army came in in 1970, '70, '71, immediately the, the nationalist people feel we are under occupation, you know, there are soldiers walking around the streets with guns, so they felt very threatened. It wasn't just that, they also started to target businesses who served the security forces, so and it could be anything, it could be a hairdresser, if you cut the hair of pol-, of, of army, if you were a baker and you delivered bread to, to a barracks, if you serviced the car of an army guy, they would, could, they would, you would be targeted and my father's shop was the largest supermarket in Holywood and of course the army and their families would come

and do their shopping there, so my dad received threats growing up, you know, and, no, you know, even to the point where then you start thinking, you start seeing these situations on the TV of, not just police and army having their cars blown up, but regular men in particular who are going about their business and their cars are blown up with a bomb, so even my dad, you know, was taught how to look under his vehicle in case a bomb was there, simply because he was the manager of a supermarket in a town that had a large army presence, and so the likelihood would be my, even though it wasn't my dad, you know, he, he was just the manager of the supermarket, honestly, if you're going to target anyone target the owners of the supermarket, not my dad, he's just doing his job, I, I always wor-, and I remember also from time to time even looking under my dad's car, just in case there was any suspicious devices, so yeah, that was Holywood.

JC: Yeah, that must have been quite scary, I mean, yeah.

DP: It was. The, the other side to that, the opposite of that is when you're working to school in the morning you see the army coming towards you with their guns, but again, it's almost like, it's a game, you're like, good morning, morning, and of course they all had English accents [adopts an English accent], alright, alright mate, how are you, yeah, yeah, I'm fine, have a good day in school young man, yeah, keep yourself safe, you know, so all it was, you know, the army would be walking, greeting us on the way to school and it became part of your [doorbell rings], sorry.

JC: Yeah, yeah, no worries.

DP: [extended pause] Sorry again.

JC: No problem.

DP: Yeah, yeah, so, you know, there's that side of it too where it becomes normal to see the, the army and to talk to them, like, you know, you'd talk to the man, the security guard, with the, letting you across the road or, or just a guy, you, you, and you'd walk beside these guys as they had the guns, you know, on the way to school, boys, see you tomorrow, oh alright son, see you then, bye, so **[00:30:00]** it was a bit bizarre.

JC: So did you have, did people in your area have quite a friendly relationship with the soldiers, then?

DP: I would say yeah. Now, again, Jack, the, the army, it wasn't that they guarded every street and every community, you know, they, they, you know, there were areas of the city and areas of Northern Ireland that there was more of a likelihood for riot and trouble to, to break out, so they were generally, certainly if they were walking, they would walk in those areas. I mean, there was the movie, *'71*, that came out about, maybe ten years ago, very, very well-made movie and that was about two, two members of the, the army who got isolated during a riot and, and that, that's a great movie for showing you what the early seventies was like in Northern Ireland, but again, like, those guys are, are in very dangerous areas, you would probably see more the army trucks or Saracens, as, as we called them, kind of going down the street, but again, the area I grew up in, yeah, if you saw a member of

the army you would greet him, you know, they were, some, some of the women would come out and give them a cup of tea, you know, God bless you for keeping us safe, young man, there's a cup of tea, okay, God bless you, they used to say, so in my area growing up they had a lot of respect for the army, they felt the army were there to protect people like us, and, and my dad, in particular, not a threat at all.

JC: That's interesting, and I was going to ask, you kind of mentioned sort of your, your grandad and his faith and stuff, I wanted to ask, like, how important the church was to you growing up, was, was it a big part of your life?

DP: Yeah, yes, it was. I grew up in a, in a movement called the Brethren movement and the Brethren are, are quite prominent in Northern Ireland. The, the Brethren were a movement that started, interestingly, in Dublin, in the South of Ireland in the 1830s, and it was a kind of a working-class, very lay movement, you know, of people who just started coming together to, to study and read the Bible, they met in homes, they didn't have churches, they weren't part of established churches, and, and so it's what's called a kind of a non-conformist movement or a restorationist movement, and, and they wanted to kind of get back to a more simple form of Christianity, you know, and so it was very important for me growing up. Again, it wasn't political in any way, like, some of the churches in Northern Ireland became very, very political, you know, where you would have political sermons preach from the pulpit, in some of the Presbyterian churches, and then of course the Free Presbyterian churches which Ian Paisley formed. I remember, I was probably about nineteen and I went, one of my friends took me to his church one Sunday evening, oh my goodness [laughs], what a difference. There were police officers outside the building, and inside, fully clothed, he would go to the platform and for the first fifteen minutes of his sermon it would be all politics. He would give an update to his congregation on the, what the IRA were doing and, and the dangers of nationalism and Roman Catholicism and what a great evil it was. He would preach that for fifteen, twenty minutes, then he would say a prayer and then he would preach the gospel. I had nothing whatsoever like that, no politics in my church growing up, it was very much a the importance of, of knowing Christ personally, in your heart, you know, the Bible was always important for us, but again, it wasn't using the Bible for political ends, it was the importance of following Christ in your life and his example, his teachings, and so, and particularly my grandfather, him teaching me that, that shaped me in ways, later on I didn't realise how much it shaped me, because I don't believe I grew up a bigoted person, I, I don't, and I, and that's actually something that turned me off religion, when I was about fifteen, that we might come to, but certainly in the early days faith was something very real, I saw it kind of lived out in, in my family, yeah.

JC: And you, you went to a church, was it nearby where you live?

DP: Yeah, yeah, uh huh, nearby, one just, like, five minutes round the corner. My grandparents went there, my parents went there, quite a large church of three, four hundred people, lot of children and young people in it, quite traditional church you would say today, but, yeah, it was just part of, part of your life, part of what you did on a Sunday, but, but again, nothing at all political about it, ever.

JC: And was there kind of, like, a social scene around the church as well, like, would, would your parents have, have socialised with, with people from there and stuff?

DP: Yeah, with other people within the church, yeah, uh huh, again, to a limited degree, for, for various reasons. I mean, I mean, in those days, you know, people were, my, my dad would go out at seven-thirty in the morning and come home at seven at night or maybe later, so, and he wasn't, he wasn't unique, so many men, unless you were kind of in the shipyard or something like that where you clocked in, you clocked out, a lot of men just worked, so it was only really weekends, and then again, because of the Troubles, you know, you, there's certain areas you wouldn't want to drive through that area, but yeah, we would, a bit of socialising and, and then, you know, in the summer of course you'd always go on summer holidays. We, we didn't travel overseas, we stayed in Northern Ireland, so we would go to caravan sites or to the beach or something like that, you know, places like Newcastle and these sort of places and always seemed to be warm in those days, the summers were summers in those days, yeah.

JC: And what, what did you do, like, I mean, outside of school and stuff, just on a day-to-day basis, would you have, like, gone out with your friends and stuff?

DP: No, not, not a great deal, and, and again, that, that's because, as I mentioned earlier, because of the, the kind of threat, so I remember my first en-, really direct encounter with paramilitary organisations. I was about thirteen, twelve or thirteen and, you know, so I'd just become, I remember I'd just become a teenager, so you start to venture out a wee bit further than your street, you'd go to another community with some of your friends and I remember one day there were about three of us, we were going down the street and an army Saracen drove past us and then we heard this crack, crack, crack, crack, crack. There was a sniper and the sniper was in the, the bell-tower of the Catholic church, so somehow this guy had got into the Catholic church, up into the bell-tower with a gun and was shooting at the army going past us, so we all dived under cars, I don't, oh I don't mean, I meant stationary cars okay, and walls and stuff like that, these bullets, so these bullets started, and I mean, that was just a busy street on a Saturday afternoon with people and children doing their shopping, and these bullets rang out and I went oh my goodness, so when you, when you, when you have that kind of experience you think, hmm, I have to be really careful, so we would go and maybe play football, I loved playing football, I would play it at school and play it with friends, you wouldn't go too far away, or you'd hang out at your friend's house and play board games or watch TV or, or something like that. I, I didn't really grow up in a, probably because of my, my, my religious background, I wasn't really growing up with, like, guys who would go off kind of drinking at weekends and excessive partying and stuff like that. I didn't really want to, it wasn't that I was not allowed to, it just never really appealed to me and, so yeah, you played football and other sports with friends, you would, you know, you would maybe go to the beach when it was the summer, you know, you were at school all the time as well, so yeah.

JC: It must have, yeah, it must have made just things that little bit more anxious I guess, knowing that, you know, there was the army around and that there was the potential for incidents like the one you described to happen.

DP: Yeah, yeah, that, that's right, Jack. I mean, the worst one for me was when I was sixteen, though that's, that's when it really hit home to me, so it, it's **[00:40:00]** very, very vivid in my memory, and so speaking to you about it now I know all these images will come back, so it was seven forty-five, Friday evening. I could tell you exactly what was on TV, it was the *Six Million Dollar Man* and our front doorbell went, and so my mum and I were home, my dad was working cos Friday night was late night opening, so he worked till nine o'clock, but in those days they didn't kind of bank the money in the shops everyday, they did, they banked the money at the end of the week, and so they obviously knew that come Friday evening, late night open, there'd be a lot of money in my dad's supermarket, so anyway went to the door. These two guys dressed in uniforms, which looked like kind of police-type uniforms were standing outside, my mum opened the door, they kicked the door in, came in and they had guns, and they were speaking very loudly. They grabbed my mum, they threw her on a, on a chair and I was sixteen, you know, and it's one of these moments where you just freeze and they say okay, we're here, we're, we're basically, want all the money, they were two terrorists.Now, we didn't know whether they were Protestant loyalist terrorists or nationalist, they could have been either, you know, you just don't know and you don't really care, all you know is these are very violent men, and that was another side of the Troubles. To fund the terrorism these guys needed money, and so there was a lot more bank robberies, a lot more break-ins, a lot more of other crime associated with a community because of the need to get money to buy weapons and to do all that stuff, so basically they held my mum and I up as hostage, my mum fainted on the spot and they tied her legs and she was lying on the ground with her legs tied, but she was out for the count and one of the guys took me, took me to the phone and he says okay, I want you to read this card out to your father, and he pointed a gun right there at my head and I had to read. Dad, this is Don, mum and I are being held hostage by two men, they want all, you to take all of the money from the shop, take it to this location, do not call the police or they say they're going to kill us. I put the phone down and he took me into the room, he tied my hands and my feet and, and then they went out of the room. Within a very, maybe a minute or so, my mum came to, and because they hadn't tied her hands, they'd only tied her feet cos she was just lying there on the floor, she was able to untie her legs and she untied me, but you don't know, are these guys, have they left our home, are they standing outside, is there someone in a car outside, so it took us maybe five minutes, we realised they weren't in the building, we looked out the front door, we didn't see a car and I said mum, let's run for it, and we ran across the street to our neighbours house, knocked quickly on the door and this elderly lady led us in, and within ten minutes, fifteen minutes of that happening there were three police cars at our house, so my dad did phone the police and my dad took the money to the drop-off point, he left the money there, but there were two unmarked police cars waiting and so when either these guys or whoever it was came to pick up the money, they, they arrested two of the guys and then about three weeks or so, we, you know, we had to do, answer all kind of questions from the police, three weeks after that, one day I was taken out of school, my dad phoned the school and they said okay, you've got to go with your parents, we had to go to a police station and they had two line-ups of men and basically my mum and I had to identify the men who came into our house that night, and I don't mean, you know, from a distance, Jack, I mean, go up and touch this guy on the shoulder, so we, we both did it, but it was one of those moments where because it all happened so quickly, you know, you, you think okay, I got a vague sense of what this guy's face was like, they didn't have masks or anything, you think okay, one was a heavier set guy, one was a thinner guy, one, you know,

so, and then afterwards, like, for years, even to this day I think, if someone said to me Don, are you one hundred per cent sure those guys were the two guys that came in your house, I could never say that, Jack. I'm eighty per cent sure, maybe, eighty-five per cent sure, always had this thought, but maybe he looked like the guy, but maybe he wasn't, so, and, and so that's when I was sixteen and, and when that happened to me, that was very traumatic.

JC: I can imagine, yeah.

DP: So for, for months afterwards, in fact, my mum took really ill after that, it, it was really just the nervous-related stuff, it wasn't even medical, she had all kinds of treatments and homeopathic treatments and everything. My mum never recovered from that, eventually, about, maybe two years after that happened we moved out of that house, we just couldn't live in the house any longer and we moved out of Belfast to a small town near Bangor where our roots were, and, but you always, always think of that, and the other thing that that did for me was, and I was as I say, sixteen, I started thinking more seriously about the Troubles, I started reading about it and I started asking questions like the one you asked me when I first, when you said, well, when I was a little boy watching the Orangemen, did I know why they were marching. I wanted to know now, why are these guys marching, okay, what's this all about, because the likelihood was, and we heard afterwards through several people, that the two guys who came into our house were loyalists, it was, like, they are, like, they're our own people, these are Protestant. My uncle, my uncle who was, who actually joined one of these paramilitary organisations as a volunteer, he, he was stopped in his car one evening and they, they took his car off him to burn it and use it as a barricade and they were loyalists. He says, he said it's me, they said we don't give an eff who you are, give us the effing car right now, get out of the car, so they didn't care and, and so that's when I started really thinking about it and I, I kind of, I kind of lost my faith for about, best part of five, four or five years, the faith that I kind of grew up with because I, I, and my reasoning went something like this. These guys who march on the Twelfth of July have got banners with Bibles on it and verses from the Bible and pictures of people like Martin Luther and John Calvin and Oliver Cromwell and King Henry VIII [laughs]. Okay, why have they got all these people on these banners, why have they got Bibles, and also why are they carrying swords, is this Protestantism, is this Christianity, you know. Some of the, many of the bands would play hymns, you know, famous hymns, and they'd be singing, but, but they're marching to protest against Catholics. Would these guys kill a Catholic, probably, or at least they would do something very bad to them, and I thought, well, that's not religion is it, and then I remembered what happened to me when I was a boy, and a Catholic terrorist, hiding in a Catholic church in the bell-tower, known or not by the priest, starts shooting and then I thought what if that guy went to see the priest and confessed to sins, would the priest forgive him, okay, so I reasoned that both sides were actually hypocrites, Catholics and Protestants, and I, and I actually basically gave up my faith. I didn't want to go to church, I didn't want to be a Protestant or a Catholic, I just thought, this is a load of nonsense, okay, you know, they both say they believe in the Bible, they both say they worship God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they both quote the Lord's prayer, they both say they believe somehow in Jesus Christ, but what difference is it making to them, and so I, I kind of lost my faith after that.

JC: And was that when you were sort of, like, a teenager, around–?

DP: Sixteen.

JC: Yeah, sixteen, yeah, after that incident, yeah.

DP: So you can imagine, like, fifteen, sixteen, you're going through adolescence, you're starting maybe to develop your mind and think maybe more seriously about this stuff and study a bit more of it, yeah, I, I just kind of lost my faith in, in it, even though my church wasn't like that, you know, you think, okay we're not like that, but it's the same religion, okay, maybe they're **[00:50:00]** a bit more extreme in, in how they interpret it, but, so I, I did, I kind of lost my faith and yeah, till I was about twenty-one.

JC: And were you starting to develop, like, a political consciousness at all around that time as well, yeah?

DP: Yeah, yeah, it was, but it wasn't a political consciousness where I would stay on a loyalist side or the other, it was a, a more, can I say neutral, political consciousness, does that make sense, cos, like, I started, the more I read about it I saw loopholes in both sides, but I mean, I wasn't very vocal about it, I wasn't, don't get me wrong, I wasn't going round having arguments with people all the time about politics. I was pretty angry at religion and I was angry at what was happening in the country. I, I started to be able to see why some of the people who were marching in, in the late sixties, in the civil rights movement, were marching. I started asking questions on both sides though, and then on the other side you're thinking okay, I understand people are taking your civil rights from you, okay, but does that give you an excuse to put a bomb under my dad's car, does that give you an excuse to blow up my cousin, so my cousin Anne in 1974 worked for the electricity board and I got a call, I was, '74, so I was about thirteen, I got a call from my mum saying, I was home and my mum and dad hadn't come home and I was worried about them, so she phoned home and said Don, we're going to be late, we're at the hospital. I said what happened, she says your cousin Anne was blown up in an IRA bomb today, I said is she alive, they say, well, it's touch and go, and she, and they said, you know, the press are all here, so she got caught up in a, a terrible, terrible bomb that the IRA, you know, there is, there's another example of where terrorism is, you know, it doesn't care who it affects. They planted a massive, massive incendiary bomb in the electricity board headquarters and they phoned and they gave people ten minutes of warning to get out of the building. The bomb went off after two minutes, the whole building went up, and my, my, my cousin was caught in it. She did survive, but she and her cousin, and my cousin Brian and then my, my uncle and aunt, so my mum's side, they all emigrated to Canada. In fact, it may have been, may have been '72 or '73, it may have been even earlier, they'd had enough, and so my cousin had to have plastic surgery on her face and they, they left and never came back, they moved to Toronto, like so many others, just to get as far away from it as possible, so that, that sort of stuff, it makes you angry and quite bitter, so I had no tolerance whatsoever for the nationalist community and, and what they, the excuses that I felt they were making for their civil rights, but nor had I any toleration for these stupid men who wore sashes and marched on the Twelfth of July and beat their drums till blood came out of their hands, you know, and carrying Bibles and swords and pictures of Martin Luther, I thought that's hypocrisy, that's nonsense.

JC: Were any of your family in the Orange Order, like, your dad or your grandad?

DP: No, no, they, they weren't, and I'm kind of glad cos that's another side to it, you know, it's a, it's a little bit like the Masonic Order, although the, the masons, and I've since studied into the whole masons and all of that and I've talked to masons, masons would disown the Orange Order, you know, masons say that the Orange Order have nothing to do with them. It's actually not true because when you look at the Orange Order and okay, they don't wear an apron like a mason would wear, they wear a sash, but that sash stands for the same thing, they have to, they're given certain passwords, they're very secretive, you know, you have to swear complete loyalty to them, so there's rituals you've got to go through, now it's, it's, it's associated with Protestantism obviously, but there's rituals, there's things you've got to wear, there's rings and all kinds of secrets that you're told, it's very similar, even though the masons say it, it's not one of the branches of masonry, but I think they're saying that because of the associations to, you know, the Orangemen and all that, but no, thankfully I didn't. I had friend whose, whose fathers were members of the Orange Order, yeah, particularly from Presbyterian churches, so the Presbyterian churches had many, many of them said, well, you would, you would watch, if you go and watch the Twelfth of July, you will see Presbyterian ministers with their collars on marching, you know, and then at the, when they march through Belfast, they go to the field and the kind of, the more religious ones go and listen to a sermon, the non-religious ones go and drink themselves stupid, and they get a, a good, you know, forty-five minutes preaching from one of our Presbyterian ministers and then they all get in their vans and they march back again, so, but I, I wasn't, no.

JC: Yeah, and, yeah, so it sounds like, I mean, your family obviously had a lot of, you know, traumatic experiences. Did your dad ever talk about his time in the B-Specials?

DP: Never.

JC: Never, okay.

DP: Never, and, and I, I found a picture one time of my dad with the B-Special uniform, but he wouldn't talk about it, but, but again, see my dad, I, I don't know, so I don't know why he joined, Jack, but he didn't stay in it very long, because my dad wasn't really a political, politically-oriented person. It might have been for a wee bit of extra money, I don't know, so no, never spoke about that, and to be honest, even that kind of traumatic experience with my cousin and then myself, it's not something we talked a lot about, kind of growing up, unless something came on TV and you hear about somebody, or you know of someone who's experienced it, that would just, that would flare up, you know, the, the emotions in-, inside you, so no.

JC: And it's interesting as well you said, like, about your cousin's family moving to Canada quite soon after the, the incident with the bomb. Did you know a lot of people who were leaving Northern Ireland at the time?

DP: Yeah, the population of Northern Ireland was static for at, at, at least the whole duration of the Troubles, so for thirty years at least the population of Northern Ireland

never grew, it was always one and a half million, so the death rate and the emigration rate was balanced out by the birth rate, it never grew, and in fact, if anything it may even have declined, so yeah, no, I, I knew a lot of, I'd heard about a lot of people who emigrated, particularly to Canada, others of course would come over here, but, and of course when I was twenty-two, when I was twenty-one I kind of rediscovered my faith again, and I don't know if you want to ask about that or not, but I, I went through this period when I was around about twenty, twenty-one where I started to question my own lack of faith. I started asking ques-, I started thinking, well, and my, my grandfather had died by that time, and I, I stopped going to church and then I, I met some friends, some guys through my football team and these guys were Christians and they invited me to go to church with them, so I was, as I say, twenty, something like that, so I thought, alright, I'll give this an open mind, but I'm not going to tell them what they want, and I went to church with them and it was fun, you know, they, they were part of a band, and not an Orange band, but a kind of guitars, drums and I went wow, that's a bit different, there was a lot of life and vitality about it, they went out at weekends and we're talking here maybe late, well, yes, late seventies, '79, '80, so they went out at weekends to basically serve, like, drug addicts and things like that on the streets and guys who were sniffing glue and all this sort of horrible stuff and they would try to help them, you know, they, they never had anything to do with the Orange marches, they were very much against that, they would, I, one of my best friends was Roman Catholic, still is to this day, Chris, and, and so I started seeing, these are gen-, these seem to be genuine Christians, you know, their, they talk a lot about Jesus, they don't say anything about religion, and they really want to find out, what does it **[01:00:00]** mean to live like Jesus, if Jesus lived in Ireland, in Northern Ireland, would he march on the Twelfth of July, would he join a terrorist organisation, would he kill someone, no, clearly he wouldn't, and then we, I became aware of the whole peace movement. I didn't join it or anything like that, but I was very impressed with what I heard from it, and then of course there were mo-, there were marches for the peace movement, so I kind of subconsciously bought into that and thought I like this and I was seeing a very real genuine faith, so, but I had tons of questions and I, all these questions kind of fired out of me, came out of me and I also had a lot of bitterness, I think, because of my own experiences and that kind of came out of me too. It was, it was quite an emotional time for me for maybe about eighteen months and during that time I felt I reconnected with my faith again, even to the point where I, I gave up my job and I felt a kind of calling to go into Christian ministry. I didn't know what it was going to lead to, so that was 1982, so for the last, I went and trained and studied in Canada of all places, where else, and then, so from 1986, so for the last thirty-four years I've been in Christian ministry, but it's interesting, Jack, when you go and, out of Northern Ireland, and this kind of gave, I wanted to get out as well, when I went to Canada in '82 to study theology I felt that I'd escaped the goldfish bowl and I was able to develop my, a consciousness and an awareness of the situation because I wasn't in the goldfish bowl anymore, with little green fish and little orange fish. I was outside and when you're outside the goldfish bowl, whether it's you move to Scotland or England or Canada or New Zealand, wherever you're going to, you start to see things from a different perspective, many, many, many people do, and so when I returned after my theological studies I returned, then eventually I, I came to Scotland, so this, I'm in Glasgow now, but my first time in Scotland was a youth worker, so in 1986 I became a youth worker in a church in Edinburgh and then I was that for six years and then in 2011 we came back to Scotland with my family, so we're in Glasgow now, but that, I, I've a very, very different view on it, on it now and yeah.

JC: So how old were you when you first kind of felt that you wanted to leave Northern Ireland?

DP: Late, late teens, so probably eighteen, eight-, I went to work, I got my first job in, I was in banking, so I worked in banking, did some banking exams, got into banking when I was eighteen till I was twenty-two, so during those four years became quite restless, thought, because that, no, that would have been ’78 to ’82, things were starting to change, but there was still a lot of violence and whatnot and, you know, that was quite a long time before the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement and all of that, but I’d, I’d left Northern Ireland when, you know, John Major and then Tony Blair were part of all those discussions, but, but I was really, really glad to see that happening and it’s interesting, Jack, when I go back, my friends who didn’t leave are, I would say are still much more entrenched if that’s not too strong a word. I mean, they’re, they’re not militant, but they wouldn’t have the same openness that I would have, you know, they, they wouldn’t, they would still say oh yeah, but this guy used to be in the IRA, he’s now in the Northern Ireland Executive, he’s a government minister, you know. I said, well, well, maybe he’s changed, no, I don’t know, I don’t know if people ever change. I said, well, I don’t think he’d be given a government post if he’s still planning to kill people and plant bombs, so there’s a, now, it’s, I don’t want to be too critical of them because some of these friends of mine lost loved ones. I mean, I, I almost did, you know, even my own life, but I survived it, and because I would say of the importance of forgiveness, I, I would say that the heart of faith, the Christian faith is a message of forgiveness. Okay, it’s not easy to do that, it might be easy to forgive somebody who says something to you, but it’s a heck of a lot harder to forgive someone who has killed one of your family members and I, I always remember when Marie Wilson died in the Omagh bombings, and her father Gordon Wilson who was I think a Methodist lay preacher, the day after that young nurse was blown up in that bombing, and in fact, there’s a, a whole programme, a documentary been made about this guy, this guy went live on the BBC and he said, they said to him Mr Wilson, what’s your message to the people who’ve killed your daughter, he said I forgive them, they said how can you do that, he said I choose to do that, he said I have preached my whole life a message of forgiveness, and he’s a Methodist in the church, he said I, I can’t, you know, for me not to be able to practise that, he says, I would be the ultimate hypocrite, and Gordon Wilson went on to become a member of the political establishment in the South of Ireland, he joined a political party in Southern Ireland and was elected as an official to be a, a spokesman for down there, so I heard about, when I saw people like that I went oh my goodness, like, that is real hardcore faith, put in action, not easy, not easy, but it’s choosing the higher road, choosing the path and, and thank goodness for people like, and John Hume, there’s another example, you know, who just died this past week. If it wasn’t for ordinary people like the Gordon Wilsons and people of courage like John Hume we would never have what we have today. Someone had to say enough is enough, okay, there’s got to be a better way, we’ve got to put our weapons down, we’ve got to talk to one another, we have got to at least give people a chance to change and practise forgiveness and put it into, into, into action and thank God for the people of courage who did that.

JC: Absolutely, and so you first left for Canada in ’82, is that right?

DP: ’82, yeah, and studied theology and then came back and then I moved to Scotland, so I, I’ve never really lived in Northern Ireland since ’86, I’ve been gone for all these years, thirty-four years now, so, but, but I, you know, I still cheer for the Northern Irish football team, got my scarf and my shirt, my youngest son is a professional footballer now and plays for Rangers, Glasgow Rangers, and he plays for Northern Ireland Under 21-s, so I, I still, you know, feel Northern Irish, I, I, you know, try to catch, keep up with the news of what’s happening over there, you know. I’m so grateful and I, I say that to my friends when I go back, when, when I hear them becoming a little bit politically irresponsible I say guys, do you really want to go back thirty years, do you really want to go back to what you had, okay, every shop you walk into you’re getting searched, every bus is stopped going into Belfast in case there’s a bomb on it, okay, you can’t go out at the weekends for, for a meal with your friends because there might be a bomb goes off in the hotel or the restaurant, you really want to go back to that, you know, where, where people can’t, their very business could be taken from them just because there’s a, they, they might cut the hair of a guy who’s a soldier, really, of course you don’t, so, it, it’s very different and the whole education system is different, so I think it’s about twenty years ago they, they addressed the whole segregation issue in, in the state schools, and I don’t know what they did in the Catholic schools, but in the state schools, they were Protestant schools, they were just state schools, they, they put a cap on how many Protestant children could be admitted to a school, okay, to encourage more people from nationalist communities to send their children to the state school system, and they wanted to consciously integrate young people together, and so they, they did it with a few pilot schools to start with and it worked really well and, and then that has continued to grow and I, I know people who were headteachers in some of those schools, we’re talking about in the nineties, you know, mid-nineties, **[01:10:00]** and they said it was a very, very positive experience because young people are, are, are studying together, are eating together, are playing on rugby teams and football teams, they’re growing up in, in the classroom, you can express your political views, but you do it with respect, you listen to one another, you’re not just studying out of a textbook, but you’re hearing, you know, someone like me whose cousin was blown up, alright, and you’re, you’re from a, a nationalist community, you hear how awful that was for me, you hear my gut-wrenching stories and you listen to what it felt like to be a Protestant who almost died, you know, at the hands of terrorists, and I listen to you, I listen to your story of what it was like for your father not to be able to get a job just because he was a Roman Catholic, and you, you had poverty, you grew up in poverty because your dad couldn’t get a job, you know, or your dad was treated like an inferior human being just because he was Catholic, okay, what does that feel like for him, what does that feel like for me, and it’s like any situation, Jack, when you get human beings in a room talking and listening to one another’s stories and you hear that, the, the raw emotion of that, that’s when people change, that’s when people change and I, I have a lot of hope for Northern Ireland now, I think there’s a whole generation that’s growing up with very, very, very different views.

JC: Yeah, so, I mean, I was, I was kind of going to ask, like, do you, do you visit Northern Ireland regularly still, then, yeah?

DP: Yeah, my mum and dad are still alive, so my mum and dad are in their early nineties now, so yeah, I go over, you know, four or five times a year. I fly over normally and it’s interesting, my mum’s birthday is on the fifteenth of Jan-, of July, so [laughs], when I go for

her birthday I'm always there in the marching season because, you know, for a couple of days everything shuts down, so, you know, you, it's hard to get flights on, like, the thirteenth and fourteenth of July, so for the last few years I've been over there and I've actually gone and watched the bands and it's been a bit of a surreal experience, you know, because in my head politically, I completely disagree with why these guys are doing it, but there's something of that raw emotion just watching these men walking through the streets beating their drums, playing their flutes, the girls playing their accordion, the streets lined, you know, you're seeing the batons tossed in the air, there's, there's a part of you feels almost, like, a connection with it, but you feel guilty feeling a connection with it, and, and then afterwards you think I, I don't want to be part of all that, you know, because I'm not part of that anymore and I don't live here, but, but do you know what I'm try-, it's a h-, it's a surreal thing to say.

JC: Bit of con-, conflict there.

DP: A conflict, yeah.

JC: Within yourself, yeah.

DP: Uh huh, although people would ask me, and people would say, like, do you believe that marches should be banned, I actually don't, I, I don't, because there, you know, I, but that's me, I can separate the cultural aspect of that from the religious aspect if you want to put it like that, you know, I, it is part of their culture, you know, these people were, their ancestors were given land and they farmed the land and they farmed it well and they became prosperous and they happened to be Presbyterian, they happened to be Protestants from the west of Scotland who were given this land, that is their culture, okay, and so they grew up as Protestants worshipping in a certain way, okay, and, and so part of their heritage is celebrating the fact that that's who they are, so I, I don't think it's wro-, I don't think it's right to fully take that away from people, anymore, now I would say to people, but it's equally legitimate for what are called the Hibernian marches to take place, so people who identify with the Easter uprising in Dublin, okay, and that's their heritage, they felt oppressed by Britain for hundreds of years and they wanted to overthrow the British presence in Ireland, okay, in the Easter uprising, they were given independence, they are Irish, they're not British, okay. They were deprived food in the 1800s, in the nineteenth century when they were dying, over one million of them died and the British government could have fed them and they didn't, okay, that's deep in the Irish psyche and they'll never ever forget that and they emigrated to, to Ireland, okay, they, or sorry they emigrated to America and you read, you know, *Gangs of New York* and you watch movies like, like that and, and you see what happened, and when the Irish moved to Montreal and to New York over there, so I would say it's both, both are legitimate, but can we get to a place where we celebrate our culture, but not in a way that promotes violence and hatred towards the other. Is that possible, I don't know, I don't have answers for that, Jack. I, I hope and I pray that it would be, why can other cultures not do it and celebrate their culture without promoting violence and hatred, so.

JC: It's a difficult one.

DP: It is, it is, maybe we can't, you know, maybe we can't. Now, I, I would also be someone who says that the Northern Irish anthem must change, I would be very strong about that and my son, you know, plays for Northern Ireland as I've said and when he goes to play for Northern Ireland he sings 'God Save the Queen', okay, and he's one of two boys on the Northern Irish Under-21s who will sing that, he does it because he was born in England, okay, he's Eng-, he's English, he was born in Yorkshire, even though his, you know, my side of the family are all from Northern Ireland, so he sings that because he would sing that in a school growing up or that, that's part of who he is, he doesn't sing that because he's a Northern Irish Protestant.

JC: Sure.

DP: But some of the guys standing beside him before that game are standing with their heads down, they're not singing a national anthem because they can't, they don't identify with that, so I would absolutely argue for, there should be an independent anthem for the, the sports teams. Scotland has one, Wales has one, England has, even the English rugby team, they've got their own, so why can't Northern Ireland, why can't they have their own anthem that identifies the best of their culture, that nationalism, nationalists can identify with, and Protestants, sing something about St Patrick, you all love St Patrick, you don't ask was St Patrick a Catholic or was he a Protestant, you all love St Patrick [laughs], Protestants love St Patrick, Catholics love St Patrick, okay, so sing something and celebrate the good things about your culture, for goodness sake, and just do it.

JC: I wanted to ask you a bit about sort of your time in, in Scotland, so you moved to Edinburgh in, in '86, yeah, and you were a youth worker there in, in a church, you said, yeah. How did, I was sort of wondering how people in Edinburgh reacted to you as, like, a Northern Irish person at the time, was there any, any kind of suspicion or hostility or anything?

DP: No, no, not, not, not at all.

JC: Nothing like that, no.

DP: Not at all, Jack. I mean, you've, you've got to understand the difference between the east and west of Scotland, between Edinburgh and Glasgow, okay, Glasgow and the west of Scotland is just as militant as parts of Belfast and Northern Ireland. In fact, if you go over on the Twelfth of July and watch the bands, okay, particularly the bands in Belfast, there would maybe be two hundred bands marching through the streets of Belfast on the Twelfth of July, at least, at least one third of those bands will be from Glasgow or the west of Scotland, and these guys are the real hardliners, they are not the guys who are dressed in, in lovely uniforms playing trombones, okay, gently beating their drums and, and singing, no, no, no, no, no, these are the guys with blood coming out of their hands, okay, with T-shirts on, not, okay, throwing batons up in the air, you know, so the west of Scotland and Glasgow is very different to Edinburgh, **[01:20:00]** now, there are, there are pockets of Edinburgh where they, they still have lodges, Orange lodges, but they would be very, very small, you know, parts of Leith, for example, on the Twelfth of July or, or that week will have one band walking along Leith, okay, that's about it, whereby Glasgow, oh my goodness, very different,

so it's a very different mindset in, in Edinburgh, very different. Edinburgh's much more cosmopolitan, much more inclusive as a city than, than Glasgow.

JC: And what was it that brought you to Edinburgh? I mean, did you get the job before you moved, yeah, and–?

DP: No, no, I, I moved back from Canada and I, as I say I, since my late teens I wanted to move away from Northern Ireland and when I finished my theological studies I could never see myself settling again, so that was '86, things were starting to happen peacewise, they started, we're starting to have some of the, the discussions initially, but it was going to be another ten years, you know, until you got to the Good Friday Agreement, so, no, it was just a job that became available and I came over here, I'm glad I did, you know, settled in Scotland.

JC: You enjoyed living in Edinburgh then, yeah?

DP: Very, very much, yeah, very much so. Edinburgh was a good place to live in, my wife's from Edinburgh, I got married there, then we moved to Yorkshire in 1992, so we spent eight years of our life in Yorkshire [laughs], which was, which was very good, and again, similar to Edinburgh, no sense whatsoever of I'm Northern Irish, any kind of suspicion. I kind of carry, the changes that went on in me, you know, that started before I went to Canada that continued, that were there when I was in Edinburgh, continued in the days in England, no, no sense of, oh I'm a Protestant or anything like that, no.

JC: And no, like, sort of anti-Ir-, cos obviously a lot of English people don't even see a distinction between Northern Irish and, and Irish, they just kind of see everyone with an Irish accent as Irish. There was no sort of anti-Irish discrimination or, or anything like that?

DP: No, none whatsoever, no, none, never have said that whatsoever, no.

JC: Interesting.

DP: But do you know what the other thing, like, about Irish people, both North and South, they have a great sense of humour, despite the extremes on the violence side, Irish people know how to laugh, okay, and we tell as many Irish jokes as anyone else, so when anyone used to tell Irish jokes I knew the punchline, I would finish the joke before they got there [laughs], and defuse the joke, so there's a lot of Irish comedians, you know, Dave Allen, Frank Carson would be two of the classic ones, but there's a lot of others and, and I don't know whether it's a kind of psychological technique or something about growing up, you, you learn humour, and the humour helps to defuse some of the tension, you know, there's probably, that's maybe another research project for another time, yeah, but you find the same in Glasgow, you know, you'll find way more Scottish comedians come from the west coast than the east coast, you know, Billy Connolly would be the classic example, but there's a lot of comedy over here and, and even to the point where now you can tell jokes about, I mean, Billy Connolly has great stories to tell about, you know, Northern Irish Protestants and Catholics, and Billy Connolly's a great example of somebody who grew up Catholic, but, you know, he can, he can joke about both sides and see the hypocrisy in both sides.

JC: And you met your wife in Edinburgh, you said, she's from there, yeah?

DP: Yeah, yeah, she's from, from there, yeah.

JC: And you got married in Edinburgh as well, yeah?

DP: Yeah, we did yeah, in 1991 we got married and then '92 we moved down to Yorkshire and I was a, a minister in a, in a church in York for eight years and that's where all my boys were born, three boys.

JC: And they, they grew up there, yeah?

DP: They, they grew up, my youngest was only a baby, so he was only nine months old when we moved to Canada, we a-, we moved in 2011 to Canada, I moved to Toronto, there's the Canadian connection again, but that, that was more, there was a large church in Toronto that called me to be their minister, and so yeah, the interesting thing though, Jack, when, when we moved over to Toronto I became much more acutely aware of the whole Northern Irish situation because there are whole communities in Toronto. In fact, there's one community called Orangeville and a town, Orangeville was built by Northern Irish Protestants who emigrated, and when Northern Irish Protestants emigrated over there they wanted to preserve their culture. There are still bands, there are still Protestant bands, there are Orange lodges in Toronto, you know, there, there are people who get together on the Twelfth of July in Toronto to, to watch Orange parades on the TV, okay, so there, there's still quite a bit of it over there, now not, not in any intolerant way, you know, I'm not talking about, you know, any kind of violence or anything like that, it'll be more in kind of joking way, but yeah, there's, there's quite a lot of Ulster Protestant influence in, in the Greater Toronto Area.

JC: Was that a bit surreal for you, sort of, yeah, moving–?

DP: Yeah, it was, well, I remember going to Orangeville, Orangeville, this lovely town, I remember going then, and I said to someone one time why is it called Orangeville, he said, they said to me, well, you should know the answer to that, and I said what do you mean, he said it was your ancestors who, who named it, so there, he said there's three Orange lodges in Orangeville and there's, he said if you walk though the streets of Orangeville, he said listen for the Northern Irish accents, and he says don't, don't talk about, don't talk about pol-, Northern Irish politics in Orangeville or you'll, you'll get some strong views, you know, in the pubs and in the bars, so that was a wee bit weird, yeah, and, and, and I remember one time I was, I was in Toronto and I was driving down the street and there were police and you couldn't go up this street and I, I said to the, the cop is it, what's wrong, and he said oh there's a parade and I said a parade, what kind of parade, an Orange parade, so this part of, of Toronto has an Orange parade, now it might just be one or two bands, and most people probably don't, but there's a parade in Toronto, still happening.

JC: You must've thought you'd escaped all that and then [laughs]–

DP: [laughs] Ah, I know, yeah, I didn't get out of the car and join them, but no, no, and even here in Glasgow, I mean, I, I stay away from the centre of Glasgow, it's not on the twelfth, it's, I couldn't even tell you what date it is, it's maybe the fifth or something like that, but the centre of Glasgow is a pretty scary place to be.

JC: Yeah, what, what area of Glasgow do you live in?

DP: I live on the Southside, so, so yeah, and, as I say, but see even that's interesting, the east side of Glasgow is the Catholic community, so Easterhouse, all of that area, Shettlestone, and I've done a wee bit of a, a religious survey of Glasgow, but something like seventy-five per cent of all Catholic churches in Glasgow are in the east, so Glasgow's divded north, south, east and west, you've got the north, the Southside and the north side, you've got the East End and the West End. West End is where all the universities are, student population, north side is where all the newer houses are and, and a lot of the refugees who moved to Glasgow are housed up in the north side, so you've got, you know, Polish communities, eastern European and Chinese and Middle Eastern. Southside of Glasgow is where the shipyards used to be, so Govan, and so we are, we're not in Govan, we're in an area called Pollokshaws, a large Asian community in, in our area, a lot of Pakistani and Indian people in, on this side, and then of course you drive, once you get towards the old shipyards you'll see the Union Jacks, you'll see the bars with the, the, you know, outside, the Rangers flags, and, and all the, yeah, you'll see the bands, so, Govan, that area is, is quite, still quite militant and then there's another area called Bridgeton and Bridgeton is a little community right in the middle of the Catholic part of Glasgow, and, and, and so you're driving through the east of Glasgow and you hit Bridgeton and all of a sudden you'll see Union Jacks everywhere, you know, hanging out of houses and pubs and lampposts and then you, it's very small, then you drive through it and then you're back in, you know, you see the Celtic flags or, or the, the whatnot, so yeah, there's little pockets of Glasgow still, still **[01:30:00]** has it.

JC: And have you, I mean, how, how did people react to you as a Northern Irish person? Do they kind of make assumptions about, has anyone ever kind of made assumptions about what background you're from, or anything like that?

DP: Assumptions, people ask you, so, you know, sometimes people will say what was it like for you, obviously you grew up in the Troubles, you know, you're late fifties, so, what was it like for you, yeah, I mean, I don't really get asked my political views very much and, and, as I say, Jack, I mean, I'm very different kind of person now, so, now one of the other things that I should've said to you was, when I moved back to UK, so when I went to Edinburgh for those six years I was a youth worker, and when I, I started doing a lot of schools work, so I would go into take school assemblies or religious education classes or social education classes, and when young people heard my accent I always got asked about Northern Ireland, always, and so I told them some of the stories that I told you about being held up at gunpoint and my cousin dying and how I changed, about the bubble, you know, or the, or the goldfish bowl, and I told them about that. Similarly when I went down to York, to Yorkshire, I did a lot of schools work as well. Again the question came up, you know, what was it like for you growing up, you know, questions about forgiveness, you know, do you know anybody who died during that time, what was it like for them, could they forgive people, to, have you ever had to do that, so those questions came up in my Edinburgh time

and in my time in Yorkshire, not so much in Canada cos I didn't do schools work anymore and I don't do that now, maybe very occasionally if I'm in a primary school, you know, it, it might come up, but no, not really.

JC: I'm interested to get your opinion on a question that I've asked a few people and that's, obviously Glasgow has a lot of the sort of shared traditions and culture that people in Northern Ireland have, but they, they didn't experience the, the Troubles in the same way that Northern Ireland did, there wasn't, you know, the Troubles didn't really spread to Scotland at all. I'm wondering how well informed you think people in Glasgow are about the actual issues that underpin the Northern Ireland conflict, like, or is it more of just sort of a tribal thing, do you think?

DP: No, I, this, this is hard, so take this with a huge grain of salt, I don't have any solid empirical evidence to prove this.

JC: Sure, yeah, I'm just kind of looking for your perspective.

DP: Okay, my perspective is that people are more politically aware now, okay, I, I, now I don't know why that is, is it that they've become more educated, is it because of the internet, people can research more easily, I, I don't know, but I, I find people are a lot more aware of, and here in Glasgow, of the political history of Northern Ireland, and Pro-, and Catholic people too, so yes, there are Protestant marches in Glasgow and there's some small Hibernian marches in parts of Glasgow, but they're, there, there, just quite a few, it's kind of become more acute to me because my youngest son Cameron who is, he's almost twen-, he's just turned, sorry, just turned twenty, he, when we moved back from Canada in 2011 he was signed by Glasgow Rangers, so he's always been a very, very capable footballer, and having a son now who plays for Rangers who, growing up, watching him, you hear a lot of po-, lot of political statements from parents on the sidelines, okay, you hear a lot of intolerance as well, you hear a lot of words used on the sidelines that I haven't heard since I left Northern Ireland when I was twenty-one, twenty-two, okay, and, and, and the, and, and some parts of that, I just asked someone this question last week, some of it I don't understand, there's a, there's an, there, and, and there is empirical evidence for this, but I think it's quite recent and I'm curious where this is all coming from and more importantly where it's going to lead to, there's a greater intolerance that's growing up in the last few years, and new words are starting to appear, so I could take you, if you were here, I'll take you to parts of Glasgow and you will see, I'm not going to use the f-word, but obviously eff the huns, I went, what's a hun, I've never seen that, you know, never heard that in Northern Ireland growing up and you drive through the centre of Glasgow as you're going through these overpasses and it's, and so on, I live in a, a quite a, a peaceful part of the Southside, just the two weeks ago I was walking down the road, or, the shops, on the, on one of the green electric things it's, like, eff the huns, and, and where is this coming from, okay, so I, I said to someone, I said to a friend of mine a couple of weeks ago, I was round at his house for a barbecue, he's a Rangers fan, I said John, what's a hun, why, why are people, I assume they're talking about Protestants, or, or is this just a Rangers thing, he said I don't know, he said let's try and find out, if you research that, Jack, it's fascinating, so that to me is saying people are becoming more politically conscious, they're choosing words like hun and they're finding evidence in history of why a hun is a word that could be used to describe a, a

Protestant or a loyalist or a Rangers fan, in Glasgow, and then there's other words too, okay, that the Protestants are using to describe Catholics, and these aren't words, like, and I'm, I know this is an interview, so I'm allowed to use these kinds of words, it isn't words like Fenian and Taig anymore, those were slang words that I grew up with, a Catholic was a Fenian or a Taig, very different words that are, are being used now, and you're going, wow, this has got to be through these guys researching something. Now, I don't think they're reading peer-reviewed journals, okay, or, or academic books from some of your colleagues, it's probably because of the internet and YouTube, they're accessing this information more and they're putting it out there, so, and I've, and I've just seen this in the last maybe three or four years. Here's another interesting one. When my son, who plays for Rangers, when we went to watch Rangers, the first team, play Celtic two years ago, it was a Scottish cup semi-final I think it was, we were in the Rangers end obviously because my son plays for them, I looked in the Celtic end and I saw a massive Palestinian flags, where's that coming from, why are Celtic fans now carrying Palestinian flags to, to games, in the Rangers end what do you find, star of David, so Rangers fans are carrying Jewish, or well, Israeli flags, you go, where is that coming from, that is certainly not something that historically happened, so the Celtic fans are identifying with the Palestinian cause and the Rangers fans are identifying with the Jewish cause, there's, there's, that, so that, something is fuelling all of that, and words like hun and other words, so that, there's a research project in there for someone, where is all that coming from, what's fuelling it, and as I said to you, Jack, what is that going to lead to in the future, is that a new nationalism, a new loyalism, a new intolerance, just last year there was a Hibernian march in a, a, in a part of Glasgow, there were huge, huge riots took place, the police had to come in, there were bottles, and not so much tear gas or anything like that, but there was a huge loyalist demonstration against this march, so I'm starting to see that again in Glasgow, and, and of course then there was the murder of the, the young, girl, the young reporter in Londonderry, in Derry, a couple of years ago, she was murdered, she was a nationalist, **[01:40:00]** she was Catholic girl, she was gay, and she was murdered, for, by who, by the nationalist community, because what, because of her sexuality, because she was a journalist, because she was reporting on something, why, I know there's, we still haven't got to the bottom of that, but, so it shows it's, there's still that undercurrent, isn't there, that seems to be taking on new, another example of it is the, the, the footballer, James [pauses]–

JC: James McClean?

DP: McClean, okay, who refused to wear a poppy, Rangers fans, oh you, my goodness, you, you ask a Rangers fan about that, oh gosh, they hate that young man, abs-, and I mean, I mean hate with a passion, they have no toleration for, for, for that at, at all, and what's interesting to me and I'd not seen this before, during the time of remembrance, so the beginning of November, Rangers will always have a remembrance ceremony, okay, the army and the police will come out carrying wreaths of poppies before the, the Rangers game that's the closest to Remembrance Sunday, you will have a, a minute's silence and they will have poppies and they will stand, all the fans will stand and recognise the, the security forces. That will never happen, never happen in Celtic Park, you will never see a poppy in Celtic Park, never have a wreath. Celtic, I, I guess the Football Association arrange it in such a way that Celtic don't need to have a home game during the time of remembrance, so they won't do that, so again, I hadn't seen that before, you know, I'm not saying it wasn't, it

probably did exist before that, but it's, there's a, there's, as I'm saying, there's a new political consciousness that young Catholic footballers are, are discovering and they're refusing to wear a poppy because James McClean would say that, that reminds him of how his family were treated on Bloody Sunday by the army.

JC: So do you think, I'm thinking in Glasgow in particular, do you think there is still a lot of sectarianism in the city, like–?

DP: Oh there is, I don't think, I know, and trust me, James, there's empirical evidence. There definitely is, you know, whether that's watching a Rangers football match against, not just against Celtic, but against Hibs, when Hibs come through it's just as intense, or not even Rangers, but Hearts, there's a really strong sectarian element in Hearts, you know, where there's been real violence, you know, against, you know, Hearts, what-do-you-call-him, Lennon, Neil Lennon, Neil Lennon was attacked on two occasions by Hearts fans, just, you know, big, big, you know, and so yes, there's very clear sectarianism, very, very tangible, you'll see it in the, in the flags, both sides, you know, you'll go to parts of the east of Glasgow and you will see a lot of Irish flags, you know, you'll, you'll find it in, in sports, you'll find, you know, young Scottish Catholics who would refuse to play for Scotland, they will play for the Republic of Ireland and there's several, several of them, so yeah, and on the other side as, as well you'll find it, so yeah, it's, it's still here and, and again, you used, you asked the question, even though Glasgow didn't have the bombings and, and the violence, there were riots in those days, but it's, it's part of their heritage, it's, it's deeper than just what happened during the seventies and eighties, you know, that, that was much deeper, you know, you'll, you'll read about when Irish, when the Irish came to Glasgow, okay, so even the creation of the two football teams, you know, the two football teams were created because when the Irishmen came over, Irish Catholics came to Glasgow to work in the shipyards, okay, they were not allowed to play football for the Protestant football clubs, they formed their own football clubs, you know, and one of those clubs was Celtic, so Celtic was formed by priests to let young Irish Catholics be able to play football and Rangers at the same time, 1888, 1889, within a year of each other those two clubs were formed, so that they could, they could play football, so that's deep, deep in their psyche, and, and so yeah, it, it very much, very much alive here in the west of Scotland.

JC: And have you ever encountered anything, like, through your profession? I mean, obviously you work in a, in a Protestant church, you've not–

DP: Yeah, I, I do, I'll give you a couple of examples, so there is an Orange lodge near our church and it wasn't my church, so one of my colleagues is a Church of Scotland minister in Pollokshaws. Two years ago the Orange lodge came to him and asked if he would conduct a service for them, they were going to march and then they wanted to meet in a church and have a Christian service, and so he came to me and he said Don, what would you do if they came to you, would you conduct the service, and I said Roy woah, I, I don't know, I said I'd need to think about that because I don't want to identify anymore with what's behind that, but then on the other hand we're a church, if a group wanted to come and it was, I think I said to him, I think I would ask them what, what do they want me to do, and what would they do in the building, would they come into the building with all of their regalia on, would they want to hear a message condoning or supporting their views, would they want, you

know, to do some sort of ceremony in the building. If they wanted to do any of those things I would say no, but if they simply wanted me to come and lead in some worship, read the Bible, share a message with them, do prayers, I would do it because, you know, we're, we're a church and you can't say no we wouldn't do that for that person, so in the end up he agreed and last summer he conducted a service for people and it was a very positive experience, and from that experience several people have started attending his church who didn't attend before, nothing to do with, you know, because he's become political in his views, simply because he showed hospitality, he was gracious enough to host them, so that was one example, you know, a couple of members of my church. There's a young girl in my church in her late twenties and during the, the marching season last year, not this year because of Covid, but last year she was in her car, she has a mini, and it just so happens her mini is green [laughs], and she was driving and she got a wee bit lost and she was driving and it was in, in the marching season and all of a sudden these bands started coming down the street and she was in her little green mini and she froze, and she went oh my goodness, what are they going to do to me. She says Don, for that fifteen minutes, she said, I was terrified, were they going to damage my car, were they going to think I was Catholic, you know, she said it was really, really terrifying. They didn't touch her car thankfully, or her, but she says I, I locked the doors, I wouldn't get out of my car, you know, I wouldn't even look at them in case, you know, looking at them, they, they thought something about me, so there's, there's ways like that it's very tangible, it really is and, you know, you see a heavy police presence even if it's one band, you know there's one band near us in this lodge, just one, and they, they march, you know, maybe you'll see them two or three days in the year, with this one band you'll see at least six police officers marching beside them, you know, to, to, to guard them, so there's all kinds of reports of, you know, I mean, last year, oh just crazy things, like, they would, somebody, they would spit at Catholic churches, or if a priest was there, you know, this priest, they spat on him, just disgusting things, so it's still very much there **[01:50:00]** in, in, in the hearts of these people and it's quite concerning, but it's, but it's that other side, Jack, that I'm curious about, these new words that are appearing, these political allegiances to other parts of the world that have got nothing to do with the conflict of Northern Ireland, you know, where, where's all that coming from, I don't know.

JC: Yeah, it's an interesting question. I just have a, like, a few more sort of questions I wanted to ask, if that's, that's alright, yeah, yeah, so obviously you, since your kids were born you've moved around quite a bit, but I'm wondering how often you, you took them to Northern Ireland and your wife, have they visited Northern Ireland often?

DP: Only one of my sons, I took my middle son who's now twenty-five, so one of the times when, not since we've moved back, but one of the times when we lived in, in Toronto we came back that summer and I, my middle son Phil was about sixteen, so about the same age actually I was when I, and he was curious, he said dad, what's this like, I said do you want to go and see it, he said sure, so I took Phil up to Belfast with me to watch it. He, he was, found it really weird, really, really weird, you know, to, to watch all of that and he had a million questions, so, no, my wife's just not interested, she, she wouldn't be remotely interested in going, that, my other sons, my youngest son is probably more aware. He, the one who plays for Rangers, he's doing an Open University course at the moment in social psychology and one the units he's doing talked about the Troubles in Northern Ireland, so he had to do an essay on civil rights, civil rights movement and, so that's been interesting for him, but not, I

mean, never in a sense where he's interested in the Orangemen or the marches or going to see all of that, no, not at all.

JC: Do they ever ask, do they ever ask you about, like, the Troubles and things like that? Is it something that's–?

DP: Yeah, yeah, they all know those stories that I've told you, but, but I want them to grow up with a healthy understanding of that, you know, even to the point where, you know, I, I would say, I would call myself a Protestant, okay, now I'd be very careful in what circles I would use that word, okay, but I, but I am, because now I've studied all of that and I understand what the Protestant Reformation was all about, you know, I understand that, you know, Martin Luther, what he was protesting, but the interesting thing most Protestants don't realise is, Martin Luther died a Catholic priest. Martin Luther did not start a new denomination, Martin Luther protested against those Lutherans who wanted to form a separate denomination, he did not want to form a new denomination, he wanted to reform the, what he saw to be the corruption in the Catholic church, but he didn't want to start a new church and he died as a Catholic priest, okay, he was a reformer, one of the reformers, and he spoke out very very strongly against the Pope and against indulgences and against all of that. I've studied all of that and when I studied the life of Luther, I th-, it made me a, gave me a much bigger, much greater appreciation for, for that period, so yeah, I, I would encourage my boys to understand what does it mean to be a Protestant, what are, what are you protesting against, and, and is that legitimate, I think it was, you know, and then interestingly the Council of Trent, so after, after you had the Reformation from Luther, then, you know, the, the Catholic church thought we'd better look into reforming ourselves here, so they had their own kind of reformation then, through the Jesuit movement that all came out of that, trying to rediscover an, an authentic form of Catholicism, so there's nothing wrong with saying that you're, you're part of that movement, as long as you understand what that means, and I did teach my boys that, I want, don't want them to be ignorant of it, so, I want them to, and two of my boys have a very strong Christian faith, my youngest and my middle son, my oldest son, he's more agnostic when it comes to these things, he has political views, but he'd be more agnostic when it comes to this, but, so my boys would say so dad, if someone asks us are we Protestants what should we say, I said, well, what do you think you should say, I said are you Catholic, do you attend a Catholic church, no, I said, well, why do you not attend a Catholic church, well, because we worship in this way, I said okay, so that's fine, that doesn't mean you have any hatred or malice or disrespect for Catholics. I said they would worship in a certain way, they'll have an understanding of their faith and why they call it the mass as opposed to communion, why they would, would, would take a wafer and the priesthood and all that, understand those things, but understand those things so you can respect Catholics and respect that you're cut of the same cloth. I, I teach them about St Patrick, you know, and I, and I say, you know, the Celtic church didn't ask, obviously, of course it didn't ask if you were a Protestant, okay, because there wasn't anything like that, but there was a much more healthy understanding of the differences of Christians in the Celtic movement and I would want people to get back to that if anything, because the Celtic church taught us, I think, a true understanding of what it means to be a Christian and a, and a Catholic Christian before all of the other stuff came about, so, no, I, I want my kids to understand that, and I encourage them to read on it. Cameron, you know, who plays for Rangers, when he played for Rangers, half of the boys

who played for his team growing up were Catholics, okay, they put on the Rangers shirt because they played for Rangers, but when they got home all their friends were Catholics, and so they said to Cameron and, and Cameron would ask me these questions since he was, he, he joined Rangers when he was eleven, okay, so between eleven and he's now nineteen, the last eight years, regularly, regularly he would ask me questions in the car, he says dad, you know, so-and-so would say to me, Cammy, what's a Protestant, okay, or what do they do in your church, and, and he said so what is a Protestant, dad, why do we do things differently than they would, what is the difference, so that, that was really interesting for him, so I guess, I know I'm taking a long time to answer, I'm simply, I'm simply saying, Jack, I encourage my boys to understand their roots, you know, and, and to appreciate their roots, but also to, to be, to be understanding, to be respectful, to be, to understand the other, and, and where they're coming from, very, very important.

JC: And do you think any of them, I mean, obviously one of your sons plays for Northern Ireland, do you think they identify as, as Northern Irish at all, or would they be more, you know, see themselves as English or Canadian or Scottish or something?

DP: No, Cameron, Cameron probably wouldn't identify as Northern Irish, no, it, it's more a, a, he had a, he could play for four countries, he could play for Northern Ireland, he could play for Scotland cos his mother's Scottish and he lives here, he could play for England cos he was born in Yorkshire, he could play for Canada. No, it's more a practical, pragmatic thing. He, he had a bad experience, he did, he was chosen to play for Scotland when he was about fifteen and he had a bad experience playing for Scotland, didn't really respect the coaches, so he's chosen Northern Ireland over that, but not because he identifies as a Northern Irish Protestant or, or something like that, no, no, no, not at all, no interesting you ask that, because since playing for Northern Ireland Under-19s and now Under-21s, there's a lot more conversations come up among the players, you know, because you've got now Protestant and Catholic young boys playing, so there's much more a conversation goes on, but again, very, very respectful, you know, nothing at all, no segregation or, or nothing at all, they really respect one another.

JC: Just a couple more things, then. I mean, we've kind of, we've talked a bit about the peace process already and stuff, and I'm just wondering the extent to which you, you, you visit Belfast quite regularly, in what ways do you think, especially your area of Belfast where you grew up, in what ways do you think it's changed since you were growing up?

DP: Oh radically, radically, yeah, yeah, the, you know, you, you, the riots, you, you know, now there might be occasional outbreaks of riots, but they're very, **[02:00:00]** very rare and very localised, so you don't have that, the, socially the, you know, you wouldn't think twice about going out for dinner, or [indecipherable] or a drink, you know, there, there may, there probably will be Catholic bars and Protestant bars, but again, they'll be in certain parts of the city, you know, Catholics and Protestants will be drinking together, eating together, socialising together, working together, you know, you, the, the, you don't have any sense of, is somebody going to plant a bomb in my hotel or my office or under my car, you know, the, the army barracks are all gone, so the army have left now, you know, the police have been renamed, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, so you'll get Catholics and Protestants both serving in the police force, education, it's very, very different now, and with that the

population has started to grow and, you know, North-, Belfast is beautiful. I mean, there's more construction work, I mean, like, every time I would go back to Belfast, like, oh my goodness, look at this, you know, the Titanic centre, the, the Odyssey centre, you know, there's so much developing, and the other thing I'd say, and again this is a, a research paper for someone, Northern Irish people are good at business. There's a, there's a very different economic attitude in Northern Ireland than I've found over here, very different, they know how to do a deal [laughs], you know, right down to, like, a basic level of between two people or between businesses, you know, and, and so the, the, yeah, the, the, they know how to attract business into the community, they know how to encourage and build up the economy. There's a lot of wealth, a lot of wealth in Northern Ireland and you can see evidence of that, you know, all around you, you know, with building projects and housing and, and all of that, so it's very, very, very different, but you, you do see, you know, the footpaths painted red, white and blue, or green and white, you'll see the murals on the wall, and those have all grown since the peace process, okay, so since that time you'll get way, way more of the murals being painted and again. I don't fully understand that, it's almost, like, okay, we have peace, but we don't want to forget our heritage, okay, we don't want to forget those young men who died in the hunger strike, we don't want to forget, you know, that bomb which took all those people's lives, we don't, so the murals remind people of their heritage and of their past, the flags, you know, that are, that are, are flown, you know, you'll see more Union Jacks in Northern Ireland than any other part of the United Kingdom, you'll see more Union Jacks in Belfast than you'll see in London, so, but very, but as far as the, the attitudes, the freedom, you know, the conversations that you'll have when you go out, very, very, very different now.

JC: Do you think you'd ever consider moving back?

DP: No.

JC: No, so Scot-, is, is Glasgow home for you now, then?

DP: No, I couldn't, Jack, the [pauses], well, I guess, we, I suppose we should all say, we should never say no in life, because who knows what, I mean, there's me saying that, maybe the Almighty will test me on the statement one day, who, who knows.

JC: But it, it's not on the cards at the minute, no.

DP: No, it's not in the, I don't have a desire, I mean, I, we love living in Glasgow, we've a different, we love life over here, my boys enjoy life here, yeah, so no, I don't, I don't think so, you know, I think, as I said to you earlier, being able to get away from the province has changed me, and I guess I would be afraid, I would be afraid of some of those attitudes creeping back in and, and I wouldn't want that, I wouldn't want that.

JC: That's interesting, so how, so how do you think you have changed as a person as a result of moving, then?

DP: Hopefully I've become a more tolerant person, it's given me a greater appreciation for, how can I say, my Catholic brothers and sisters, my friends. It's helped me to hear their

story and learn their story. I wasn't taught their story, I mean, you're taught some of the historical, you're taught about the Easter uprising and you're taught, taught about some of these people and, and characters, you're taught about the potato famine, but, and you'll appreciate this as an academic, Jack, you can be taught academically about something, but there's an emotional, there's, there's a social understanding that you're not really taught, you know, I wasn't taught in the sense of, okay, today we're going to go to a community in west Belfast and we're going to sit down with a group of students from the nationalist community and we're going to hear their stories, that never happened to me, you don't hear the emotion, you don't hear the stories, you get the facts, and it's impersonal education, so I, I feel I've changed that way, yeah, and, and I suppose my faith as well, my, you know, I wanted to say, okay, I've told you my story of how I, I almost lost my faith completely and then I rediscovered it, and when I rediscovered it, I, I love reading, I love history, I loved history at school, but I love it even more now and I love reading about history, I love watching programmes about the Troubles, and I've watched several programmes. I love watching movies like *'71* or, or what's the other one about, *Dead Men Walking*, *Forty Dead Men Walking*, about this guy who was the, an informer for the British Army, he was an IRA informer and it's about forty men who, who survived the Troubles, who would've died if he hadn't informed the British Army about the fact that the IRA were going to kill these men and he informed and he did it consistently and these men survived and, and lived because of, he was an informer, and then how they came after him. I love watching stories about that cos it reminds me of, of what it was like growing up, so yeah, I think it's given me a better awareness and hopefully it's changed me as a person, you know, I, you know, when I hear some of these parents and some of these guys at Rangers games coming off with it, I look at them and I go, really, do you really believe that, okay, do you really believe that, do you know what you're talking about, and most of the times, Jack, they don't, they don't, so I feel it has changed me quite significantly as a person and, don't get me wrong, I still appreciate the roots that I come from, the background that I grew up in, it, it's shaped me, and, and even the Troubles shaped me, you know, and I, and I use that in my ministry now, you know, when I talk to people about suffering, you know, we're in the middle of this Covid, you know, this horrible, dreadful time that we're living, you know, I, I said okay, let's not whitewash it out, don't whitewash out your suffering and your pain, you know. C. S. Lewis talks about how, how God shouts at us, screams to us through our pain, you know, pain is, is a terrible thing to go through, but it can shape you and it can change you positively, it can make you into a better person, if you will allow it to. Now that's a process, that's a process, okay, but it can and I would say the Troubles have shaped me in ways that I've embraced.

JC: Yeah, that's, that's a really interesting kind of note to, to wrap up on. Is there anything else that we haven't covered that you'd, you'd like to talk about, or want to add, I think I've, I've covered, like, most of the things I wanted to.

DP: Yeah, I don't think so, Jack. I mean, I just welcome the opportunity to do this and hopefully it's been helpful for you and, I, I love, **[02:10:00]** I love telling my story, I, I can't, even the painful parts of it, I can tell those now, there's times that it touches me, you know, in a deep part, and I, there's times I can feel myself getting quite emotional, even today there was one moment there where I feel, I felt that raw emotion inside me, but I feel it's important, it's vitally important to tell these stories and because those stories shaped us,

but, but now we're at the stage where we can shape our culture, you know, that's the thing that I'm worried about, is this new vocabulary and this new intolerance that's spreading up, I want to challenge that, I, I want to do that. The only thing I'd say is there, there are still, I don't know if you're able to do this with somebody who is probably, can I use this word, is maybe a bit more militant than I am, you know, who's moved over here, but, but wouldn't share the same way, still carries a lot of bitterness, you know, it's, it's important to hear that side of it too, it really, really is, somebody who lost someone in the Troubles, you know, particularly someone close to them, how do, how have they dealt with it, you know, how have they dealt with that, are they willing to forgive, how can they identify with it, that's a whole other side that I, I can only help with indirectly, so I'll give you, I mean, my, my uncle has died, my uncle in Canada, even though my uncle moved to Canada and changed to a degree, once you got him talking about this topic he would be very militant, he would have no respect for the nationalist community whatsoever, no excuse for what the IRA did, there is nothing could ever legitimise what they did, he'll give you all kinds of stories of, of stuff. Now, he's not going out and demonstrating, but once you talked to him personally about, so that, that might be worth exploring if you could find that kind of person, you know, but it, yeah, I really appreciate you, you asking me to tell the story and, as I say, I hope this really helps in your research, and–

JC: It has, yeah, and I, I really appreciate you, you telling it. I will, I will stop the recording there.

INTERVIEW ENDS