INTERVIEW M03: ROSE MORRIS

Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interviewee: Rose Morris
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Textual Note: Annotations and observations appear in square brackets (e.g. [pauses], [laughs]). Partial, interrupted or unfinished utterances are denoted by a dash. Time codes appear at ten-minute intervals in square brackets in bold type.

BH: Okay, I think that's the thing going. Okay, so I'm here in the Irish World Heritage Centre in Manchester and I'm here with Rose Morris. Rose, could you say hello for the tape please?

RM: Hello, hello Barry. Nice to see you.

BH: Nice to see you as well. Before I begin can I just say thanks very much for agreeing to do this today, and also thanks very much for booking the room, which helped us out an awful lot. So as I said there, this is going to be, like, a life history type of thing. So I'll just start at the beginning with a question, when and where were you born?

RM: I was born on the eighth of June 1947 in the townland of Altaglushan near Dungannon in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

BH: Okay, County Tyrone, okay. And what did your parents do?

RM: My parents were farmers. My mother did as much as my father cos there was no difference between men and women on the farm [laughs]. But can I say, 1947 was the year of the big snow and there was snow and hailstorms on the eighth of June, the day I was born, you know, so it's a memorable year for some people [laughs].

BH: [laughs] For some people.

RM: And I was born into it.

BH: So what kind of farming, then, did your parents do?

RM: It was a hill farm up on, I suppose you'd call them the slopes of the Sperrin Mountains, I suppose. Cappagh Mountains, Altmore Mountains. So it would've been probably a lot of heather and gorse before that and my father would've probably brought some fields into use, you know, by using lime and different things like that, and adding on an acre here and there.

BH: And was this cattle farming or sheep or–

RM: There was cattle and sheep mostly. Might've had a goat and we didn't do so many pigs. We did later on but not in the early days.

BH: And what did your mum do, then? Did she work on the farm as well?

RM: She worked on the farm. It was her farm. My father was brought in there because my grandmother had three girls and my grandfather died in 1919 with the Asian flu, the year my mother was born, and so my grandmother with three girls had to keep the farm going themselves by bartering their time with local farmers. And the men would come and do jobs that the women couldn't do and they would go to these farmers and tie corn and fork hay and do things that women could do in exchange. They wouldn't have the money to pay them to do it, but that's how they did it, so she was well experienced in farming by the time she got married in 1945.

BH: And what about your father, then? Did he come from a farming background?

RM: He came from a farming background about three miles away. He had, he still lived on the home farm, but he had bought two little farms nearby so he farmed those and we then acquired those, that was our outlying farms. So between the home farm and those two that my father had farmed before he married my mother we had a bit of travelling between them, which was a bit of excitement for us as well, and horse and cart [laughs].

BH: And were the farms prosperous?

RM: They weren't prosperous. They were just enough I suppose to, we'd have maybe six cows and they would have calves and then the milk they would produce during the year would provide us with butter and milk for ourselves and for making puddings and different things like that. We wouldn't have sold any milk. My mother kept hens and she would've sold eggs and we would've provided our own potatoes, carrots, turnips, lettuce, onion, beetroot, different things like that so that we very rarely had to shop for anything. We could've existed on our own, but we couldn't have made any profit, and then eventually there were eight of us so it just kept us in existence, you know, and as, that was the way it was. We might've, my mother might've got turkeys and reared them for Christmas and that would've been a bit extra then to put Christmas over and usually to pay off the bill that she might've run up with the grocery man in the meantime.

BH: So this was largely subsistence farming?

RM: It was subsistence, yeah.

BH: Okay. And there was no alternative source of income? Like, there was no working as a builder or anything like that?

RM: No, there was none of that, no.

BH: So you had seven brothers or sisters then, yeah?

RM: I had three sisters and four brothers.

BH: Four brothers, right. And where were you within that?

RM: I was the second.

BH: You were the second.

RM: Yeah.

BH: Right, okay. And what was that like?

RM: It was alright, you know. It was, I mean, the eight of us were born between, within ten years, you know, so they came pretty quickly one after the other kind of thing. And that, that was, you know, I suppose we, we would've looked after little ones, but as soon as you were able to go out you were out on the farm doing something, you know.

BH: Sure. So was that a big part of your childhood then, working, actually working on the farm?

RM: Yeah, absolutely. You know, good weather you would be called in the morning to get up, there was good weather going to loss and you had, there was hay to be done, there was turf to be seen to, there was cattle to be put out or took in or something had to be done. And it was, we enjoyed it okay cos we got a bit of play in between or, especially if you were travelling to the other farm it meant a ride on the horse and cart and a picnic on the other farm, you know, stuff like that. So it was, we enjoyed it anyway, we didn't know any better [laughs].

BH: And what about school, then? Where did it fit into the picture?

RM: School, I went to school in 1952 and, so I was [pauses] five at that stage. My sister was six. The both of us went together because there was three miles of a walk and they didn't want to start us off too early because of the journey, and it wasn't a dangerous journey but in bad weather it could be dangerous, like, cos there was streams and rivers and things like that. It might've been four miles if we went by the main road and two miles if we ran across the fields, but going across the fields you had barbed wire, you had ponds and sheughs and things like that, and you had bulls and different animals that might've followed you around.

BH: [laughs] Right.

RM: So they didn't want us to go to school too early, until we were able to do that journey on our own.

BH: Right, okay. And did you like going to school? Did you want to go?

RM: I wasn't too keen at the beginning. I cried and wanted to come back home, but I was whipped off by the headmistress into the room and that was it [laughs].

BH: You had to stay, then?

RM: I had to stay [laughs]. And, no we got used to it and we were in a school with, like, a headmaster and a mistress and it was a two-room school and you would've had the infants, high infants and then primary one, primary two and primary three all in the one room. And then the master would have the higher groups, and you learnt everything they were learning because the teacher was teaching them while you were getting on with some work. It was a system that worked because by the time I got to that class I knew some of that already because I'd been taking it in from when she was teaching it to, say, primary three. You'd learned some of it, you know. It might be a system that needs researching [laughs], instead of keeping them separate because if you were very young and you were able to take it in at five, you know, it might be that you, you're capable of getting something.

BH: You learn faster, yeah.

RM: Yeah.

BH: So how many people would've been in your school, then?

RM: There was probably about fifty in that room and fifty in the other, about probably a hundred all together, you know.

BH: Yeah, and what about, that was primary school then, was it?

RM: It was.

BH: Yeah, so what happened then when you got–

RM: It was called national school then, I suppose. What happened, sorry?

BH: What happened then when you got to high school age, then?

RM: There was two systems. There was a system whereby if you did the eleven-plus and you were successful in getting the eleven-plus you could've moved to a grammar school at eleven. If you didn't, you stayed on until you were fourteen, which was the school leaving age at that time, and it so happened that the headmaster that was teaching us at the time was off ill so we didn't get put in for the eleven-plus and therefore we were going to miss out on that. And it so happened that I had a niece who was a sister of the Daughters of the Cross in Donaghmore Grammar School, convent grammar school, the local grammar school, and she came home. They were only allowed home every eight years, they didn't get home, they didn't get home, they got driving past their home and staying in the local convent. And my father took us in a taxi to see her and she said would you like to come here? And we said we would and it turned out there was a fee for that which was a big decision-making process because it meant selling cattle and things like that for the first, I think it was three

years, and my mother said she wouldn't split the two of us who'd gone to school together, myself and my older sister, and so the two of us started in 1959 **[00:10:00]** when I was twelve, at that, at Donaghmore Convent Grammar School. And so, like, I always worked hard because I knew they had paid for the first, the fees for the first three years, and the bus fare from Cappagh down to Donaghmore, back and forth, which at the time was a half crown a day, so it built up like, you know. So it took the turkeys and extra cattle and [laughs] a lot of hard work on our behalf to make sure we weren't wasting it, you know.

BH: Is that right? So did you board at the convent?

RM: No, I didn't. There were boarders in there, but I didn't board, yeah.

BH: Yeah, so you went home, backwards and forwards, every day, then, aye?

RM: We did, yeah.

BH: And what was that like, then, cos that would've been a fairly big change I'm sure?

RM: It was a big change and it was a two mile, I remember getting a bicycle at the time and we would have to travel for two miles to Cappagh to the village to catch the bus, and then the five miles down to Donaghmore on the bus. And then we had to go on a Saturday morning and the buses didn't go on Saturday morning, so we cycled the whole way to Donaghmore, the whole five miles there and back on a Saturday for half, for half a day.

BH: Pffff. That's tough going. So was it important, then, for your parents that you did that, then? Was that something that was important to them?

RM: It was. Well, my mother said there was so many of us and, you know, the lads could, I suppose, one of the lads was going to have the home farm, the second lad was going to have the outlying farm and then she said the others, the rest of us, needed some education or something to get on and, you know, to get out of, to get ourselves prepared for the future in some way for some kind of livelihood. And so they decided to go down that route because the sister, my cousin, the, the sister of the Daughters of the Cross had eight sisters and they had all gone through Donaghmore and had become teachers and nurses and different, different professions, and my mother and father recognised that Donaghmore probably helped them achieve that, and so they thought that was a good investment.

BH: So that, was that the thinking, then, that teaching or nursing, was that the plan?

RM: Yeah, that was about it at the time [laughs]. You know, yeah, it was limited.

BH: And would that have been the same for your brothers and sisters too?

RM: The brothers would've probably, in fact one of the brothers went on to do engineering and the other brother did, he did an agricultural course, but he didn't have any land or farm or anything when he'd finished that, so he started his own business in haulage of caravans, and he has that to this day, P. Duggan Caravans. He delivers them all over Ireland, so he

made, he made out well in that. He was clever and he had just, he was a borderline eleven-plus failure, so he knew that he had the ability to do something that would help him in the future, you know.

BH: Right, okay. So you mentioned going to the convent there. More generally, how important was the church when you were growing up?

RM: The church was a big part of our life because it was like the timetable for the week. You knew that you were going to go to mass on a Sunday, there was no, there was nothing else that you were going to do as much as that [laughs]. In fact, you didn't work unless it was a wet, a very wet summer and you had hay to save and it had been lying wet for three or four weeks, you might save it on a Sunday if it was a good day, but it would've lain there until Monday. They would not work on a Sunday. So we would've gone to mass on a Sunday morning. There was an early mass and a second, a second mass as they called it, and that would mean, like, say my father could go to one and my mother would stay at home and then she would go to the second mass, so we didn't need a housekeeper, but that was the way we looked after it. And those of us who went to school then would go to mass then because as soon as we'd made first communion, first confession and first communion round about seven or eight, we would then be obliged to go to mass as well. So it was a big part of it and we had confession once a month on a Saturday night and then we had the holy days. Like, we have a holy day today, which is the first of November, the Feast of All Saints. We used to have, probably, about eight holy days, but they got rid of a lot of them. I think we're down to three now [laughs].

BH: [laughs] Is that right? What about through the week, then? Was the church important through the week or was it mainly on Sundays?

RM: It was mainly on Sunday. There might've been, in October we'd have gone to devotions which were a rosary every evening. They would sometimes have a mission which was about a fortnight of a monk or a priest or a professor of some kind coming to speak to the people every evening. They called it a mission and they were really telling them off and telling them how to be better, practise it and, you know, to practise better their faith or whatever. So there was some of them they used to think of it as fire and brimstone, like, and never came [laugh]. But you would have that and that was exciting too because we got out every evening to that and they used to have stalls outside the church with little medals, rosary beads, little pictures and books and things like that, so we used to like to get browsing through that.

BH: But that would only be something, maybe once a year, would it be, yeah? Or would it be more often?

RM: It might even be only once every three years.

BH: Once every three years.

RM: But every October we'd have done the devotions, so that was a rosary every night and we might've been, yeah, there would've been the feast days which, you know, Ascension

Thursday, Corpus Christi, St Patrick's Day, different days throughout the year when we'd have, you just stood, they would be like Sunday. There would be no work done on those days either.

BH: Sure. And were there any wider social sort of activities associated with the church? I'm thinking of dances or anything like that. Was there other aspects to it?

RM: We didn't have any church halls. I mean, if they did, it was just for the Pioneer Abstinence Association, to sign up for that, you know, where you, where you took a pledge at confirmation that you wouldn't drink alcohol and you could extend that then at con-, you could extend that for, you know, to carry on for life. So they might've used a little office at the church for that kind of thing. The local, the GAA had a local hall and in that hall we would've had dances and old, ceilidh and old time, ceilidh dances, old time waltzes, that kind of thing, and we would've had some kinds of drama, you know, comedy plays and things like that, concerts.

BH: So what would have been kind of like the social activities, then? When you weren't working on the farm or you weren't at school what did you do for sort of–

RM: Ceilidhed in each other's houses. We called it ceilidhing. Ceilidh is a Gaelic word for together. So you would get together, you would go and you ceilidh. My mother till, till her dying day said she was going on her ceilidh, cos people who spoke Gaelic would, she'd say that to them on the phone, you know, that she had ceilidhers in [laughs], they understood her. You'd go and visit neighbours and they would come to you. So there were nights you expected that so-and-so across the field would be coming over on a Sunday evening or whatever. They just did it and, you know, passed the time, gossiped a bit and got a cup of tea and told you the gossip that whatever they had or any news and stuff like that.

BH: Yeah. And would this happen through the week or was it just–

RM: Oh it happened through the week, yeah.

BH: Through the week as well.

RM: Yeah. And then of course you had the odd wake if someone died. That was two nights and a day when people would've all gathered up at the house. And that would be a lot of talking and tea and sandwiches and whiskey and, you know, different things like that, so.

BH: And then as you got older, then, did that make anything around that change? You know, was there anything like cinemas or anything like that?

RM: We weren't allowed to go to the cinema. There was a cinema in Dungannon and I wanted to go to the cinema to see *Wuthering Heights* because it was on my O-level paper, and that would've been when I was about sixteen, and I found it very difficult to get permission to go to that [laughs].

BH: From your parents, like, this was, yeah?

RM: Yeah, because my father would've thought they were dens of iniquity.

BH: Is that right?

RM: Even the dancehalls and things like that, they were, they had a bad reputation. You know, he was just worried about what might happen to you in it, or what you might learn from them [laughs].

BH: [laughs] Would that have just been your family or was that in general? Like, would other people have been going into the town for–

RM: It would probably been a bit maybe less in some other families, because my father was quite a bit older than my mother and he had, he had, he was quite strict in his Catholic beliefs, and he believed that he was duty bound to make us, to rear us in the correct way, and he was answerable to God for that. So he took it very seriously, you know.

BH: What about, then, Dungannon town itself? Would that've been the main kind of, like, postal town I suppose?

RM: It was the main, well, I suppose, we were mixed between Pomeroy and Dungannon. Our postal area would've been Pomeroy because it was Altaglushan, Cappagh, Pomeroy. Then it became Altaglushan, Cappagh, Dungannon later on, so our telephone exchange is still Pomeroy, you know, so I don't know how you'd have worked that out **[00:20:00]**. But Dungannon would've been our town for going shopping, although they did, there wouldn't have been as many shops in Pomeroy, whereas Dungannon would've had the drapers' shops and the hardware shops and other things like that, Pomeroy wouldn't have had as many things like that. But what Pomeroy had was a fair day and Ballygawley had a fair day and Carrickmore had a fair day and Dungannon had a fair day, so we always went to the fair days because they may have been taking cattle or they may have been going to check what the price of cattle was, and so there was a chance that you would go too. I wouldn't have got to those. Like, my father would have gone. In a lot of cases he would've walked or taken a bicycle. We would've taken the bicycle to Cappagh and then taken the bus into the town if we ever had to go to the town, and that was usually only to the doctor or to the clinic or optician or something like that.

BH: Right, okay. What about your friends, then, outside of your family? Did you have friends outside of the family?

RM: The friends were mostly the ones near, who lived on the next farm or close by or the ones we walked to school with, you know, the ones we would've met along the road and so we would've had that journey to and fro, and they would've been friends we'd seen probably on a Sunday. Gone around, maybe gone out for a walk with them or gone to pick, gone to pick blueberries or whatever you would've called them, blackberries, raspberries, things like that along the roads.

BH: Yeah. And did you have any interactions with Protestants in the local area?

RM: Yeah, yeah, we had.

BH: Was it a mixed area or was it predominantly Catholic?

RM: It was mixed because a lot of the Scottish, I'd say they were Presbyterians, maybe Baptists, seemed to go for mountain areas or maybe that's where they were given or, or, or that was what was allocated to them because I remember somebody saying when they went to America the Scots-Irish took mountainous areas cos they could deal with that better and it was less wet because the water would run down from it, you know. We [pauses] would have met lots of these family members because they would've been part of the bartering work, you know. They would've come and tied corn, forked hay, picked potatoes and there was one or two of them who had skills like building skills or, you know, doing plastering or concrete or joinery, and they would've come to work on the house or to build another farmhouse. So we had a lot of interaction with them and sometimes, we were very careful that, that we considered their sensitivities because we were told not to talk about the church, not to talk about going to mass, going to confession.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

RM: We took down the rosary beads off the pictures or things like that that might–

BH: Your parents said this?

RM: Yes, yeah. And they were very sensitive to them, and my mother would've been at school with a lot of them because a lot, there was a mix, the school was mixed.

BH: Oh school was mixed?

RM: The school was mixed because there wasn't any other school to go with them, you know, for them to go to. There was one in Ballyreagh, but a lot, I know that when we had a school reunion and my mother was at it, a lot of those people who came were, and there was one lady who was a hundred, and I remember my mother sending her a card and they'd been friends all their life, like. There was no, that we didn't have, there was no discrimination or no sectarianism or whatever and we were very sensitive to their, you know, to their feelings or their beliefs or whatever. And there was one family where the father, and the girls even went on, I would hear them on Radio Four now, *Lift Up Your Hearts*, where they did a bit of preaching or whatever, and they would discuss bible readings at the table. There was some of the lads, you know, there was some of the other lads who'd come, be questioning them, you know like, just wanting to draw them out for, I suppose, curiosity more than anything else to hear what their take on it was, you know, and to work out why they were thinking like that or why they were doing that, you know, but–

BH: And why would there, why would there have been sensitivities, like? Like, you were saying your parents took down the rosary and stuff like that, like. Would they be worried what they would say or what, how they would react or what?

RM: They must've been from, I suppose, carried on from, from the civil war and the, and the independence thing, you know, and the border, like, when we found ourselves in the Six Counties as Catholics and probably supporting, supporting Home Rule, that probably came down through them, and they felt that, you know, maybe those people might be angry with them or they just wanted to keep on good terms with them. Although my mother would have said sometimes, we wouldn't see them, they wouldn't come to work on the farms in July and round about the middle of August because she said they got very black around the Twelfth because they went to marches and meetings and they listened to a lot of, maybe, I can quote one, like, Ian Paisley who might have said things about the Pope, blue socks and things like that, and she felt that maybe they put things in their head to make them think for a while, you know, that they couldn't come near us or whatever. Whether they felt they couldn't come near us or they didn't want to come to us, but we didn't tend to have the interaction in July and August in, and you'd know it yourself, that's parade time or the marching season, you know.

BH: So was there a bit of fear as well? Was there fear in this or was it just more–

RM: There was never fear. We were never frightened of them like, you know, because we took, they were just, where we were working they were just working and helping and doing whatever. But we were always sensitive to that, that they were different from us in that way, you know.

BH: Sure, yeah. Well, just mentioning there July and parades and things like that, was there an Orange Hall in the vicinity or anything? Did you ever see and of these parades or any of these kind of things?

RM: Yes. Castlecaulfield would have probably been the nearest one and they would usually put up their gates and their decorations and there would've been marches then or practices through the village, so we might've come across those on the way to Dungannon sometimes. And then there was Black Saturday when you might've been going by bicycle to Dungannon you would come across some of those. And Pomeroy, Pomeroy did have them, although Pomeroy tended to be a majority Catholic, but they did have, they did have occasional, I don't know how they rotated it but occasionally it would happen in Pomeroy as well.

BH: Parades would, yeah?

RM: Yeah.

BH: And what did you think of that and what did your family think of these things, like? You know, would they ever watch them?

RM: They just took it for granted.

BH: Took it for granted.

RM: Yeah. I mean, if they, if they went, I suppose if they were out near them they would've watched them, but sometimes, my mother was very conscious of not being seen watching them. Or even when the army came later on whenever we were, if I spoke, they maybe stopped the car and they looked at my licence and it was Manchester and he'd say oh I I'm from Manchester and I, I might chat and say what part? And he'd say, I'd say where did you go to school? And he said oh I went to school in Red Robby and I said oh I was a teacher in St Gregory's across the road. And my mother said come on, let's get going, somebody'll see you talking to the police [laughs], you'll be in trouble, you know, and that was it. They were in fear of being seen associating with, later on, like, you know, at that stage.

BH: Sure, yeah. Well, what about other things? Like, you mentioned, you know, there was a local GAA. Were there ways that people sort of maintained or expressed their Irishness?

RM: I didn't see it as expressing my Irishness, I just saw it as doing like what the rest of us did. You know, we might've gone and learnt a bit of Irish dancing in that hall and then there would've been the Galbally team. Like, my husband was on it in the early days and stuff like that and it was just part of what we did. Later on it came to be recognised as, maybe as associated with republicanism because we would've been stopped by B Specials or the UDR or, or the British Army and kept for a long time as if we were going to do something really, you know, political, and it might've got connotations that really weren't there at all, like. Although our local club was called Pearse's and that would, that would have been called after Patrick Pearse, but we didn't learn Irish history and apart from what my father might have taught me about, about 1916 and about conscription and things like that, and the Civil War, they never, they never dwelt on it. And I didn't know who Pearse was and I didn't know who Clarke was and, because there was Clarke's in Dungannon, and I didn't know who Casement was, there was different names on these parks, but to me, there wasn't, I didn't know anything about them until probably about 195-, '66, when **[00:30:00]** it was the fiftieth anniversary.

BH: Of course, yeah.

RM: And then I went down to Dublin from art college and I, I had a day out to the art galleries, and then went around and did a historical tour of things as well. Then it all started to come to me then what these were like, you know.

BH: Right. So up to that point you would have no idea.

RM: I would have not much involvement in the history of it at all, you know. I didn't know how we arrived where we or where we were at [laughs].

BH: Sure. So what happened then after you finished school, because you've mentioned that you were doing O-levels?

RM: I did O-levels and during the O-level year I applied to art college.

BH: Art college, right. So what did you study, then, at O-level?

RM: I studied [pauses] English language, English literature, history, geography, domestic science, math, art. I think that was it. I did nine [laughs].

BH: [laughs] That's plenty, yeah.

RM: I did eight. I did about eight or nine anyway, I think. I failed math, that was the only one I failed, but I got an off-, oh I did Irish language as well. I did enough to, at that stage, get a call to the art college and also a call to St Mary's Training College. So I remember I had an uncle, a priest, and I had two cousins, sisters of that, the sister that I mentioned, who were also art teachers and I rang them to help me make the decision, whether to take the St Mary's teaching course or go to the art college. And the two cousins said oh go to the art college, that's a specific art course where you do a foundation year in which you touch on all kinds of art, then you'll specialise in a particular kind of art and then you can teach after that if you want to. And my uncle said no, go and do the teaching course, but I think it was, he didn't want me doing life drawing, things like that [laughs].

BH: [laughs] Is that right?

RM: Later on I, I came to that conclusion, but it, it was only three years, whereas the other was five. And I went to the interview with the head of the college at St Mary's.

BH: Where was this at? Where was the interview?

RM: St Mary's in Falls Road, St Mary's Training College. I don't know where.

BH: In Belfast?

RM: In Belfast.

BH: Oh right. So that's a fair distance away then.

RM: Yeah, yeah. I was gonna have to go to Belfast to do whatever. The headmistress in Donaghmore said I probably wouldn't get into the art college because they very rarely took Catholics in.

BH: Is that right?

RM: Yeah. And she did it, she did the reference for me and with having had the other two cousins gone through and doing art and that and art she said oh she's from an artistic family. And anyway I was successful and the sister at St Mary's Training College said yeah, go and do the art course, I couldn't give you anything near as deep a course in art as you'll get there, and you can still teach after that, you know. So I made the decision then to go to art college.

BH: So you went to art college, then, right. So tell me a bit about that, then, because that's bound to be an experience, I would say [laughs].

RM: Yes. I mean, people would say, like, you're not at that bohemian place, are you? Cos I would've been dressed like coming from Tyrone, like, you know [laughs]. I wouldn't have been into, right, we might've had miniskirts or whatever, Twiggy I think was the fashion person of the time.

BH: So what year would this have been?

RM: 1965, '66. Yeah, 1965. And so I had the foundation year and then I had to look for a grant, and Tyrone Education Authority would not give a full grant for a foundation year because they didn't consider it a third level course.

BH: Right. So what did you do, then, about that?

RM: I went up to see them. I took my bicycle [laughs] and I cycled to Omagh and I chatted to somebody, some official there and I managed to get half a grant out of him, which, that was it, that was enough [laughs].

BH: And was that to cover your accommodation?

RM: That was to cover accommodation and I suppose there was a fee that the college required as well, you know.

BH: Yes. So you weren't, wouldn't have been too rich then or whatever [laughs].

RM: No, we weren't rich and my mother used to send me maybe a pound or two in a letter every week. We'd have written a lot of letters and I wouldn't have come home every week because of the expense of the express bus and things like that. So I just stayed over the weekend and Belfast was dead at the weekend. I mean, there weren't even cinemas open to go to [laughs].

BH: Seriously?

RM: [laughs] No, there were no cinemas open at the weekend?

BH: So who did you go with? Was this just on your own, was it?

RM: I went, I got in touch with a friend from school who was already in Belfast in the civil service and she said that she was in digs and that there was space in there if I wanted to come with her and so that's what I did. So I was in Ivy Drive off the Falls Road for the first year, with the landlady, an elderly landlady, and one girl from Armagh and one from County Derry, from Dungiven. And it was very different, like, you know, because I wasn't used to the noise of horns, mill horns going off, they'd blow you out of bed in the morning, [laughs] and then all the people starting to walk to work after that, you know, and trolleybuses and things like that, you know, and jumping on and off buses and speeding up, you know like, people just walked over the top of you, you know, we just sauntered along in Tyrone. But I was soon, after a month or so, walking as fast as they were, to keep out of, more to keep out of their way than anything else [laughs]. But it was okay until then January that year my

father died, my first year at college. He had farmer's lung for five or six years and it just got gradually worse and in the January of 1966 it took him. So that left my mother then in a more difficult situation. My, the third lad, who was the brother taking over the farm, was only seventeen and he had got him a tractor before he died and he was doing a bit of the farming and that. But it just meant that, like, my mother was apply-, what happened was she couldn't, he hadn't paid stamps, he hadn't paid national insurance stamps because he was old whenever it came into being in '47 or whatever time it started doing it, and he didn't bother and he never was asked because he probably wasn't making a big wage to do it anyway. So she wasn't going to get any widow's pension.

BH: Right.

RM: And so she applied to different people. They were called ministry men in her vocabulary and she was very wary of ministry men and sometimes she wouldn't give them the full story [laughs], because she would ask them what they wanted to know that for, she was very protective of, you know, of, maybe she'd say the wrong thing and things like that, you know. And sometimes she would say, you know, I might as well not bother answering these cos you're not going to give us anything anyway, you know, and have a little tussle with. So she got somebody to help her go to tribunals and things like that and the civil servants who were coming to talk to her said that the farm should've been left to her, as if she should've been able to sell the farm off and make money or whatever, and they said that she'd got her day of the house, she could live there and, for her day they called it, but the farm was going to the eldest son. But it was entrusted to her until he was maybe twenty-one, I think it was twenty-one, yeah. And so she went to the local councillor at the time who was Austin Currie and Austin Currie went to the tribunal with her and he explained the situation and she was given a supplementary benefit or pension. She said it was like winning, winning the pools and she would never forget Austin Currie for that.

BH: Yeah. So this was all happening, then, while you had just started your–

RM: That was all happening in my first year at college, yes.

BH: And what, did you like going to Belfast? Did you like college?

RM: I did yes. I mean, I suppose I was working towards doing something like that. So even though it was a big change it was different and I **[00:40:00]** was getting out in the world and looking back, I was never back, you know, after that, only on holidays and that because–

BH: So you stayed in, stayed in Belfast, then, after that?

RM: No. I didn't stay in Belfast, but I was never back living at home full-time, you know, because that year the friend that I went to stay in the digs with, she was in a Catholic group called the Legion of Mary, which is a community. It was a Catholic group which had, which helped in the parish, you know, might've been just shopping for some old person or going to visit them or, you know, bringing them. We didn't, money didn't change hands or anything like that, but we would've helped in some way. Usually the priest would've said who in the parish needed help or needed a visit. So we were in that and then during the summer of

1966 I went to London for the summer holidays to do a project that that organisation ran and it was called Peregrinatio Pro Christo, Pro Christi. I'm sorry, maybe Pro Christo, I'm not sure the Latin, but it was a journey for Christ and it was to help the Irish emigrants or anybody in a parish wherever we landed or were put, to help the parish priest with any work that he might have.

BH: So this was the summer of 1966. Is that what you were saying?

RM: Yes.

BH: And you'd joined the Legion of Mary and then you went over to London then to work. That was just for the summer?

RM: Just for the summer holidays.

BH: Okay. Yeah, right.

RM: So the person who recruited me into it, I wasn't too sure, you know, cos I had already taken one big step and I thought that's a bigger step, you know, I don't know if I want that or not [laughs]. I might've wanted it, but I just didn't know, you know, whether whatever. So anyhow he said my girlfriend is going, you'll be alright, and there's another two girls from St Mar-, she's at St Mary's College, St Mary's Training College, and there's another two girls from St Mary's College as well, so there'll be four of you, and that was alright. So we had a few meetings and we met them and it was all arranged that we go. And so 1966 was a funny year cos there was a shipping strike in Belfast and the boat that we had planned to go on wasn't available. So we had to take a train to Dublin, and I can't remember what the name of the ship was that we went on, but it was packed as well because there was a bankers strike in the South of Ireland. Students were leaving for the summer, the bankers were going working because they'd been off work I think for about three months at that stage. People like Christy Moore went on that and never came back [laughs]. So we were, it was packed and we got on the boat. Nowhere to sit down, nowhere, we were up on deck on top of chains sitting on our cases, you know. And the experience going across to Liverpool, and then the train down to London, and then again looking for accommodation, and then looking for a job because we had to work our way, we had to work during the day to get money to exist.

BH: Oh right, okay. And you hadn't a job already planned?

RM: No, no. So we went about looking for work and we got a job in Sainsbury's, a shop in Kilburn High Road, which is an Irish area, and it was one of these shops where you, you serve over the counter. They didn't have tills at the time and they put the four of us in that shop, which was nice.

BH: Four of yous in a shop? [laughs]

RM: Four of us in the shop, which was nice, and as well as that, in London that summer was the World Cup. So the tubes, that was another experience that we had to get used to,

travelling by tube, and they were packed at night with the World Cup crowds and things like that. And we were there on the Saturday, the day of the World Cup final, England playing Germany, and nobody in the shop, just the four of us looking across [laughs], two of us looking across at each other and nobody coming in for about three hours of the Saturday afternoon. So things like that. I came back from that.

BH: Back to Belfast?

RM: Yeah, back to Belfast and started again and into my first year and I specialised in interior design. So I did that for three years. The art college at the time was in the old College of Technology, just in, just past the train station. Is it Victoria Street?

BH: I don't know Belfast.

RM: College Square, College Square. I think it's now student accommodation, but it's a bit like the town hall, it was that shape of building. And they built a new art college down in York Street, so in my third year we moved down there and that was nice, it was a nice new building.

BH: And what was art college like? Cos you were obviously mixing with new people, probably from all over Northern Ireland or from Belfast anyway.

RM: Yeah. There was one, one guy I met just when I went in for my interview and he knew Pomeroy cos he was, he might've, he wasn't born in Pomeroy, but he was reared in Pomeroy for a time cos his father was a policeman. I think he was from Sion Mills, but he did, he was doing, he specialised in sculpture and I still see him occasionally and have him in here cos he lives up in Ramsbottom, just, you know, about twenty years later I came across him, like, somewhere in, didn't know that, that he was here in Manchester, but he was someone who knew a bit about Tyrone and that. There was, they were very different cos obviously the students wanted to be dressed in a peculiar way, you know, things like I suppose are more acceptable now, but they would've had all kinds of clothes and all kinds of hairstyles and–

BH: New fashions and things?

RM: New fashions, and I suppose fashions were, that was big in the mid-60s like, you know.

BH: And did you adopt these fashions too, then?

RM: Gradually. I suppose I adopted maybe getting, it would've been very tame [laughs]. It would've been a tame adoption because I had to work between this Catholic organisation and this bohemian organisation, and ne'er the two did meet [laughs].

BH: [laughs] And was that a difficult thing to balance was it, then, those two organisations?

RM: It was, but I was a pioneer so they were all getting drunk and drugs and having their parties and stuff like that, and sometimes you go to a party and you're very cagey, but you leave early, just put your face in and, you know.

BH: Say hello.

RM: Show willing and then leave. We might've then gone to dances with the other girls in the house in the digs and we would've normally gone to, there would've been Irish showbands in them, like, you know, the Orpheus and I can't remember the names, and then there was Catholic ones and Protestant ones as well and when, the landlady didn't like us going to Protestant ones.

BH: Is that right?

RM: [laughs] Yeah. She said [laughs] don't bring back any Protestants. Don't bring any Protestant boyfriends back here.

BH: Is this the digs on the Falls Road, yeah?

RM: We used to come back and we would've come in the door, we'd say goodnight Billy and goodnight [laughs], we'd use what we thought were Protestant names to make her think. We'd say we can't, sorry we can't take you in [laughs].

BH: [laughs] To wind her up, aye?

RM: We would make this up [laughs]. So that was I suppose all of the fun we had kind of, that.

BH: You mentioned there Austin Currie and this was 1966 obviously, so you had the Civil Rights movement becoming, you know, much more prominent around that time. Do you have any memories of that?

RM: Yes. I remember, I would've heard all those on the news. But Bernadette Devlin was very prominent at the time and she was calling a lot of the students out to protest in different, maybe Shaftesbury Square near Queen's, cos she was at Queen's at that time and they would've had sit-down protests out there, you know, things like that. And Ian Paisley was prominent at the time and he was walking along because I think at the same time the Vatican Council took place and they were advocating ecu-, more ecumenical practices so that we, originally we weren't allowed to go in a Protestant church or go to a Protestant service on the pain of sin. Then they stopped that, we were allowed to do that. We could mix and we could, you know, be more conciliatory, and that I think started Ian Paisley being more vociferous, and he was marching up and down the back of the town hall, City Hall, and then eventually sometimes he was getting arrested and taken away as well. And I met, later on, when I was here in Manchester **[00:50:00]** I happened to invite the lord mayor over to Dingle to an exhibition where I was bringing an artist from here over in a partnership. And his driver, or he would've been his driver, he was his, probably the person who looked after him anyway, looked after his chain and that, over in Dingle we were sitting down at a meal

after the opening of the exhibition, and his claim to fame was that he had arrested, he was in the army in the sixties [laughs] and he had arrested Bernadette Devlin and Ian Paisley, both of them, on occasion [laughs].

BH: [laughs] Right, my goodness. So, you know, that period of ferment in Belfast, were you involved in any of the civil rights protests or anything?

RM: No. I didn't take part in any of it at all. I just watched it from the news or maybe if you were out on the street you might've come across some of that. The only time that, that it might have come into the college to me was when a girl in my year came into the dining room on the night that Captain Terence O'Neill resigned and she was pretty annoyed, and in my hearing or across towards me she shouted it's that peasant bitch from Tyrone. Now I thought it was me, but she meant Bernadette Devlin.

BH: You thought it was you, right.

RM: And, and she, and then somebody, others started talking to her, cos I just took my chips and walked on and sat down somewhere. But they said, I could hear her then saying, we won't get our Christmas card anymore, that had pride of place on our mantelpiece, you know, things like that [laughs]. So obviously they were friends with Terence O'Neill or maybe her father was in politics or whatever, you know.

BH: Sure, yeah. And would that have been a common occurrence within the art college?

RM: No. It wouldn't because they didn't tend to be, they didn't tend to have any kind of, that I was aware of there was no political leanings in there at all, you know, cos it's mixed. There was a sister on the course and she would've had a rough time outside because, you know, if we went out to do a project in Sandy Row or on the Shankill Road or something like that, cos they used to send us out sketching, whether to send us out to do children at play and take pictures of them, whatever the project was, she used to get, have things said to her and people would spit on her and things like that.

BH: Is that right?

RM: Yeah. So at that stage before the council nuns wore their habits, later on they could take that off, but I would've taken down my pioneer pin and I would've taken any, anything that would've identified me as–

BH: If you were going to the Shankill to sketch, right?

RM: Yeah, yeah.

BH: So what happened after that, then? That was a three year course, '66 to what, '69?

RM: To '69.

BH: And what did you do after that was over, then?

RM: Now I want, at the time I was going out with my present man, John, who's now my husband.

BH: Oh so you'd met your partner in Belfast?

RM: Well, my partner was from across the fields at home.

BH: Is that right?

RM: One of the ones who used to come and work with us, like, you know what I mean.

BH: Ah right. So I should've asked you that, had you already met your partner before that?

RM: [laughs] I, yes, I knew him from, he used to call in the village on the way home from his school and pick up my grandmother's pension because it was two miles and she was disabled and he would come in with that every Friday, and then he would come and help my father twist ropes in the hay time or fork hay or do whatever, you know. So I knew him from, we've grown up together, you know what I mean. But he went to, he came to Manchester, he came to Manchester probably in the late fifties. I think when he finished school at fourteen he went to Manchester.

BH: So he had already left. He was from the local area and he had already migrated over there?

RM: Yeah, yeah.

BH: But you went to Belfast.

RM: And I went to Belfast. So when he would be home on holidays and that I would see him sometimes and–

BH: And yous were still like a couple at this stage were yous or what?

RM: Well, we'd met and we knew each other. But then when we met at dances, we met at dances and things like that, you know, he might've asked to leave you home or something like that, you know, and then when I would see you again and he was going away and we would write to each other, so gradually developed a relationship and, yeah. He came down to London when I was there and, you know, came down and visited me then and things like that. And he was keen on, you know, me giving up the course and getting married then, but I didn't want to. I wanted to finish that and I said to not wait if he didn't want to, that kind of thing and that. So anyway we, we separated, like, we went on with our lives and then got back together again later on.

BH: Sure. So you finished the, finished the course in Belfast?

RM: I finished the course in Belfast, but I wanted, if I was, if, if I was intending to come to Manchester and follow that route I needed qualifications that were acceptable in England.

BH: Sure, yeah.

RM: And the Belfast art teachers' qualification wasn't recognised in England.

BH: Is that right?

RM: Yeah.

BH: Right.

RM: And so–

BH: Did you know that before you started the course?

RM: I did because somebody else I think had hit that problem. So there was two or three, including that lad whose father was from Pomeroy, who found out that he would be better going to England and he went, he went to Leeds. He applied to Leeds for that, for the art teachers' part, art teachers' diploma. Welsh colleges would take the Belfast students in but the English ones wouldn't. I applied to Manchester because that's where I was intending, you know like, if I carried on my relationship with John I was thinking I might end up in Manchester. So I wasn't a, I wasn't an economic migrant, you know, it was just how things fell. I could've gone anywhere. But I applied to Manchester, you had a first, second and third choice, I applied to Manchester, second choice Birmingham, third choice Cardiff, cos I knew the Welsh ones would take us. Manchester turned it down completely, no way. It was sent on to Birmingham and the guy in Birmingham sent for me and he wanted to discuss the problem that he saw with, he said they're fighting over there, saying they're British and they're whatsit, and yet you can't get a, you can't be recognised here with the course that they've put you on, it's not recognised in an English college.

BH: This was the guy at the Birmingham–

RM: At the Birmingham College of Art and Design, it would've, it was the Art Teachers' College of Education or whatever you called it, College of Art Education, which was the final part of Birmingham College of Art course.

BH: Was this the guy who was interviewing you for the–

RM: Yes. And he said now, he said I'm going to accept you and I want to test it, and so I thanked him very much for that and waited for a while and then we got a letter, I got a letter from him saying he'd tried, but he wasn't successful and he had sent it on to Cardiff. But he said I'm not letting it drop, I'm going to carry on with that. He was just the right place at the right time I suppose, you know. So I was then having the head of the art teachers' course in Belfast coming to me and asking me questions and saying, you know like, what was this about? And I said well, they don't recognise, you know, if, if I stayed here and did

this course I wouldn't be able to go on the Burnham scale in England if I was teaching and I would be an art teacher only for Northern Ireland, you know. So anyway, the fella here at Birmingham got in touch with clearing house in London, and he got in touch with someone in the faculty over in Belfast who was in charge of, of that, the awards, whatever, and together they worked out a system whereby they would rec-, they would go over and assess Belfast and see what its level was compared to whatever.

BH: Is that right?

RM: Yeah, and so they did then. They may have done things or added things to the course to make it recognised, but it wasn't until April 1970 [laughs] and I, but they let me come to Birmingham. And the guy, the head, I remember the head of art there, education, College of Education in Belfast, came over to see what I was doing and to talk to the lecturers there and find out, you know.

BH: Why was this guy so interested, you know?

RM: I don't know. I'd like to, you know, now.

BH: He was an English guy like?

RM: He was, yeah.

BH: Yeah, that's very strange. **[01:00:00]** Just to ask you again about that. So that's really your first, that's your migration over to England at this stage, then, yeah?

RM: Yeah, yeah.

BH: What was that, what were your main motivations for that, you know? What was, because obviously you could've stayed.

RM: Well, it was that I was, I suppose, more bent then on ending up married to John and continuing that way, so it, it would've, cos he would've said oh forget about the job and it doesn't matter and things like that, and I suppose I wanted to do, I wanted that option to be able to teach here and whatever. And they took me on the course alright and I went through the year's course and I achieved the art teachers' diploma. And when I went teaching here, I was teaching a private, Notre Dame Sisters up here in Cheetham Hill, up until the comprehensive change in 1977, when the city council took over most of the ones that weren't comprehensive and gradually phased them into a comprehensive system linking up schools and that, and the Notre Dame Sisters pulled out. But when I went into the Manchester City Council education department's employment, and they went to work out my wages, they wouldn't recognise the art teachers' diploma because it had been achieved in the year, five or six months before it was ratified in London at the time [laughs].

BH: My goodness, right.

RM: And I save, the day was saved by me being moved from Notre Dame to the city council because they guaranteed for four years the wages you were on, even though they may have put you on a lesser job with a lesser wage, and they guaranteed your bus fare, the difference in your bus fare between the two places. So I knew it didn't matter for the next four years and eventually it phased out, they didn't take it back off me, you know. It was called the Burnham scale, they might not even use the Burnham scale now, but whoever was setting up or checking it against the Burnham scale, I didn't have the right qualifications to be on the Burnham scale. Oh they would've paid me, but they would've paid me less.

BH: Paid you less, even though you were doing the same job effectively, yeah. Well, what did your mum think about you migrating over to England? Was there any other brothers or sisters over there?

RM: Everybody else was at home and everybody else is still at home. The one that would be furthest away would be Trillick, which is probably about twenty-five miles or something. Everybody else is within a six-mile circle of home.

BH: Of where they grew up, like. Right.

RM: Yeah.

BH: So you were the one that went the furthest then?

RM: Yeah. I'm the black, I'm the black sheep [laughs].

BH: And what did your mum say about that, whenever you said you–

RM: She wanted me back all the time.

BH: Is that right?

RM: Yeah. She would tell me about houses that were for sale and buy this and buy that one and whatever. And then a bit more pressure, would say if you don't soon come home I'll be dead [laughs]. And then John got a few illnesses then, a stroke and a heart attack and that, and then she said if you don't soon come home John will be dead as well, you know. So really putting on the pressure. So we both, we did, I did look at places and I did intend to go, but you'd always, you know, I had two sons and you'd always look at where they were in school. If they were in the junior school you didn't want to move them. You'd move them before the secondary school, but then if you had them in two different years it didn't work. You just couldn't hit that right date when you might do that, you know.

BH: Well, John, then, he came over before you in the fifties. What did he come over to do? What was his background or what was he–

RM: He had gone to the technical college in Dungannon and he had done a course in commerce, bookkeeping, that kind of stuff. And I think he looked out for work like that in the beginning, but then he got involved with other Irish people in bus driving, bus

conducting I think it was, and things like that. And then I think he might've spent a while in Dunlop, in Dunlop's factory, and then he got into lorries and he was a mechanical, he did mechanical engineering, fixing lorries and diggers and things like that. He set up his own business doing that and then he did plant hire as well, letting, letting out lorries and diggers on the motorways, you know, all of that conglomeration of motorways and whatever, Arndale Centre, whatever was being built. John would travel around Manchester and say I was at the building of that, I dug the foundations there, I did this, I did that. So, you know, I could write a book about that [laughs].

BH: About that. So did he come from a farming background too?

RM: He did, he came from a farming background, yes. Yeah, very similar, just we didn't what we call march, you know, there was a farm between us, but we could see, we'd see their farm out on the, on the moun-, on the far side of the hill.

BH: And did he have no desire to stay on the farm or anything like that?

RM: No, because the brother, there was one brother stayed on the farm, but he did mechanical engineering with I think it was Ulster Plant and then it became Powerscreen, a bigger organisation, you know.

BH: Oh yes, I know.

RM: Welding and stuff like that. So a lot of the farmers, a lot of, when I said my brother did mechanical, did engineering, that was what they went to do, things like that, cos they've set up a lot of small industries in Tyrone with those. There was the Ulster Plant and it became Powerscreen later on and those lads all, were all working in that, and John's brother was running one as well. My brother runs his own, Immediate Engineering, so there's a lot of small engineering plants in Tyrone, in and around the area.

BH: But John had no intention of working in those. He specifically wanted to come over to England.

RM: No, he didn't, he didn't, he didn't want to go back. He did think about going to Australia. There was a ten pound–

BH: Aye, there was a scheme wasn't there?

RM: Scheme.

BH: Ten pound poms.

RM: Yes, something like that and he prepared for that, but didn't follow it up and [pauses] he just stayed put [laughs].

BH: Yeah. So after then you finished your course in Birmingham, then, did you move then to Manchester?

RM: I did, yes.

BH: You did. And what part of Manchester was that?

RM: Well, John was in Longsight at the time. John, well, he started here in Cheetham Hill cos he bought a little house on Caster Street near the Waterloo pub and he kept a lot of the lads from home in digs with him.

BH: Okay. Guys from Tyrone?

RM: Guys from home, from Tyrone, yeah, yeah. Any of them who'd come over, you know, if they knew somebody they'd come to them, and he had, he had five or six lads in there with him, you know. I met one coming back on the boat there two weeks ago [laughs].

BH: Is that right?

RM: Said he had spent two years with him. And somebody told me about somebody being dead last night, he said your John will know him, he used to live with him, you know. So you would get the stories around where they came and they stayed for a while with somebody they knew, you know.

BH: Well, that's what I was going to ask you next. Was there a lot of people from your area in Tyrone who would've migrated or was that a fairly unusual thing?

RM: It wasn't unusual, no, because from our townland there was a lot gone to England. There wasn't so many gone to America, you know, a few. The ones who were America were priests who were sent on missions. But most of them went to either Scotland or Northumberland, Workington, somewhere up there. A few went to Luton or London, some went to Birmingham, Coventry and there was a pocket in Manchester as well.

BH: Right, okay. And would these mostly have been, like, Catholic groups of boys going over or would they have been mixed?

RM: They were mostly Catholic. You would get an odd non-Catholic here and there, but a non-Catholic coming here has to go with the flow and I know even in the Tyrone Association you might get a Protestant lad being involved because he has, he's Irish in the eyes of everybody else and they're not looking at the Protestant-Catholic thing. They're listening to his accent and that's where he's from, he's from Tyrone, he's Irish, whatever, you know.

BH: Sure, sure. I'm just wondering as well, I mean, at that time was migration more common amongst Catholics or was it more common amongst Protestants or was there equal amounts?

RM: It was probably more common amongst Catholics. I don't know of any of the Protestant guys around that we knew growing up who emigrated. The girls did, that I spoke about who went on mission work, and as I said I heard some of them on *Lift Up Your Heart*, you know,

they would do those talks and things like that, so they would've gone. But I don't know any of them who went to migrate for, I do know one girl who was here, she was with the lads in Levenshulme **[01:10:00]** and she married one of the lads from Derry, went back and lived in Tyrone and he died suddenly at forty-eight. And she lost her son in an accident in one of those engineering works, and she went back to being, they were Baptists, and she went back to, became very religious, writing books and talking about it and how it was just a big change for her. But she was one of the, she was just one of the guys, you know, around, there was no distinction at all, you know.

BH: Sure, yeah. When you came to England first, to Birmingham, then I suppose to Manchester, what did you think of it? You know, was it a big change?

RM: It was. Belfast had kind of prepared me for city life.

BH: Aye, you had a bit of a taste.

RM: And the first, the next city after Belfast of course was London, that six weeks in London with the tube and the different, you know, the, everything. What you could've done in London, like, you know, and where we went in London. And then we'd gone to Eastbourne and Southend on Sea, you know, and gone to the seaside every weekend from some of the parishes and that, you know. So we got, it was, you know, a discovery of the south-east of England kind of thing, you know. Then Manchester I thought was very industrial and very smoky and diesel fumes and stuff like that. There might've been some of that in London, but London tended to have more parks and more trees and different places, bigger places to go to. So Manchester was, it was, I suppose there was still smog and coal fires and things like that at that stage. So there was a lot of grime and dust and dirt, you know.

BH: Yeah. Were you ever homesick?

RM: No. I was never homesick cos I just felt, you know like, I was near home, you know what I mean. And we'd go for the summer holidays, we'd go for the Easter holidays, Christmas holidays.

BH: Back home to Tyrone?

RM: Back home to Tyrone. So we spent a good bit of time in Tyrone, you know.

BH: And what then was your first jobs then whenever you got to Manchester?

RM: My first job was in St Gabriel's in Bury, teaching, and that was a secondary modern school at that time, it hadn't become comprehensive then. I did look for jobs in Manchester from my last term, during the last term in Birmingham, summer term I should say, and I came to do one in Prestwich, it was then St Peter's Boys' Grammar School. It had only been three years in existence. I didn't know it was a boys' grammar school [laughs], but a canon and seventeen priests and a headmaster interviewed me and wondered why I applied for a job in a boys' school and how would a lady teacher control boys and things like that. And I, I said well, I did, I'd done my teaching practice in Saltley Grammar School in Birmingham and

that was a boys' school and I, you know like, they were putting obstacles that I didn't even envisage at all. They said they only had a music teacher, a lady music teacher who came in to do lessons, single lessons, not class lessons like, you know. And obviously I didn't get the job, but that night coming back from there I said to John this is a nice area and we were looking at houses up around Longsight and Levenshulme and I said this might be a nice area to buy a house in. And he said well, we've got the *Evening News* here, let's have a look, and we looked at two houses the next day and we bought one of them and we're forty-seven years in it next week [laughs]. No, forty-nine years in it next week, on the fifth of November. We moved in on Bonfire night.

BH: Right. So yous must've been in a position to be able to buy, then, at that stage?

RM: Well, John, I was just saying to him today because I was saying that we're here, he said this is our house, like, cos sometimes he forgets now, but I said we're here forty-nine years on the fifth of November, do you remember that? He said I do, I remember it well, and I remembered that he said we can't afford that, it was sixty-seven pounds per month of, it was two and a half thousand pounds. I was on eight hundred pounds a year from first year teaching. He had started his own business, so that was in the early days. He said, like, whereas that was two and a half thousand, the ones we were looking at was three, three hundred, four hundred, five hundred up in Levenshulme, you know, something like that. And I said well, I know I can do that up. I had the interior design degree, and I said I can make that house become an income from Sedgley Park Training College across the road, cos there'll be students there. And he said well, okay, but if, only if you do that, because we couldn't afford a big house that size. It's a Victorian semi, cellar, three floors, five bedroom. And we got it on those terms, and so that's what we did, so we let off the top floor.

BH: To students?

RM: And a couple of the bedrooms, yeah, a couple of bedrooms downstairs until our two lads needed the space. So we had a little income from that to pay the–

BH: Fantastic. What about the English people, then? How did you find them when you first came over?

RM: It was difficult in, I didn't interact much with them because John would've taken me up to all the boys and the girls from home to visit them and, you know like, I wouldn't have been interacting so much, apart from meeting them on the street or whatever, so I didn't get to know any of the neighbours. And I might've done when the lads came along and you were out with a pushchair and they might ask you what's his name or they might've known you were pregnant and saying what did you have and things like that. So we just kept ourselves very much to ourselves and were just polite like, you know. So we didn't develop into any relationship where people were coming in and out of your house. We kind of kept to the Irish people, you know.

BH: And is this in Levenshulme this is, yeah?

RM: This was here in Prestwich.

BH: Prestwich, yeah. What about at work and things like that?

RM: At work it was, again, you would've latched on to Irish teachers and in the Catholic schools you probably had more of those than English ones, and English ones kind of, we felt they didn't understand us [laughs]. They [pauses], they seemed to be, I don't know, being an art teacher, and I had another friend who was a home economics teacher, and although we were well qualified and as far ahead as any of them, they tended to think those weren't academic subjects and that Irish people couldn't really excel in academic subjects.

BH: Oh is that right, yeah?

RM: [laughs] I got that feeling.

BH: You got that feeling. Right, okay. And what did you think about that, you know like? Did you, you were happy enough to work in these schools and things like that?

RM: Well, I suppose it was a job. You didn't have much option as far as that went and, no, I was, I was happy enough in the schools and usually as I said there was an Irish streak through the Catholic schools. You always knew that there was going to be three or four staff who would understand you, you know what I mean. English, they would, there would be some more specific than others and even I suppose some of the English ones they might've been of Irish descent anyway like, you know what I mean, so.

BH: Sure. Whenever you mentioned there that John, you know, he would've taken you to see the other, you know, other Irish people and so on. Would these have mostly been from the North or would they have been the South as well?

RM: It would've been the South as well because for a period of time he was in digs, when he came over, with a family from Mayo, and they kind of took him under their wing. And I would meet lots of that, many of those and I was at their weddings and at their engagement parties and at their funerals and different things like that because there was one of them who even says to me I was nine when John came to live at our house and he made me my first doll's house, you know. So they were kids of that family and now, when they were growing up and having weddings and having parties and that we'd have always been invited to them, you know.

BH: Sure, yeah. And did you, you know, prior to leaving Northern Ireland, like, did you have much sort of, you know, interaction with people from the South or was this a relatively new thing as well?

RM: Relatively new. And I would say that I got to know Ireland much better through being here than I would've done in Tyrone because I can go to any county in Ireland and I can visit someone in any county in Ireland, and have done, and a lot of that would be down to having been involved with the Irish community here. Getting involved in the seventies through set dancing, **[01:20:00]** cultural activities and then the setting up of the Irish World Heritage Centre and being involved on it as a trustee in that, getting involved with Irish Community

Care and being a trustee on that and even managing it for a couple of years, that I've met so many people and have had people coming over from Ireland to do maybe cultural things or to give talks or to do, to be involved in conferences or whatever, and politicians and whatever, that I never would've done in Tyrone.

BH: Well, this is what I was gonna ask you, cos you said earlier on, you know, whenever you were young growing up in Tyrone, you know, you might have done some, you know, dancing and stuff like that, but you never really would've thought of it as expressing your Irishness. Was that something then that changed? Did you become more aware of that over time?

RM: Yeah, I became aware of that here. I mean, I know that I never could've expressed my Irishness as well in Tyrone as I can here, and I would say that's even yet.

BH: Yes. And is that because of the religious and political situation in Northern Ireland?

RM: No. I don't think, I think they have changed. I couldn't go home and go to a ceilidh with my brothers and sisters cos they wouldn't be interested, they wouldn't do that, and their sons and daughters are now into Twitter and Facebook and stuff like that, so they don't even ring up anymore [laughs], they don't send a letter, they don't do anything, Christmas cards, everything's gone online. So there's a lot of interaction that doesn't happen now. You see them at weddings and things like that.

BH: So you think there's more of an opportunity to become involved in Irish activities over here than there is–

RM: Yes, yes, I definitely do. I mean, the emigrant population probably want that for their identity and they want that for it to feel, for their wellbeing and things like that, and it has helped them, and I know that through Community Care and I know the Irish government gives us grants to make sure that that is happening. So if, if we want to have the Irish language continued, we have Irish dancing continued, we're doing Irish writing, we're doing the kind of country and western which some of them want as well. You can have any, any form of Irish expression here, and you're gonna meet all the different people from the areas, and then second-generation have got interested in that too. There's some third-generation even learning the language and can speak Gaelic and whatever, you know.

BH: I was gonna ask you about that, cos I think you said you had, you have two sons, is that right?

RM: Yes.

BH: Whenever you were bringing them up was it important to you to try and, you know, encourage them to have an interest in Irish things?

RM: It was important to me, but I had to be careful with what they wanted.

BH: Right.

RM: When I decided to take them, it might've been easier with girls, I had two sons, so girls might dance or do things faster than little boys [laughs]. But there was a step dancing in our local parish in Prestwich and I asked them if they'd go to it. One of them, point blank, no. He was only six or seven or whatever. No, no way. The one of them who was always trying to please a bit, you know, didn't want to hurt me, said I will go mum but don't tell any of my friends. So he went for a little while, but I just knew he wasn't happy at it.

BH: Is that right?

RM: So I let him out, I didn't bother [laughs], I didn't pursue it with him at all. He wouldn't be that interested, although he married an Irish girl, he married a girl from Cork he met in America. They would always be interested in Irish things from my point of view, cos they would say mum there's an Irish something on in such a place or have you heard this tune or there's an Irish group coming over or something like that. They would push Irish things towards me, but they wouldn't be interested in themselves, but they would think maybe better tell mum about that. But it's strange that one of them now, at forty-seven, for the past three or four years, he's taken up Irish music and he goes to three or four sessions a week.

BH: Right. Three or four sessions a week, my goodness.

RM: With, and he goes, like, Grace was there with me, Grace.

BH: Oh Grace Kelly, yes.

RM: And, you know, like he was very friendly with Grace and Mike McGoldrick, he's gone with really good–

BH: Players.

RM: Players, and he goes to their sessions, he plays with them and he really, he's bought practically every instrument under the sun [laughs], his house is full of them [laughs]. And he went over to Omagh to the Omagh Fleadh, to his cousins over there to play with their kids or whatever. Just all of a sudden in his mid-forties, it's come.

BH: My goodness.

RM: It's come to him.

BH: And he's his mid-forties, my goodness. Whenever they were growing up did you take them back to Tyrone for holidays and things like that?

RM: I did, yeah. Every holiday we went back. In fact when he was over there I met a lad outside the shop at home in Galbally and he said oh he said I met your Sean the other night, he said I hadn't seen him since he left, since, and they were next door to my mother, this family, and I remember we came back, they'd been playing with him all summer and the

summer before and the summer, you know like, leading up, that growing up kind of over there, over the summer with them. And I remember coming back and when I put them to bed one of them, one of the nights after we came back, one of the lads was crying and I said what's up with you? And he said we're never going to see them again, they're moving, they were moving to a new house and they won't be there next door to granny when we go back. And he didn't see them from then, and he was only a little lad of six or seven, he didn't see them until last, just a few weeks, back in June there when he was over at the Omagh Fleadh.

BH: Seriously?

RM: Cos some of them were playing. So that lad said to me, you know, I saw Sean but I hadn't seen him since that, and some of the sisters saw them when they were over for my mother's wake, that's about nine years ago and that was the first time they'd, they'd all grown up, but they hadn't seen them since. But they had friends there. There was, one of their friends that they used to run about with was shot in the ambush at Cappagh.

BH: Ah right, okay.

RM: And I remember when the news came over my sister rang me and said four lads had been shot, because somebody shot into the pub, and I said who was it? And she named them, and I said to my son, do you know that lad? Because I would know their parents, you see, but I wouldn't know all the kids, and he went upstairs and brought down a photograph album and he showed me all the pictures of, well, that's him there walking along with me and they were all at the sports in Galbally or something like that, you know, so.

BH: Well, that was actually something I was going to ask you about. When the Troubles started you were just about leaving, I suppose, to go to Manchester.

RM: Yeah, because when I left to go to Birmingham it was 1969 and I had a flat on Springfield Road, Kashmir Road corner. Now Kashmir Road went over the Clonard monastery and in behind that was Bombay Street that was burned out. And on the day I chose to go to Belfast, 15th of August, I wanted to buy, a, my sister was getting married–

BH: So it was the 15th of August you chose to go?

RM: I cho-, well, I was leaving. I had finished college in July and then in, I came over to Manchester and I did a while working in a raincoat factory. I worked in the raincoat fac-, and Woolworths one year and then a raincoat factory down here in Cheetham Hill during the summer. And, you know, I did some more Legion of Mary work, but, you know like, that was only five or six weeks, so I went back in August. My sister was getting married and I went down to Belfast to buy some clothes for the wedding and to go and clear out my flat, you know, to take a folder and some work home and stuff like that. And I was meeting the girl that I shared the flat with, she was still in the civil service in Belfast City Hall, and we were coming home together on the Friday night, so twenty-, it was a bad time because that was the day the army came in, and they were coming up in army lorries and Saracen cars, whatever, up, up Royal Avenue, and driving towards City Hall when I came out of, I'd gone

to mass on the 15th of August, I'd gone to mass in St Mary's in Smithfield, Smithfield Market. And I went up to the town hall and I met my friend. She came out and she said they have been saying in there that all the transport is off and there's roads burning and our road is burning. Up Kashmir Road there's been a lad shot and there's houses burning up there, so we can't go back. So she said, this girl is, her brother's picking her up from the Done-, he's from the Donegall Road, she lives in the Donegall Road, she said we'll take a lift out the Donegall Road and we'll thumb our way from the roundabout out there, we'll thumb our way out to Tyrone. **[01:30:00]**

BH: Right.

RM: So we did that, we went to that girl's house and we could see it on the news at six o'clock what was happening. And he drove us up to the roundabout to drop us off and when we got there there were gangs stopping lorries and turning them over and blocking all the roads into Belfast, from that roundabout. So we were lucky in that when the cars came down into Belfast, down the motorway, they had to come round the roundabout and go out again, and we thumbed and got out on one of those to Lisburn or wherever it was going, and we thumbed the rest of the way back to Dungannon like, you know.

BH: My goodness, yeah.

RM: But that was on the 15th of August when they came in. That was a bad night.

BH: Yeah, I'm sure it was, yeah, that whole week.

RM: So then I would've gone to college in Birmingham then, beginning of September that year.

BH: So you stayed at home, then, until September and then you went over?

RM: Yeah.

BH: So after that point then, when you were living over in Birmingham and then in Manchester, were you, were you aware of what was happening?

RM: Oh yeah, cos you'd get the phone calls and the time.

BH: Yeah, yeah. And what would–

RM: And you'd watch it on the news. You see, I, I can remember watching on the news. You'd be there in the living room and they'd say somebody had, something had happened to somebody in Tyrone or wherever. And I remember seeing the face of Gertie and Jim Devlin from Coalisland who'd been assassinated at Edendork. I was on the Donaghmore past pupils committee with Gertie, we were officers on that.

BH: You knew these people?

RM: Oh yeah. Jim was a Tyrone footballer and Ed-, well, Eddie, his brother, was my dentist, Eddie Devlin the dentist in Dungannon. But they were, they were stopped as if it was a UDR road check and they just shot point blank and the daughter, she was seventeen, doing her A-levels, they just brought her into Coalisland because Jim had ran a shop and a pub and they lived along the road beside Edendork church, and she was badly wounded, she got about I think seventeen, twelve wounds. She recovered, like, you know, but, and they had four lads as well then at home and coincidentally I met one of them earlier on this year. He was at a film show out in Chorlton and he went up to talk about his experience and he identified himself as I think it was Eamon Devlin, and he told about his mother and father, and he told about Eddie and Austin Currie coming to the house to take, to take them and to tell them what had happened, and then he was taken by his family over to Bradford and he was reared in Bradford. He hadn't been back since, he–

BH: He hadn't been back.

RM: Well, he would've been back, but he was reared from when he was twelve in Bradford as a result of that, and all the rest would've gone to other relatives, you know.

BH: So they had all moved out as a result of that?

RM: Yeah.

BH: So when this was happening, then, how were you finding out about it? Was it phone calls or was it–

RM: It would've been phone calls, like, yeah, and mostly, and the television because I saw that on the television and then I would've rang home and got a bit of background or asked did anybody know or what happened or whatever. He didn't know what happened until four years ago. He just thought they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, didn't know it was part of a set-up in that particular triangle that was, they discovered now, you know, there was a lot of collusion and stuff like that and that certain people were chosen to try and make things turn in a different direction or something like that, you know.

BH: At that time, whenever you were, you know, back really, just as a young person going to England and you're talking to, you know, people, relatives and things back on the phone, what do you think, what did you think was happening? What did you think was causing this, this violence in Northern Ireland?

RM: [pauses] It was hard to say, really, because both sides got so entrenched. I mean, at the beginning when it was civil rights I could see that, you know, that, where they were explaining that there wasn't civil rights like or the voting system of gerrymandering or whatever they had wasn't working, and if it was, if Stormont was set up to be like that then unless we got people to speak on our behalf we weren't going to get any kind of rights. When I go back to the art college when there were six Catholics out of eighty, and there was one from each county, you know, and the guy who was in charge of the foundation year was an Englishman and I remember him doing a map and putting marks, you know, from where people came from and what they were, just, you know like, to work it out, you know, to see

why is this happening. But somebody on the interviewing panel or somebody was making sure that it was just a token.

BH: Sure. A token, yeah. So whenever you were at art college, then, was that difficult, then, you know?

RM: That didn't manifest itself amongst us as students. It's just that, I suppose, the powers that be just made sure there weren't that many of us in there [laughs].

BH: Sure, yeah. At that time, then, I suppose, in England as well there were things like bombs and things starting to happen, from 1973 anyway.

RM: Yeah, definitely.

BH: Do you have any memory of, of really the Troubles affecting, you know, your life or anybody else's life in England at that time?

RM: Yeah. It affected us here at the Irish Centre because, and I was at the Ardri one night just after the they Droppin Well pub bomb in Derry, where you'd get the phone call that there was a bomb, there would be a bomb scare here, and there would be phone calls. I suppose that it would be on social media now, but it was phone call after phone call after phone call, saying what they were going with the Irish, kind of thing, you know.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

RM: Yeah. You would've got a lot of phone calls.

BH: So these were even, like, attacks or bombs that went off in Northern Ireland, there would be phone calls with you?

RM: The Droppin Well bomb did. I remember being at the Ardri and I remember having to come out of there. I was friendly with the manager of that, Tommy McKenna, and there was another teacher with me who was friendly with him, and we were in a flat of his waiting for the dance that night and it was a really wet night and we all had to get out. There was a bomb scare. Police came and cleared us out. Here we got a lot of phone calls after the Manchester–

BH: Oh of course, yeah.

RM: Bombing, and so much so that the town hall, the people from the town hall came out to be here that night, like Richard Leese and people like that, to be with the Irish, to say they weren't, it wasn't anything to do with people in the Irish Centre and things like that. I would've gone to the shop and just picked up things and put them down and not spoken to anybody because my accent led people around me to say things. And I remember going into, I was going to a physiotherapist and there were people in the waiting room. They were all quiet and I went in and somebody said it's looking like, it's getting very dark out there or something like that. And I said oh it was just starting to rain as I came in, and then the next

one said oh did you hear about that bomb and whatever, down whatever, to the other one, and I just thought, that's just for me [laughs].

BH: Is that right, yes? This was in a kind of doctor's waiting room or something?

RM: Yeah, just my accent sparked off the next thought, a bomb.

BH: Is that right? Were they trying to be hostile or–

RM: No, I don't think so. I just think it just automatically–

BH: They heard the voice and it made them think of bombs, like, yeah?

RM: Yeah [laughs].

BH: And did you ever encounter any, like, hostility or any kind of, you know?

RM: No, it was all, like, kind of remote like that. You knew it was there and you would just keep your head down and keep quiet. Even the kids at school, I think they were readers of the *Sun* or whatever, because on the morning after the Loughgall shooting when I came out of the car park into the school, kids were shouting SAS eight, IRA nil. And that was to me because I was an Irish Catholic teacher, I don't know, in a Catholic school.

BH: Yes, and you think that was directed towards the school anyway?

RM: I think it was directed to me as an Irish, those kids thought themselves as English, and England had won, or the SAS had won against the IRA, and I was Irish and I was, in their mind, IRA. I don't know, I don't know why it would have been chanted at me because I wasn't pushing any kind of agenda [laughs] about it, you know.

BH: And what, did you do anything about it, like, did you?

RM: No, I didn't do anything, just walked on and went in. And as it happened I had lo-, my cousin had lost his son in it, like, you know what I mean. And there was another one, one of the girls we kept from Sedgley Park College, her brother's house was blown up. His wife, she was expecting, she was eight months pregnant, and her two brothers who were helping her do up **[01:40:00]** part of the house were all blown away, down in Castlecaulfield. I saw that on the television, went upstairs and told her friend. He was still there, they'd trained together, they were good friends. And I said some bad news, and I said Margaret, who's gone back, her brother's wife and that, and she knew, because they'd just got married, you know, the year before. I knew him too cos he was our butcher at home, you know. So just on television or wherever you, just these things would just, they were there in front of you, you know.

BH: And would you follow what was going on in Northern Ireland, you know?

RM: Oh yeah. I would follow it all the time. I keep the radio on RTÉ. I don't get Northern Ireland as well, I probably could get it digital now. But I keep my alarm clock on RTÉ, I keep the car radio on RTÉ, so I get all the Irish news as much as I can all the time, yeah.

BH: Yeah. And when you observed all these things happening from England did it change your views politically or anything like that? Did you begin to think differently about where you'd come from?

RM: [pauses] I don't think so, I can't imagine that it did. I just, from a distance I kept thinking why don't they talk to each other, why do they say, like, I'd prefer dead in a ditch kind of thing, you know what I mean, that type, before they would speak or discuss anything with the IRA. They wouldn't, and yet they were talking, we know now during those Troubles they were talking in the background as far back as the seventies, but they pretended to all and sundry that they weren't talking. They were talking as far back as Willie Whitelaw, you know. And it was only going to be through getting together and stopping the, it's a bit like I suppose what's happening now, you wonder where the aggression and all that's coming from, and how to say stop now, you know, it's different, it's a different problem, but it's more or less the same, you know, in that everybody's going for each other kind of thing, you know. Because when people, like, maybe a doctor or the physiotherapist would say to me how do you think it's gonna, what do you, how do you think they'll stop that? I said they need to talk to each other, they need to stop being, you know, on two sides and to say we're not talking to them, you know, I won't go along with them. Because you're only going to, it's only gonna happen somewhere like that. You had South Africa, whatever you had, you know, and you gotta look at some conciliatory way of doing it. What I think is politicians here, and it's being shown now in the recent–

BH: The Brexit?

RM: Yeah, Brexit thing, that the politicians here don't really know enough about what's happening over there and I think that the two parties that came together who are supposedly keepers of the Belfast Agreement did not carry it on in the last ten years. They did nothing about it and so we got this break and then it suddenly becomes a border between two boroughs in London, simple as that, and you'll be going back again, agitating. Now they've alienated the DUP and you're gonna have to fight that war again [laughs]. Well, not a, not a war but something's gotta happen there, you know, to get them back in line again. They were out of the Good Friday Agreement, they had come back in when Martin McGuinness, Ian Paisley got together and you might've had the Chuckle Brothers, but I mean, that was outstanding in its own way, that they did get some kind of coming together there. But after that it just died again, you know.

BH: Sure. I'm wondering about as well, you know, the effect of the Troubles upon the Irish community in Britain, and England in particular, you know, the bombing campaign over here. How was that, how did that affect the Irish community, did it have a big effect?

RM: It probably did in, like, a, same as when I was saying there, they would kind of always feel that it's you Irish that's done that, you know. And even we're now feeling the Brexit thing, cos a friend of mine who's doing a course over in Abraham Moss, she says these are

coming at me saying can't get this Brexit done because of you Irish. And this woman said I don't even watch it on television, I know nothing about it, you know, the way they are [laughs], I don't listen to it, I switch it off when it comes on, so why are we responsible for it, you know. So it's very easy blaming somebody, you know, and, I suppose, maybe, cos now when it's the hundredth anniversary of the emergency, the civil war and that in Ireland, and I was reading up on some of that and it's like history repeating itself, like, with Michael Collins discussing things with Churchill and Birkenhead and things like that, and were going through the same things as we're going through now, and they were hiding things from each other, and they were saying this'll work and that'll work and this might work, and then they fought and they wiped each other out and, I don't know. At that stage maybe the mistake was then that they did what they did and were still suffering. Like, maybe if they'd have lanced the boil then it might've stopped it, but there's some things, I don't know, you can't solve.

BH: Yeah. I wonder as well, you know, in terms of the Irish community over here. You were obviously from Tyrone, so you were saying, you know, you actually have people from your home town and relatives who were directly affected by what was happening. Was there a difference in attitude between people from the North and people from the South, within the Irish community, to the Troubles, or was there–

RM: [pauses] Amongst people in Manchester was there a difference, is that it?

BH: Yes, yeah. I mean, did Northern, people from the North and South look at it in a different way?

RM: It's hard to say because I didn't get to know enough of Northern Irish people that would've discussed it openly, like, you know what I mean.

BH: Right. Over here?

RM: Yeah. I would have, I suppose, three or four and I didn't, they were kind of academic and they didn't, you know, they got on with the cultural work and being part of the Irish community. And they would've come in here to do talks or be part of drama, writing or whatever it was, and there was no, there was no difference, although sometimes they might say well, I wouldn't know as much about that, and sometimes people would say well, they won't understand that because they don't speak any Gaelic, you know. So if you were using a few Gaelic words in a piece of a project or that and they were kind of not understanding that. But I mean, you can get French words, you can, you know, like, people have to come, have to come to terms with an odd Gaelic word here and there, and non-Catholics learn Gaelic as well, it's, it's not that. I think probably, it's different, people from different areas and different classes might think of it differently and maybe I haven't interacted as much with them. I do know that I've had phone calls from people in the North who are not Catholic whose sons or daughters are coming over to go to university here and they would say maybe they could come to the Irish Centre, you know, could you maybe get them involved in something or whatever because they're gonna be Irish over there, you know, and, you know, they're just looking for somewhere or some person to welcome them or look after them the same way as somebody looked after us when we came, kind of thing.

Because there's no, I'm not saying there's no Protestant equivalent of the Irish community, because the Irish community is looked on probably as a Catholic community, but when a person comes over here they're called Paddy, you know. If they're Protestant then they could be, if they were on the building site definitely they'd be just Paddy like the rest of them and they might get things said to them in, it'd tend to be in the cultural activities and that, it wouldn't be as much difference made of them and if they were into music or they were into dancing or whatever they would blend in. But you know, like I've had people say, you know, could they go to the Irish Centre and all, they're not–

BH: I was wondering as well about the Northern Catholics, you know, as in, I know Manchester's very strong Mayo, for example, and the west coast, and my guess is that there's probably less from sort of the Ulster counties, you know, I know some Donegal, but certainly, you know.

RM: Yeah, from the Six Counties kind of thing, yeah.

BH: Aye, Six Counties, yes, and I was just wondering, you know, was there a difference there as well, you know, **[01:50:00]** would they have had, you know, because their family backgrounds and things are different, would they have watched the Troubles in a different way, you know?

RM: They have, they didn't take it into, they didn't get involved, they just thought that's them up there fighting with themselves or whatever, like, you know. I don't, there would have been pockets and places probably where they still had something come down through the generations where they still feel a sympathy for Catholics in the North or they would sympathise with the republican movement or even take part in it. Some have come from the South to do that, and there probably was, maybe in the earlier days, I wouldn't have noticed it so much now, where people from Galway or Mayo or that would've been part of supporting republican causes or whatever, you know, or fundraising or relatives action or whatever, like, you know.

BH: But would most of that, I suppose, republican causes and fundraising and so on, would that mostly be people from the North? It wouldn't be people from the South. Or would people from the South get involved as well, would they?

RM: [pauses] Very few. I'm not saying, you know like, I'd say there would be occasional, there would be sympathies definitely from a few, but there's others that just wash their hands of it. They don't want anything to do with it at all.

BH: And why is, why would that be, you know, why would they, is that just they just weren't interested, like?

RM: Well, you don't know if it's that they're not aware of their history and it doesn't matter to them, they just think those people, I don't know what they're fighting about or I don't know what it's all over, like, you know what I mean. And even if, if one tried to explain, like, you know, that a certain number of people got what they wanted in 1922 or whatever, we

got a line drawn round and we were in there whether we wanted it or not [laughs]. Somebody said oh I didn't realise that, you know, like.

BH: They hadn't thought of it.

RM: Cos they would say oh I don't know what they're fighting about. And I'd say well, like, you know like, if you, I said you have your government, you have a certain independence and whatever. We wanted that too, but we had no, we had no say in the matter, so we're corralled in there, and that's what we have to do, go along with this, whether we like it or not, and those people who felt strongly about that are still grieving or still strongly opposed to that, and still trying to get that undone. And, you know, like, if the Good Friday Agreement did something to make it kind of work both ways without [laughs] actually doing what they were trying to do with Brexit, you know, the Irish cows or whatever Paisley was talking about, you know what I mean. I think they were doing that with the line down the sea, they were saying it'll work for the traders and we won't have to put the line there, and they don't seem to be getting away with it [laughs].

BH: That's right. But you see what you just said there, the way you explained that about, you know, partition and, you know, a whole group of people being corralled against their will within the state. Was that something that had to be explained to people, you know?

RM: Yeah.

BH: You know, I'm just thinking because I know you're involved in different, you know, community groups and things like that, Federation of Irish Societies and things. Were people aware of that or did that have to be explained, you know?

RM: Well, in the case it was a cultural officer here who hadn't realised it and not thought [pauses], never thought of it like that.

BH: Right.

RM: And just wondered why they're fighting up there and why they can't just, whatever. Because of equality now, like, you know, where everybody has to be considered and, you know, you have to have so much equality that we can't even have Irish Catholic [laughs], we can't even say a prayer down at the Community Care old people's do. If somebody dies they can't say eternal rest for them or something like that because it's Catholic. We can't because all Irish people are not Catholic. So this is open to everybody and so you'd peeve a whole lot of the older people who automatically say a prayer for somebody when they're sick or say a prayer for somebody who's died [laughs] and they can't understand it. And I thought I'm discriminated against, you're discriminated against again by the powers that be, that are giving grants for you to run the thing cos they're wanting you make it a non-Irish thing and then you think well, I've given up my free time to come in here and put on an Irish activity for these people. Why do then I have, can I not, I mean to say why do you want a mass on St Patrick's Day? Then I said well, why are you having St Patrick's Day Irish parade or whatever? What are you, why would you leave what we did on St Patrick's Day out, you know? You either have it or you haven't it, you know. So you'd get those little bits in here.

BH: And would you, whenever you, like, would you read the *Irish Post* and things like that over here, yeah?

RM: Yeah, I would do. I used to read the *Dungannon Observer*. My mother would send that to me.

BH: [laughs] Is that right?

RM: Every week [laughs].

BH: She would send, she would send this over, yeah?

RM: She would send, and I'd be looking over the banister to see it had arrived on the Tuesday morning and that. And she would do a piece of writing and she'd wrap that in it because that would save–

BH: Oh a letter as well?

RM: Yeah. She would put a letter in it, yeah, or she'd put a big ring around some part she wanted me to read.

BH: Is that right?

RM: Yeah.

BH: What other kinds of things did you, like, send back and forth? Like, did you, I was going to actually ask you, I heard you were talking on the phone and stuff, did you write letters as well?

RM: Oh letters at the beginning because we didn't have the phone and, or she'd have gone down to the village and rang us. And then–

BH: She wouldn't have a phone in the house?

RM: There wasn't a phone in the house, no, when I left home. There wasn't even electric, wasn't running water. People thought, people from the South would've said you had this all up in the North, but if you lived in a hill farm in the North you didn't and that wasn't, Catholic-Protestant didn't, you know what I mean, because it took a thousand pounds to take a pole from there to there, to take, you know, if you wanted to take the electricity from Donaghmore or Cappagh or whatever, you paid one thousand pounds per pole to take it to your house. You couldn't afford it. We had spring water, rainwater and the river that, you know, to water cattle, to do spraying of spuds and things like that. Spring water for your tea and whatever, rain water for your hair, your bath, whatever, and so that was up until the seventies. I went back, that was there then in the seventies. When I came back from Birmingham some of that had come because some of these politicians who did get civil rights said these people need, I was just looking at a piece of old footage of the local village,

Cappagh, where in the 1970s they didn't have running water in the village and there's two reservoirs behind Cappagh sending the water as far as Dungannon, Moygashel, everywhere. The water's going past them and those people didn't get it.

BH: Unbelievable, yeah.

RM: You know, so.

BH: Whenever you went back on holidays and things like that, did you ever take anything back with you to England?

RM: [laughs] Yeah, you would, yeah. You would take soda bread and [pauses] maybe some, like, some of the sweets or some of the things that, you know, you didn't get over here. It was mostly soda bread, maybe a print of homemade butter or something like that.

BH: Did you ever send anything back over to Tyrone, to your mum?

RM: Oh I would've sent loads of things once they got the electric and that. I mean, I sent an iron and a kettle and different things.

BH: Is that right?

RM: Yeah, you could send all those things then, different, you know, to get the television and get things. They had an engine then I think, they got an engine, a generator in the mid-sixties, so they'd've have had a bit of electric, lights, but you had to switch that thing on, not everybody could switch it on with a handle. Then they got an automatic one, you could press a button so it was a bit easier, but that was diesel. I mean, we had the wick, the lamp with the, hurricane lamp, type lamp, we had the gas lamp, we had the tilly lamp and then we got electric round about the end of the sixties.

BH: Right. Later on then would your mum have got a TV and stuff like that and radio and things?

RM: She did, yeah.

BH: All electric.

RM: Yeah.

BH: Aye. Whenever you were coming back years later, with your sons and things like that, did the Troubles in any way effect that? Whenever you were coming back, like, do you remember encountering anything?

RM: I remember coming under fire and having to get down in the car and get them out of their car seats and lie on the floor and my mother saying the bullets will come through the door [laughs]. Because we came out from my aunt's house down past the golf course at

Dungannon and we were following an army land rover, and when it turned out on the main Dungannon Road someone was shooting **[02:00:00]** from the old railway line in in the ditch.

BH: At the land rover?

RM: At the land rover, and we were right behind it. But we were told later you should not have been near a land rover, you give them plenty of space and let them drive on because if they get done you, if you're on top of them you're gonna get done as well. And they did jump out and they, you know, switch off your effin' lights and whatever, you know, at them with the gun, and it was just cringe time, and the shooting stopped and then eventually we were allowed to move on [laughs].

BH: My goodness.

RM: So they were very little at that time, wouldn't have remember that. But later on when they were in their teens, early teens and they were going out maybe with cousins to a disco.

BH: Back in Tyrone, like?

RM: Yeah, in Cookstown or Dungannon or places like that, when they'd start talking others would go quiet and then somebody might–

BH: Over the English accents, like?

RM: Then somebody might say there's Brits in, there's Brits over there, watch them, they're Brits. And when they were younger they used to come in and say to me or to their grandmother the lads over there are calling us Brits, mum, what is he talking about? [laughs] And that was their accents cos they only heard soldiers talking like that, you know.

BH: Yeah. So what, do they have memories of that, of those days coming back?

RM: Yeah, they do, yeah.

BH: And what did they think about it? Do they have views about it now?

RM: Well, then for a while you see they wouldn't come. When they were like into their teens and bigger they wouldn't come, and Sean's going now because, you know like, he'll stay with the music and that, it's different. But for, like, until the Troubles stopped it was dangerous for younger lads who may be mistaken for British soldiers because–

BH: And did that put them off going back, like, do you think?

RM: It made them uneasy, yeah.

BH: Right, right. So then as they got older, as they got into their teenage years you're saying they didn't go back then for a good while?

RM: No. They wouldn't have gone back, they'd have gone over probably to see my mother sometimes, you know, or write to her and that, you know.

BH: But they wouldn't go out into Cookstown or anything like that?

RM: No.

BH: To the pubs or anything like that?

RM: No, not in the Troubles, no.

BH: Right. I suppose that's another thing to ask about, really, is, you know, it sounded like when you were growing up religion was an important thing for you personally and certainly whenever you joined the Legion of Mary when you were at college. When you moved over to England properly, then, did religion remain an important part of your life?

RM: Yes, because I carried on in the Legion of Mary cos I could go in the Legion of Mary anywhere that, it was in most parishes. So when I went to Birmingham I joined there and I would've done the same work like visiting East Birmingham Hospital or going out and doing census work for the parish priest or whatever, visiting old people and shopping maybe for, maybe someone who's widowed or a big family on hard times. You met other people of the same persuasion or with the same aims and objectives and they were, they were good friends to have or people to support you or even go out at the weekend with, you know like, to go somewhere and socialise until you got settled in. So I found that was the same in Longsight where I went to St Joseph's. I did the census up at St Richard's with a number of clerical students from Kilkenny and we got the school built, St Richard's Catholic Junior School, we got it built on the strength of the numbers we collected off Catholic children, between just babies and three-year-olds. We did, I then went to Prestwich so I joined there and I stayed in the Legion of Mary until I joined Community Care in '87, yeah.

BH: Is that right? So even well after you were married, then?

RM: Married, yeah, because it was one night a week doing a piece of work and one night a week to a meeting to report back on what you were doing and to be allocated work for the following week. And it became something that Sean, I suppose John would've understood, but one of my son's, when a cousin came over to go to university in Manchester and he was showing her around, John was with him, I was at work, so they came home and, how did you go on, and John said do you know what Sean said to Siobhan? He said when you come here now this week, this is freshers' week, there will be loads of people asking you to join organisations and join this and join that, and he said whatever you do, he said don't join any religious organisations, he said cos my mum got into one when she was at college in Belfast and she hasn't got out of it yet [laughs]. But I found that, probably similar to being in the Irish community, it was within the Catholic community and it meant that, you know, like-minded people kind of thing, if you were away from home.

BH: Yeah. So it wasn't just always just about faith, it was about friendship?

RM: It wasn't so much about faith, it was friendship and, I suppose, helping people, you know like, just an effort to understand that people were maybe hitting hard times and that if you could help them at all, you know, I would do that. I'd rather do that than give a hundred pounds of a donation because I would know that it had actually been done, you know.

BH: So you mentioned there as well that in later years you became involved in Manchester Community Care.

RM: Yeah.

BH: And was that part of the same thing? I know, I know there different things.

RM: It was similar and it, it was, it was similar in only that it wasn't specifically Catholic in that sense. I'm not saying the Legion of Mary wouldn't help non-Catholics or atheists or whoever they might have been. In fact part of it would've been maybe talking to somebody who'd lapsed and you didn't say anything about coming back. You just went and talked and visited them and said the priest was interested in how they were getting on and that, you know. And sometimes even in the London situation, some people from the Irish community who had lived together and hadn't married and were getting older, they had it on their conscience that they were living in sin or something. They would ask you was there any way they could come back, go to confession and see the priest and get married properly, get their marriage, get their union ratified, you know, and you'd do things like that. So you didn't know what was going to present itself to you, you know.

BH: That kind of idea of helping people and welfare, was that something that you developed as life went on or was that something you kind of felt from a young age?

RM: That would've been something I grew up with because even though we didn't have much there were people around us who had less and we would've always taken a bottle of milk to them or my mother would've made a pan of soda bread or some homemade butter or potato pudding or whatever she had. She'd send us to the different houses with some of them or some eggs or whatever, you know. If they'd have family and she knew that they were struggling for food we just shared what we had, and you helped them, you worked for them, nobody, money didn't pass hands you just did it, you know, and just got one with it. I suppose it's maybe a kind of communism or something [laughs]. I don't know what Jeremy Corbyn would call it [laughs].

BH: I'm just thinking here, getting towards most of the things that I've asked, just a last few couple of questions. When the peace process came about, you've mentioned this already a wee bit, what did you think about that? Did you think it was a good thing?

RM: Yes. I mean, I was glad to see it happen and I was pleased that, you know, that, you know, they'd got together and they'd sorted something out, you know, because it was hard to see all the families and all the relatives and all that, people left behind, how they were affected and you just knew that couldn't carry on, you know, or you felt it couldn't carry on, so they had to get to some, some place where it would be easier [extended pause].

BH: Sure.

RM: It's just, we met, I went to Stormont with Michael Forde from here and a fella from the Irish in Britain. He was down there on Saturday.

BH: Michael Forde, are you talking about another boy as well?

RM: Yeah. Michael and the other lad who was beside him, across the table from me, a founder member of that group. It started in 1973, the Irish in Britain, and it was to lobby the Irish government to help the Irish, cos in the seventies we were suffering here because of the backlash from what was happening over there. And all the Irish would've been, and then there were people leaving to come away from that, and even the Bombay Street, the people that came over from Belfast, there was an Irish priest here who was, well, he was from Derry, Father Fullen, and he was the chaplain for the Irish community and he was in charge of St Brendan's down at Old Trafford. And he would've come to the likes of John and all his mates with lorries to take furniture to houses that he had set up to house these **[02:10:00]** people and things like that, you know. So he was doing a lot of work to settle the Belfast people in, you know. Well, maybe other, other places besides Belfast, cos you didn't know who was being put out of where or who had to leave because they felt uneasy.

BH: Some of these people were settled in Manchester, is that right?

RM: It was a good few settled in Manchester, yeah. I mean, I came up from Birmingham that year to John's and he had a family of ten in the house. He had a husband and wife and a family of ten in the house cos Father Fullen couldn't find anywhere to put them. Eventually they got two council houses somewhere down in Longsight and broke a door through and gave them the two houses. But John kept them for a month while they were waiting for that and a lot of, there'd be a lot of people who've come from that, from that era, you know, who probably could tell you about being burnt out. I know there's one of the writers who'll talk next, next Thursday night who was with her friend going into the house after it had been burnt to look for, her mother just died recently and she was looking for albums and jewellery and things belonging to her mother. The whole street was burnt she said, like, you know.

BH: Yeah. So that was, was that quite a common thing, then, that people who had been burnt out of Belfast–

RM: Yeah. They either went, they took them down to the Curragh at the beginning, down in Kildare, and I think they took them to somewhere else, some other, religious place, Mount Melleray or somewhere, and then if they emigrated the likes of the Legion of Mary, the priest or whoever, the chaplains in the cities found places for them.

BH: Is that right? So it was the Legion of Mary would've been involved in–

RM: They would've been involved, Father Fullen was in the Legion of Mary. But not specifically, that would've been just work that they would've come across and then you

could've been sent then to a Belfast family to help them because they'd settled in, they might've needed something or they might've needed whatever.

BH: And you were saying your husband John, that he took in some people from Belfast, is that right?

RM: Yeah.

BH: And they had been burnt out of a–

RM: Yeah, somewhere in Bombay Street or that area, you know.

BH: And was there a lot of that, you know? Was that fairly common or was that unusual?

RM: Well, it, during that period in 1969, you see, a lot happened then. But then there were others that, that had to leave because they were intimidated for some reason, like, you know, with neighbours or whatever, they were blamed for, whatever, you know.

BH: Okay. So the Irish in Britain, the dinner that you were at there on Saturday, were you involved at the very start of that, then, in 1973?

RM: No, no I wasn't involved then. Michael and Seamus McGarry founded it. It was based in London and they said that we should be looking to the Irish government to give us help, to support us, to help the Irish people on this side, and it was 1994 before we got the first grant, you know.

BH: Yeah. And was that specifically about the Troubles or was that about the Irish community in Britain from the fifties and sixties as well?

RM: All of them, because they were presenting as elderly now and a lot of them had been on the lump with no, they didn't want to go and find, they had no pension, they had no, they might've been disabled, they wouldn't go near a civil servant or whatever because they were frightened of even being lifted and taken in and charged for not having paid tax or whatever, you know. So they were in a predicament, so that needed sorting out, and really Legion of Mary, the Irish Community Care started to help those people falling through the net. It wasn't really to put on parties, although that's for their mental wellbeing and things like that. If you have spare time and you get staff and you get a project funded that's alright, you can do it. But it's not there to do the work of the statutory services. It's there to link a person who's in difficulties because you know they should be getting something, but they're frightened to go near the city council or the social services because they're afraid of maybe being sent back or just being charged with, you know, or being asked for a big sum of money or, you know, whatever.

BH: Sure, yeah. Was the Irish in Britain, was it particularly concerned with the effects of the Troubles as well?

RM: No, no, not specifically the Troubles because it was just all the Irish had so many different needs, you know.

BH: And what about the Irish government, then? How did they react? Were they receptive?

RM: Yeah, they did come on board gradually, you know. The first one to, I suppose, the embassy would've always come and listened or come to a funeral or come to some, come to something. It was in 1994 that we got the first grant [pauses] and that was Ruairi Quinn at the time was the Minister for Labour, so it was the Labour, it was the Minister for Labour, so it must've been to help Irish workers over here or whatever, you know, at that stage, and that was only, I suppose it was good enough then, it was four thousand pounds. But it wasn't until they became more flushed with money in the Celtic Tiger times that they started putting it into culture as well and they're still putting it into some cultural things. Cos our argument was that the culture is for the wellbeing and the identity of the Irish people is just as important. You might think you're giving it for music and dancing or whatever, but it is an important aspect of keeping these Irish together and happy and, you know, mentally, mentally better off, you know.

BH: Sure. Okay, I'm just going to ask the last few questions now. I think I've asked most of the ones off these pages. Looking back over your life, are you glad you left Northern Ireland back in 1969?

RM: I probably, I've no regrets. People ask me where I'd rather be. I feel happy in both places cos we bought a house over in, we bought a site of an old barracks and the caretaker's house, the ruin of the caretaker's house dating back to the Plantation, and because of my interest in culture and history, because of my art, my artistic leanings and writings and art, I intend to make it into an artist/writers' retreat, and so we've self-built that over the past ten, well, it's twenty years now. And so nine years ago we had it finished so we could live in it, and so we've been spending kind of fifty per cent of the time here and fifty per cent of the time there, and I'm happy in both places, you know. And the reason I'm hap-, I suppose I have no regrets is that this really widened my horizons coming here and I met so many more people and had so many more experiences than I would've had probably in Tyrone or wherever I might've worked in the vicinity of Tyrone or maybe Belfast, if I'd have stayed within that I think. But it would've taken a different turn obviously. I wouldn't have expanded and met as many people. I'm not kind of boasting about it, but I, as I say I know people from all over Ireland. I've met every president that there was since [laughs] Mary Robinson, Mary McAleese, Michael D. I've met them all, all the ambassadors, all the prime ministers. And we had them at the Centre, we were recognised enough for them to come and visit us and meet the Irish people here, and councillors on the city council, and if like that, that we can make a mark on them. And I feel like maybe, you know like, if some of the ones that are in need in Ireland could do as, I don't think the politicians are reaching out as much to the people in their own areas. They seem to go abroad and they'll come over, be here for St Patrick's Day and the parade and the whole thing, and they'll go to America and they'll go to Australia, go to all them places. So I've, practically every minister or every diaspora minister, I've worked with them all and, you know, been to Stormont, met all the politicians there, and they're different when they're in there in the dining room, they're like you and me even though they're out there going at each other, and there's a bit of kind of, I

suppose, dishonesty about that, you know. Politicians are politicians when they're in the press, but when they're down in the dining room in Stormont they're getting each other a drink and they're getting chips and what do you want and whatever, you know, and no difference between them, but they fight it out, out there.

BH: What do you think has been the most important thing in your life, whenever you migrated? What's been the most important thing for you?

RM: [pauses] I suppose just being settled **[02:20:00]** in our house with my husband and the two lads and that, because when we talked about it today, going back forty-nine years, John said and it didn't do us any harm, you know, we bought this house and it didn't do us any harm. So I think it was a safe base and we were happy enough to stay on there. I didn't like change and I didn't like moving house or whatever. We had no reason to move house, although it's a bit big now for us probably and there's steps up to it. So as you get older you start looking for ways of getting around that, you know.

BH: Do you think moving to England and living over here has changed you in any way?

RM: Oh it has yeah, yeah definitely.

BH: What way?

RM: Well, I just, as I talked about a wider horizon, I just feel that I'm more, I'm interested in worldwide things. I might've been in Northern Ireland, but I've experienced a lot of national and international things and I take a big interest in it, like, you know. As somebody said whenever I stood down from Community Care in June, and said what are you doing with your spare time, I said I'm watching Brexit in parliament or something like that [laughs]. Cos some people say you can switch that on and play it when you get home, and I don't like seeing *Question Time* or *The View* from Northern Ireland, I don't like seeing them later on, two days later, three.

BH: You want to see them at the time.

RM: I want to see them at the time. If somebody has said something today in Stormont I want to hear it today or tonight, you know, on the news. I don't want to hear it a fortnight later because something else has taken its place, so I do find that I waste a lot of time doing that [laughs].

BH: Is that right? So you watch, you would still watch *The View* and things like that?

RM: Oh I would, yeah. I get BBC Northern Ireland, so I'll watch a lot of that.

BH: Or BBC Radio Ulster I suppose, there's that.

RM: Yeah, Radio, Radio Ulster, yeah. I could get that on the television, it comes over on that, but I don't tend to listen to the radio from the television, if you know what I mean. I watch, I just keep it plugged into RTÉ on the radios and Northern Ireland, BBC Northern Ireland on

the television for the news and *Newsline* and whatever, to see what they're doing, you know, so I still wouldn't lose interest in it. Now whenever I would be complaining about some of the things they're doing there, I just noticed, like, my sister and the family and that, you know like, even, I might read a letter in the *Irish News* where somebody's complaining about what's happening now and, you know, how they should go for a border poll and stuff like that, and I might say yeah, you know, maybe they should and stuff like that. My sister would say no, I don't want to go through any more of that again. She said but I don't want to go back to what was happening. And so the ones at home really do not want to experience that, because I was away from that, I wasn't, I do know that the times I was at home with my mother when something happened, I knew the torture she went through. But if you had sons and daughters out at night and you were worried about where they were or you were worried that they'd join an organisation and be involved, and you didn't know cos you're secretive and whatever and you didn't know what was going on, you were in an awful kind of limbo and you were worried all the time. And the peace process probably brought an end to that and they were able to relax and go out and go places and travel and not be so worried about them being at home. I know when I was at home once my mother knocked on the bedroom door and said get up. She said my other brother, who was the youngest brother, hadn't come home, went missing. And she rang Father Faul, cos he tended to, she said if he's lifted, Father Fau-, they have to tell Father Faul, apparently. Rang Father Faul, Father Faul checked it out, no, he wasn't lifted. So then she enquired with somebody else and they said well, does he go to Monaghan to the dances or anything like that? She said he might've done. So ring Monaghan Garda Station. Right, yes, he's here. He was at a dance in Monaghan, he was stopped by a guard, he was breathalysed, he was found over the limit or [laughs] he wouldn't take the breathalyser or something.

BH: Right.

RM: So they arrested him. And she said where are you, what are yous gonna do with him? He says we'll let him out, he said, when you come up with five hundred pounds. This was away on in the evening and I had taken her around all the different families and all these connections where he might've been or who he was with and stuff like that, trying to find out. And I was going away the next day, I was coming back to Manchester, and she kept saying to me do you have to go back tomorrow? And I knew she was thinking if he's found dead in a ditch somewhere there'll be a wake and a funeral and whatever, like, you know what I mean. I might've had a few days because I'd be starting school the next, you know, I might've been going back the twenty-fifth of August and I'd be starting school on the first of September, something like that, but I would've having to stay if something bad had happened anyway, but it was just, you know, her hands would be shaking. So we had to go into Dungannon to the bank and get five hundred pounds out and she could hardly count it, you know, with her fingers shaking. And we headed off up to Monaghan with it and she says they're worse up here than they are in the North, you know, she says [laughs]. They're on about coming up here and they're wanting into you, she said they're far worse up here [laughs; indecipherable], she says that'll teach them or something like that, you know, because she was kind of thinking if they're leaning towards what the police do to them in the North [laughs], they'll do the same to them in the South, like.

BH: Was that something you worried about, then? Because I know it was obviously a lot worse for your relatives who were living there and you were kind of out of it a bit when you were, you know, your own children wouldn't have to worry in the same way about them. Did you still worry about was happening to your family?

RM: Yeah, I did, I did, yeah. I worried about them and you got a phone call and the phone calls are usually bad news or whatever like, you know. It wasn't always bad news because I would ring, they would ring sort of every week or so anyway, but then if they rang out of the blue, you know, it was something or somebody had been injured or somebody died or somebody was missing or whatever, like, you know, and you were removed from it, you know, as well as that. But it was, it was strange, like, cos you knew what they were going through, like, as I said the Cappagh, where those lads were shot in Cappagh, that lad that Sean knew and used to run about with, and my cousin's son was shot in Loughgall. His wake was on television. I watched the news. It was my aunt's bedroom. I could see it, I'd stayed there, you could, the holy pictures and whatever around the wall, I remember being in the bedroom. There was, obviously he was in the republic-, he was in the IRA. The guard of honour was there with their berets and whatever and their black whatever, and then 'twas taken out of the door and carried over, over the lane to the church and that was all on television news. It brought it home. I mean, you could be, even my cousin in Africa when she got the newspaper said oh there was a Duggan face looking up at her, you know. So if it hit your family you were hearing a lot of, a lot about it and it was obviously sad for the family or, you know, whoever was left behind because they were a son or a daughter or whatever they were, like, you know what I mean.

BH: I suppose I'd never really thought about that either. Just you were saying there your son or your daughter could have joined an organisation and you wouldn't know. I suppose that would be something you'd be worried about too, if you didn't know. I never thought about it that way, you know.

RM: Yeah, cos my mother used to say, to all her friends, she'd say keep condemning it. She said if, when they're growing up, if you keep condemning something she said it'll ingrain, it'll ingrain it in their mind that it's wrong, you know, whenever they're, when they're not able work it all out that that's a bad thing, I should stay away from all that, you know. And she did, she was outspoken, like, you know, she was in a dangerous position, like, in and around the area she was in because she would ask questions, she didn't want them going through that like, you know. And we had, I mean, there's that Stakeknife, who's responsible for a number of deaths in the background, it's come out now. Well, my brother-in-law's nephew was assassinated by him. We had a split then in who would go to the funeral because he was supposedly killed because he was an informer, because he was questioned for seven days and must've given something away or something. So whenever he got out they debriefed him. Stakeknife was doing the debriefing and he, he decided who was, who was going to be shot for giving information away. But his remit was to get rid of x number of IRA men or something like that, I don't know, so he was, but whereas my mother would faithfully go to the funeral because it was her son-in-law's, it was her nephew, and he used to, he used to take photographs for the local paper, and he used to take, drive a minibus and take the relatives down to Long Kesh, you know, on a Saturday and that. So he was

[02:30:00] as I say assassinated, well, then some of the family wouldn't go to the funeral because they said they wouldn't go to the family–

BH: They didn't want to be associated with it.

RM: With an informer, yeah. So you could have splits and I mean, it wasn't bad, it wasn't bad at all in our family, but on occasions like that, you know. And then sometimes my mother would say the policeman blown up in Ballygawley there, it was shocking, she said I think they've found the guns and them men. She said I prayed that they'd find the men that done that, you know, cos she was kind of, she didn't take sides and she thought if it was a vile act people should get caught and do justice, like, you know. And when the hunger strikes were on–

BH: Cos that was a big event over here as well.

RM: Yeah, yeah. There was some local ones from our village, our area and that, because there's, there's one buried in the local churchyard and there's [pauses] three of the Loughgall lads buried in the local church, so there's a lot of it around us.

BH: Sure.

RM: And you would know all the relatives, you'd know them all, like, you know. And [pauses] they were praying, they would have little rallies and pray while the hunger strikes were on, and she would, she asked was she praying for him to come off the hunger strike or was she praying for him to die, you know, and the guy in charge couldn't answer that, but if she needed an answer for that she'd better go into the house [laughs], so she did go into the house, like, you know. But young, young ones would maybe pull up her plants or her flowers and fling them up on the roof of the house, things like that, you know, a bit of, just a bit of intimidation, like, because they knew she might not, they weren't too sure where her sympathies lay, like, you know.

BH: Sure. I mean, looking at that there, do you think you would have been a different person if you'd have stayed there instead of moving over to England? Do you think England has made you different in that way, you know?

RM: Probably has and it's kept me at a distance from that cos I don't know how I would've reacted at the time, going through that, you know. I just know what it, what I could do from a distance, like, you know, what I thought from a distance, you know. But as you say some people might get involved for different reasons, like, you know. I remember [pauses], I talk about my mother saying come in, don't be talking or don't be seen talking there, because she was in a little group of twelve houses, little pensioners' bungalows and a few family houses. And a soldier came and he knelt on her foot-, he knelt on the path down from her house, and he put the gun through the hedge, and he was pointing it up, supposedly covering his mates who were stopping cars on the main road, which was just about as far away as the wall out there, and he was there on his knees, polish on his face and all that [laughs]. I went out and I said what are you doing? And he said I'm just doing my duty. Then he kept on saying that, and I said you're from a northern, north Lancashire regiment, I see

your badge, you know. I said I know a bit about your regiment because I said I teach in a school in Manchester, I said, and they come in, I said, to show us videos, show the children videos of a career in the army, and I said I've watched a lot of videos, but I've not seen any of this on it [laughs]. And he said, and he just kept on saying I'm only doing my duty, cos he, it's a bit like get Brexit done, he has to stick to whatever the thing is [laughs]. And my mother was saying come in Rose, come in, you know, and don't be seen out there, people will be looking at you and you shouldn't be talking to them and all that. So I said oh this lad had been kept for a long time and they'd taken the hubs of the cars, taken the inside of the doors, they'd opened the boot, everything from the boot was out on the street, and he was standing there spread-eagled against the car. And I said what's, I said what's he done? What are you doing to him? And he was only doing his duty, and I says, well, I says do you know what? I said do you know what you're doing? I said, that lad, I said, will recruit people, I said if he's not already involved, I said whoever he is, whatever he's done, and people watching him here for the last two hours, I said well, you know, it'll be part of the, of helping them to get somebody to say look, this is what they do to you.

BH: Sure, yeah.

RM: And he said, he kept on saying I'm only doing my duty, and then he broke down and then he said I shouldn't be here anyway, and I said, well, he said I was going to have to go to the Gulf and I didn't want to go to the Gulf, so I chose to come here instead [laughs]. And I mean, he was probably only nineteen, twenty, he was only a young lad, and that's what they were going through. But I would come back here and a past pupil or a lad would come in and he was in the army. I'm off duty. Where were you? I was in Northern Ireland, miss. Where were you? Such a place. Oh yeah. And I'd say you know, like, when you're searching people and doing all this, I said how do you know if these people that you're searching and you keep them all for two hours and you don't let them go anywhere? He said oh you have, you know they're one of the boys. I said how do you know? He said well, you're given a whole lot of photographs, and I said where do you have? And he said you have them in your cap, you hide them in your cap and then, you know, when you're questioning you take off your cap and you look. We've got these suspects, we do that, and I said but are you allowed to keep them as long as that and do all that to them? Cos I said that lad got away and he came running down the street and he saw me at the door and he came in and he said can I use the phone? And I said yeah, and he said, I said have you finished, have they finished with you? And he said nah, but they won't give me back my licence, and he said they're not supposed to keep that, and I said well, if you ring that Father Faul I said, he'll help you. He said no, I'm ringing my dad, so he rang the dad and the dad came out. Anyway, they got it sorted out and he went away off. I asked him who he was and John knew his father, John was at school with his father, like, you know, said I know that lad's father, I know who he is now. But it's just, this lad who's in this side says to me, they're not supposed to keep them, they're supposed to have the RUC with them, and they're only supposed to keep them ten minutes [laughs], so I don't know. But that was the kind of dilemma, being here and being there. And then I had another man from Tyrone, on the Tyrone Association, who said to me, the son had gone, these career people came out to the school, he had joined the army and he said don't tell anybody at home, and that was a dilemma for him, you know.

BH: Sure. I can see that, yeah. I was wondering as well, like, maybe not living in Longsight, but did you ever know any, you know, other mothers or fathers that lived in England whose sons were in the army or something like that?

RM: Yeah. I mean, there was, I went to a funeral of a fella in the army. His mother was in the Legion of Mary with me in Prestwich, you know, so we would've gone to the funeral, yeah.

BH: Is that right, yeah? And her son was in the British Army.

RM: Yeah.

BH: Had been sent over to–

RM: Yeah, but it wasn't, he didn't die in, he didn't die, he wasn't killed in Northern Ireland, like, you know.

BH: Ah right, okay.

RM: But I mean, it was, it was an army funeral, like, you know what I mean. And when our son was in university in Leeds he did some complementary work and whatever it was, he was sent to Catterick, Catterick, Catt-, what do you call that army camp in Yorkshire? Catterick, Catterick?

BH: Yeah. Catterick is it?

RM: And he got in touch with me and he said mum I'm being sent on this assignment, you know, and it might've been, I don't know what, I don't know how he was involved in whatever it was. He said I'll be going to this army camp and I'll be standing on guard outside, I'll have to do this, that and the other, and I said what are you asking me for? And he said well, would it be any harm to gran or yourselves or anything like that? [laughs] And I said, no, I said whose gonna know, but I said you've gotta make up your mind yourself, like, you know, whatever you do, just keep it to yourself and do whatever you have to do, whatever it is. So there's always that.

BH: Yeah. I suppose my last question is where is home to you now or what does home mean to you now?

RM: I always say going home, meaning going back there. But I'm, now I'd say I'm going home, when we're finished I'm going home, because that's home, whatever [pauses]. Home, I suppose, would still be Tyrone if, if it was like the heart, home is where the heart is, and home here would be the practical home, you know what I mean. I don't think you can get out of that, and I have stipulated in my will that I want to be buried in the–

BH: Tyrone, yeah?

RM: Tyrone. John as well **[02:40:00]**. Apparently the lads don't have to do that, but [laughs] I'd be hoping they would [laughs].

BH: And you'd been saying that you've been building a house there. Would you ever move back there or anything?

RM: I was trying to and I was hoping the fifty-fifty would've become full-time and I've taken, come out of Community Care now, but unfortunately I have an illness and John has an illness and most of our appointments are here with, you know, consultants here and with the state of things over there now it's too, my brother-in-law is waiting two years for a follow-up to something he had over there and it wasn't any better. I was listening to them last night on the *Houses of Parliament* saying like you've gotta do something about it, you know, they've gotta get some funds now cos there's no, there's no government for them, in this period, and the shocking waiting lists and shocking whatever. Although John did have a stroke over there, we went to Craigavon Hospital and it was very good. If you do something in an emergency, you get there, you're in and they have to deal with you. But to go in for something and to have follow-ups and that, it takes ages, you know.

BH: Oh I know, the waiting lists are awful.

RM: And so, with this year John had an operation, he couldn't fly a month before or a month after, and so I found myself going alone, you know, to do a few things, just to see to the house and check, maybe get lawns mown and do a few things, you know. But, no, it's more or less finished now and I could go, but that, not having that support that we have had all the years.

BH: Yes, that would be a change, like.

RM: Here, I mean, like, alright, made an appointment yesterday for the GP, you have to wait three weeks, you're not getting it till the 18th. Everything takes a long time here, but it's far longer over there, you know.

BH: Sure. I think I've asked most of the things that I'm going to ask. But what I need to ask now is, is there anything that I should've asked about that I've missed over or passed over that you think's important, that I didn't ask about?

RM: No, we've covered a lot [laughs].

BH: [laughs] We've covered a lot, yes.

RM: I suppose there'll be things when I go away that I'll say I should've, I should've told you about or should've covered.

BH: Well, if there's nothing major.

RM: No, it's nothing [pauses], I don't think [pauses].

BH: Okay. Well, listen, I'll bring it to a close then and I just want to say again, Rose, thanks very much for agreeing to do it, and thanks very much for taking two hours and forty-two minutes.

RM: Is that what it is? [laughs]

BH: It is, aye, of your time on a Friday evening, of a Friday night.

RM: No, no, you're welcome. It's been a pleasant experience to be able to tell some of that and if it gives somebody an idea of what people have been through in the past, well, in my case fifty years away from Northern Ireland, then, you know. It's more than fifty actually, fifty-one probably, if I left in '69 [laughs]. No, it is, it is fifty.

BH: You've dropped out a few years [laughs].

RM: Yeah. But as I say I did spend a lot of the summer holidays and things there, so I never lost touch, and I still cut turf and have our turf fire and things like that.

BH: It doesn't sound, it doesn't sound–

RM: I tell you what, I bring a bag of turf back to give to a person here for Christmas.

BH: Is that right?

RM: She's, she's, her people are from County Clare. She's involved in *Coronation Street* and [pauses] those different things, she's an actress and a director. But she remembers being at home in her grandmother's house and the smell of smoke, and she says there's nothing she enjoys better on Christmas Day than having turf in the fire, and I was, when I delivered a bag to her, her brother said she even pulls the turf out, so that it's, you know, instead of going up the chimney it's coming out into the room [laughs]. So that's nostalgic.

BH: It is.

INTERVIEW ENDS