INTERVIEW M02: CECIL LOWRY

Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interviewee: Cecil Lowry
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Transcriber: Naomi Wells

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

BH: Okay, so that's the thing running now. So we've determined there it's the thirty-first of October. I'm here in the Samuel Alexander Building in Manchester University and I'm here with Cecil Lowry. Do you want to say hello Cecil, introduce yourself for the tape?

CL: Yes, hi there, good morning Barry, nice of you to welcome me along.

BH: Cheers. I'll just move that a bit closer to you to make sure that I get your voice. Okay, so as I said, this takes sort of a roughly life history format, so I'm just going to begin by asking you some questions about your memories of growing up in Northern Ireland, so begin at the beginning, when and where were you born?

CL: I was born in Downpatrick in County Down, county town of County Down actually, in March 1948.

BH: Right, okay, and what did your parents do?

CL: My dad had been a soldier in the Second World War. When he came back from the war at the end of 1945 he got a job as a bus driver for Ulster Transport, then he became a petrol tank driver and then he moved on to driving for the RAF at the RAF station, RAF Bishops Court, County Down.

BH: Ah right, okay, so a lot of driving then.

CL: He was basically very much into vehicles. During the war, when he'd been a prisoner of war and prior to be being a prisoner of war, he drove army vehicles, so my dad was very, very much into vehicles.

BH: Okay, and was he originally from the Downpatrick area?

CL: Yes, yes, born and bred in Downpatrick. The Lowry family originate from in and around the County Down area. I actually traced them back, they come from Killinchy, you know,

Killinchy on the way to Comber, so you've Lowrys over there, then there's a lot of them that moved into the County Down area, and my mother was also from the same area.

BH: She's from Downpatrick as well?

CL: She was, well, just outside, she's from a little town outside Downpatrick near Killough in County Down, and she came from a sort of a farming type family, they didn't have a farm, but my grandfather worked on farms.

BH: Okay, and what about your father then? What did his family do? Were they farmers?

CL: No, no, no. My grandfather Lowry he worked for the council. He seemed to have several jobs from what I could ascertain. He worked, he was a part-time fireman in Downpatrick, he dug graves in the churches there and he worked for the council, that's about as much as I can ascertain.

BH: Sure, yeah, and was he–?

CL: Cos he had died before I was, I was, he died before I was born, so I never really knew him, and my grandmother on Lowry side she, she, I did meet her, but I was only like, three, four, five years old and she died when I was about four, so I can't remember much about her.

BH: Okay, were there any other family then? Were there uncles and aunts or grandparents on the other side?

CL: Lots, lots, absolutely lots, but I didn't have any brothers or sisters, I'm an only one.

BH: Ah right, okay.

CL: I'm an only child, no brothers or sisters, but lots on both sides of the family, very, very close Irish family groupings, met all the time, looked after each other, very close.

BH: Yeah, and what about your mum then? What did she do?

CL: Well, my mum, from what I can gather, when she was about sixteen, seventeen, went into what they call service and she ended up working for people in some of the big houses, and I know that she worked in Belfast during the war as a housekeeper for a minister somewhere up on the Malone Road in Belfast, because she told me about remembering the Belfast blitz and that they hid under the stairs in this particular house. So she worked for that and then later on, after I was born, she ended up as a school, cooking in the school that I went to and eventually ended up as school meals supervisor for my school, which was Down High School in Downpatrick, and so she worked in there and my dad worked at RAF Bishops Court. But my dad was a very hard worker, he had two jobs, he was also the steward of the Royal British Legion club in Downpatrick, so he worked at his job with the vehicles in Bishops Court during the day and five or six evenings a week he would be serving drinks in the British Legion club.

BH: Is that right? And was that a voluntary role as a steward or–?

CL: No, no, he got paid for that, oh he was a steward, it was a paid, paid job cos, you know, they worked hard, so my dad had actually two jobs and my mother had a job, so they worked very hard to sort of keep me [laughs], if you like, and he was, he was, talking about my dad, he was very, very big into British Legion, having been a military man for seven and a half years, so when he came back very, very much into the British Legion.

BH: And was that quite a popular thing in Downpatrick, the British Legion club?

CL: Yes it was, it was very popular, as far as I'm aware those clubs closed down some years ago, it doesn't exist anymore, but yeah, it was very, very popular, and I have to admit that it was popular with both sides of the community, believe it or not, yeah. There didn't seem in those days, and I'm talking here, my memories are going back to the fifties and early sixties, that anybody who had a military bent regardless of where they came from was always welcomed into the, into the British Legion club, and he also was a, he carried the flag, the Northern Ireland flag.

BH: A flag bearer.

CL: He was a flag bearer, and you'll, you'll, the Festival of Remembrance, well, it's actually coming up this Saturday as we speak.

BH: That's right, yeah.

CL: He carried the Northern Ireland flag there for six or seven years, so I remember him going over, and he was also, he, talking about my dad, I only found this out actually within the last year, I didn't know it, but he was in the Home Guard. Now I didn't know that the Home Guard was disbanded in '45, right, but it was reformed again in 1948 due the Cold War threat and my dad became a sergeant in the Home Guard, didn't know it, only reason I found out was about a year ago when I met a man who's still alive who knew him and he was in the Home Guard with him, so he told me about this, and it's interesting because I can recall a, top of his wardrobe there was a 30-, a Lee-Enfield 303 with box of ammunition when I was like, sort of six, seven, eight, nine years of age, and I can remember seeing it, but I'd never wondered why, why, why he'd got a gun, now I know.

BH: Yeah, so it sounds like your dad then, for your dad then, the military experience was important, it was something that was important to him.

CL: Incredibly important. He suffered badly as a prisoner of war, he was taken prisoner by the Japanese during the Malayan Singapore campaign in 1942 and he spent three and a half years as a prisoner of war working on the Thai-Burma railway, which is quite famous, there's been films recently the *Bridge on the River Kwai*, *The Railway Man* etcetera, etcetera, and he was in quite a bad state when he came back, apparently. But my memories of him was, he was good, but he had a vicious temper, and, and quite often when I was little he would

wake up in the middle of the night shouting and screaming and running up and down, shooting imaginary Japanese, and my mother had to explain to me what that was all about.

BH: Right, yeah, so something like the British Legion club then, was that a predominately male and adult place, or was it–?

CL: Very male.

BH: Male, yeah, yeah.

CL: Those days, in the fifties and early sixties, don't recall many if any women coming in, and I certainly know that my mother would only go there very occasionally, if it was, if it was a special evening for something, but day-to-day stuff was all male.

BH: Sure, what about school then? So you mentioned Downpatrick High, but where did you go to primary school?

CL: Well, I went to a school, my first year, called the Southwell school in Downpatrick and it was like, I, I'm trying to remember, it was founded by Edward Southwell and it was the original primary schools. Now I don't remember much about it, but don't forget I'm only five at the time and I was only there for a year, and then I was moved across to the prep department of Down High, so I actually from about six or seven years of age right through till eighteen went through the whole of Down High.

BH: So you were there in the same place?

CL: I was right the way through in the same school, which was the Protestant grammar school in Downpatrick, as opposed to the Catholic grammar school, which was St Patrick's school, and then there was a Catholic secondary modern school and there was a Protestant secondary modern school.

BH: Right, okay.

CL: Right, so I have no idea whether my parents paid for me to go to Down High School, Down High or not. I know that I passed the eleven-plus, so I probably must've been okay. But if, if I can sort of follow the school side of it on, my school was about a good mile away and we obviously used to walk to school, but the St Patrick's Catholic High School, I could see it virtually, it was about three hundred yards away, and I remember one of the most interesting things was walking to my school with a green blazer on, we had green blazers, they had red blazers, well, maroon blazers, and I remember walking to school passing all the Catholic boys going to their grammar school as I was going to my Protestant grammar school, and it was always just hello, morning, how are you and, and I remember, I don't know **[00:10:00]** if I mentioned it to my mother or what, but I remember thinking to myself why have I got to walk a mile, why can't I go there.

BH Yeah [laughs], yeah, yeah.

CL: Yeah, so those, those are kind of the, the initial memories of going to school.

BH: What kind of place was Downpatrick then, as a place to grow up?

CL: It was actually quite an idyllic place. I mean, geographically it's got a lovely location, I, I, yeah, I couldn't fault it, my only, this leads on to lots of different things, it's, it's how, how do I, how do I, I had kind of a love-hate relationship with it, loved the area, loved the people, but you couldn't do anything without somebody knowing about it, it was a very kind of claustrophobic, and as we move on this'll become more apparent, it was, it was kind of more claustrophobic in those days, and I'm trying to put myself back into when I was maybe ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen years of age if I may and that would, that would've been about the late fifties, early sixties and, yeah, it was, it was quite an idyllic place to live. I think in those days it was probably something like sixty per cent Catholic forty per cent Protestant, I think, I mean, the statistics are probably there or around, but I've not looked them up, but I suspect nowadays it's probably nearer eighty-twenty.

BH: Sure, yeah, yeah, and did you enjoy school? Was it a small school or was it quite a large school?

CL: No.

BH: You didn't enjoy school.

CL: Short answer is no, I hated school with a vengeance.

BH: Okay, why was that?

CL: As you'll find, as you'll find out later for some reason I got into sport at a very, very early age and I just loved it, it was, there was something about the competition, there was something about it. I didn't enjoy school one iota and couldn't wait for the end of the day or for PE lessons to get out of the school, simple, didn't like it. Academically, I didn't work and as we progress through the interview you'll find out what happens because of that a little bit later on. I didn't like it, I didn't particularly like the teaching and the irony of ironies of ironies is that when you got to about, I can't, but, at current it's year nine, but whatever it was in there, where you'd be about fourteen, you could drop subjects, well, I dropped a subject like history, never did it at O-levels, in those days, I just didn't like it, I didn't think the teaching was up to much, and that's coming from somebody who became a teacher.

BH: What was wrong with the teaching, what was the–?

CL: I just felt it rather staid, is staid the right word to use, it was very regimented and it was very much like, I mean, just take, let's take history, for example, something that you know about. I mean, all we just seemed to do was learn dates, don't do that nowadays, and I'm thinking, I went home with a big list of dates that I had to learn [laughs]. I just didn't like it, I, I, I just didn't like it at all, and I couldn't wait to get out and I couldn't wait to finish school.

BH: So what did you do outside of school then? What was the common thing to do?

CL: Sport, oh that was me, right. I used to do cross-country running. I was lucky to live near the river Quoile, the Quoile runs through Downpatrick and in the early days there was a sailing club there, and I used to walk down, it's only about three quarters of a mile from where we lived, I'd walk down and watch them sailing and thinking I'd love to do that. I got invited out one day, just for a little trip, on one of the boats when, I would say, would be, I would have been maybe about ten or eleven, and I thought oh this is brilliant, and he took me out sailing on the Quoile and I loved it and I got into it in such a big way, right, that I persuaded eventually my dad to buy me a boat.

BH: Right [laughs], yeah.

CL: So I sailed competitively, I raced boats called Enterprises, I don't know if they're still around nowadays, and then that sailing club moved down from the Quoile at Downpatrick, down to where they built a new barrier almost on Strangford Lough, so, moved down there, sailed Enterprises and became Northern Ireland junior champion at sixteen.

BH: You're joking me.

CL: Yeah, so I had my sailing. I played a lot of table tennis, table tennis and that came about because of the church.

BH: Well, I was going to ask next, the running and the table tennis, how were these things set up, you know, how did you–?

CL: Well, running, running was basically school, you know, it's as simple as, you just, we used to run around, in fact, it would probably be to your old school as well, we used to go all over Northern Ireland to compete against, in cross-country races, it was mainly cross-country, did a bit of athletics in the summer, but it was mainly cross-country in the winter. The sailing, the sailing was very much completely across the board, there was loads, lots of people sailed. Table tennis is an interesting one from, from, you know, from a religious perspective, if you want to use a religious perspective or the word religion, in that the table tennis clubs were geared to Protestants and Catholics and there were different leagues in those days, so I, we played in what was called the East Down churches league, right, which covered that area, and then there was the Lecale league. The Lecale league was a predominantly Catholic league and the East Down churches league was solely Protestant, and I became pretty good at table tennis, that was another sport I became good at, and I got trials, well, as for Northern Ireland, for Ulster, Ulster trials, and I played for the East Down churches in the league, but a lot of my very good friends were Catholics who played table tennis and they played in the other league, and we would, we would meet for practise, interestingly enough in the British Legion club, there was a table tennis table up on the top floor, which became virtually my sole property, nobody else used it except me and my friends, so my Catholic friends would all come down and we'd all be practising away.

BH: In the British Legion?

CL: In the British Legion club, yeah, but that, the British Legion don't forget, as a I mentioned earlier, was quite mixed, quite mixed, but what two particular lads said to me, because I became pretty good at the sport, and they said well, why don't you come and play for our team called St Patrick's, I said I'm not allowed, it's Catholic, and they said there's no rules, but there's no Protestants play in your league, and they said nah, come on, come on, let's, come up, come up on Tuesday, so I have to admit I was a little bit apprehensive about this.

BH: Sure, yeah.

CL: Right, it was in a place called the Canon's Hall, you know the, the Canon's Hall, and I went up, quite nervous and made very, very welcome, had a bit of practise and they knew I was good and they wanted me in their team, and my friend, my good friend Gerry Carson, he said right, we've got a match next week, you're playing for us. I was one of the first Protestants to play in the Lecale league, and of course now those leagues, nowadays everything has opened up, and it leads me on to the sporting aspects in Downpatrick, not just the sports that I was interested in, but I found it intriguing the Gaelic sports and, and it's probably moved on a lot then, but a lot of people who, there were people I knew that played football for a team on a Saturday morning, who were Catholics and played under an assumed name.

BH: A soccer, a soccer–?

CL: A soccer, they played soccer on a Saturday morning, because it was frowned upon I think in those days, it was frowned upon by the GAA that we were playing a foreign game, but other games like cricket and rugby and that it didn't seem to affect them, but anyway, these are my memories, because sport played a big role in in my life, so there you go.

BH: Just in terms of that there, you know, how important was the church when you were growing up, was it something–?

CL: Well, it was important, it was important to my mother and father, but it wasn't in the least bit important to me [laughs] cos once again I hated it, simple. I may as well, I may as well tell you from now I'm an atheist.

BH: Sure, yeah, yeah.

CL: I became an atheist. I had it rammed down my throat. We, we'd go to church often twice on a Sunday, there'd be Sunday school.

BH: Twice on a Sunday?

CL: Sometimes, it depends, usually at least once into Sunday school, but sometimes they'd drag me back in the evening and I hated it with a vengeance, and yet, I remember, one of the things I was good at, I was pretty good at English and I was good at, I was good at reading and I was good at talking, so I read the lesson in the school, not school, in the church quite often, there seemed to be a bit of a, but I guess it was one of these things where you it made you feel a bit special that you went up to the front and you were able to

read the lesson, but I have to admit I just didn't like it, and I didn't like the almost, the power and control that the ministers had, and this is a Protestant church. I mean, I don't mind talking about this.

BH: Yeah, yeah, yeah, please do, like.

CL: Yeah, yeah, but I just didn't like this control and, and I couldn't wait in many ways to get out of it.

BH: Yeah, and how did that control manifest itself? What was it, what was it sort of aimed at?

CL: In what way, well, it's almost as though you were becoming brainwashed into, **[00:20:00]** into this small group. I can't, I can't explain it, I just felt, don't forget I'm still thirteen, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, but no, can I just digress ever so slightly to something that's quite important?

BH: Yeah, yeah.

CL: Where we lived in Downpatrick they built a new housing estate in 1948, it was probably about the year I was born or it might've been '47, it was just after the war, on the outskirts they built a new housing estate of about thirty, thirty houses, brand new bungalows, it was semi-detached bungalows, the council, and they allocated them and we moved in the year after I was born, which would've been in 1949, the council allocated them Protestant, Catholic, Protestant, Catholic, all the way round.

BH: Is that right?

CL: Yes, now I think, I have a sneaking feeling this is one of the early forms of integration because, because we had, working, working round, we lived in a, it was like a big circle of houses and it started off Protestant, Protestant, Catholic, Catholic, Protestant, Catholic, Protestant, Protestant, Catholic, and it went on like that, and our next door neighbours were Catholics and we got on fantastically.

BH: Well, my next question was going to be, how did that experiment in integration work? You mentioned your Catholic friends–

CL: I think it, I think in those days, I think it worked very well. There was never any, there, fifties, early sixties there didn't seem to be any problems, but I have also, when I think about who lived in all the houses, they were all fairly I would say upper working-class, you know, everybody, everybody, Catholic and Protestant alike, all had reasonable, reasonable jobs and were bringing in reasonable incomes, around there, there was nobody on the bread line or anything.

BH: Sure, and were there other parts of Downpatrick which were different from that particular postwar new scheme?

CL: Well, yes, there were because you would go to other parts of Downpatrick and there would be Catholic, Protestant, Catholic, Protestant, but where we were was one of the first, and then, then, a year or two before I left, once again mid-sixties, they built another new housing estate up above us and it was for some reason predominantly Catholic.

BH: Right, when was that one built?

CL: When would that, that would've been built around about 1964.

BH: Around '64, okay.

CL: Ish.

BH: And do you recall, I mean–?

CL: But I recall playing with Protestants and Catholics left, right and centre. My two best friends were Catholics, I was a Protestant.

BH: Yeah, yeah, and you don't recall like, sectarian tensions and things like that?

CL: No.

BH: No, that's really interesting.

CL: I don't recall any sectarian tensions amongst the community that I lived in up until 1966, which is the year I left, so it might be a different picture coming up thereafter, but in those eighteen years that I was there I don't recall any, any tensions. But I can, I can recall, I can recount to you at this stage, if I may, the story, our next door neighbours, I'm an only child, next door neighbours on the left are Catholics.

BH: Oh of course, yeah, yeah.

CL: He was a builder, he had his own small building company, so he had a decent income. They had five daughters [laughs], I'm an only boy, right next door, great friends of the family, cups of tea, in and out, we looked after them, they looked after us, never any problem whatsoever until I passed my test, driving test, in, when I was seventeen in 1965, or would it have been '64, it would have been sixteen in those days, when did you do, I can't remember, anyway, it's not important, the actual dates are not important, and I borrowed my dad's car one day after I passed my test and I took one of the daughters out for the day, and it was all fairly innocent in that she was roughly the same age as me, in fact, I think she might've been a year older than me, and we decided, I said I've passed my test do you fancy going out for the day, and we headed off and we went to Bangor and we spent three or four hours in Bangor and we went to the amusements, as you do in those days, you won't remember the amusements, Barry's Amusements in Bangor, we had our ice-creams and we came back, and when we got back home my mother said to me where have you been, so I told her and who I took, and my mother threw a dicky fit.

BH: Is that right?

CL: Hmm, and that was one of the trigger points in my life where I thought there's something not right about this place, there's something not quite ringing true, that these people who were our friends, and yet she was telling me off, at seventeen years of age, for taking a girl out that wasn't the same persuasion.

BH: Yeah, so basically everything else was fine, friendships, everyday interactions, but when the prospect of something like courtship or marriage emerged that was an issue.

CL: You've got it in one.

BH: Yeah, that's amazing, yeah.

CL: That was '65, I'm talking about 1965, so that we've got our dates in perspective here.

BH: Yeah, sure, well, I suppose the other thing to ask then about is, I mean, you talked about in the summer going to Bangor and things like that. What about the marching season and Twelfth of July and things like that? Was there an Orange culture in Downpatrick?

CL: No, no, my dad was not in the Orange.

BH: Is that right?

CL: No, but yet he, he, he, he was, it was strange, my dad, I think the fact that he was in the war and the military had something to do with it, but he got on with everybody, he was friends with Catholics, Protestants, you name it he didn't have a problem. He lived there virtually right through the Troubles and he worked for the RAF, don't forget. He never got a threat and there was never any issues at all with that. He wasn't, he wasn't in the Orange, but he was a big masonic, he was in the Masons.

BH: Ah right, okay.

CL: Very, very big in the Masons, we used to go to all the parades, in fact, I can't remember which ones, you might know better if they still have them, there were Catholic ones as well, what were they?

BH: Hibernian, Ancient Order of Hibernian.

CL: Yeah, and, and, and it was almost, I seem to recall it was almost like, it was a day out, let's not worry about why they're there or what they're doing.

BH: You went to observe these as well?

CL: Oh yeah, yeah, we'd go to the Twelfth, oh yeah, we'd always go to the Twelfth wherever it would be in a particular year, and, and there was, there was our church, we had, they would take you away for a day once a year, the churches, I think it's mentioned in the

questionnaire, and the Catholics would do the same and everybody would march and whenever there was any marches through the town everybody would come and watch, and I recall when the Twelfth of July marches were in Downpatrick there was loads of my Catholic friends, were all lining, watching the march, and I don't recall a single issue.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

CL: And that window would be from nineteen, probably, let's go from '56 to '66.

BH: Right, and what about, politics and things then? Like, were your parents or anybody else you knew interested in politics?

CL: No, nobody was particularly interested in politics, but obviously my mum and dad would vote unionist. I know that my dad met Enoch Powell when he was South Down MP.

BH: That was a bit later, wasn't it?

CL: It was a bit later, somewhere down the line, but it's just a thing I, I know he said he'd met Enoch Powell or he'd spoken to Enoch Powell at some British Legion do, so, no, there was never any, never anything. I think a lot of it had been tempered, as I said earlier about my dad, who'd been in the British Army and had that more broader feel than some, but then again I had, sorry?

BH: Sorry, you said, did you tell me earlier that he was in the East Surrey Regiment?

CL: He was in the East Surrey Regiment, yeah.

BH: Right, so he basically had to go over there to do his–

CL: Well, I've tried to, I've obviously got all his records, but I tried to find out how or why, but my suspicion is that he decided he wanted to join up, British Army, so he'd have gone to a recruiting office, probably in Belfast, and he would've said I want to join the army and they would have looked down the list to see where they needed men.

BH: And he was sent there.

CL: I think he was just sent there, yeah.

BH: Sure, okay, so you mentioned there that 1966 was the year you left.

CL: It was.

BH: And you done, you must've been around about seventeen, eighteen at that stage cos you'd done your test two years before.

CL: Yeah, I was.

BH: Can you tell me a bit about that? How did that come about, leaving?

CL: Well, right, I, for some reason our headmaster at school insisted we would do A-levels in one year, not two.

BH: One year, right, how many did you do?

CL: I'll, I'll lead you into that, because it's important, and, and he was of the opinion, and apparently in that particular time we were the only school in Northern Ireland to do that, now he must have had a lot of autonomy to be able to do that. So **[00:30:00]** we actually did our O-levels as they were called, GCSEs today, we did our O-levels a year later than everybody else.

BH: Right, okay.

CL: So he, he, he reckoned that you take an extra year over your O-levels and then do you're A-level course in one year. Now I don't know, I would, you know, so at the end of the day I did, I went through school, not working, scraped through and I got five O-levels. So the only two I was any way decent at was chemistry and biology, so I was going to do in one year chemistry and biology A-level, so at that stage I then had to decide now what am I going to do, what's happening, and this is where the interesting part of my story starts. Right, I'm, I'm seventeen-ish, sixteen, seventeen, I've got my five O-levels by the skin of my teeth, I'm doing my two A-levels, what did I want to do, so I had several options. My dad was friendly with a man who, there's a big factory in Belfast called Mackie's Engineering, they made machinery for mills, my dad was very friendly with the guy who owned that and he said would you like to be an apprentice, so I said well, I'm not sure what I want to do at this stage, and I, took me up to this factory and I just didn't like it, it was like, thirty or forty kids, all grubby overalls round these machines, I thought no, that's not for me, know what I mean, right, and then I thought well, what else can I do, and my dad said what about the RAF, he worked, he worked for the RAF and he used to take me out there and I used to mix with all the RAF guys and, you know, facilities and what have you, but I was frightened of heights, I wasn't too keen on heights, I didn't like flying, so I thought, not that that would've made any difference, you know, anyway, anyway, so I thought right, what el-, and the other thing I was interested in was sport, so I thought well, what the hell am I going to do now, and I thought right, PE teacher. I loved sport and of course that's what I thought, I'll be a PE teacher, so I then started thinking where, right, now, the place to train to be a PE teacher was Stranmillis College in Belfast, don't know if it still exists.

BH: Oh it does, it's still very popular, yeah.

CL: Stranmillis was the main teacher training and in those days it was the CertEd, it wasn't the degree and what they do nowadays.

BH: PGCE.

CL: It wasn't PG, in those days they were all three-year CertEd courses, and somebody, I started asking people and somebody had told me that Stranmillis was hard to get into, in

that you needed at least six good O-levels and two A-levels to get into Stranmillis, and I had to reach the conclusion I ain't going to get in, so what was also totting up in the back of my head was, I'm not sure I want to stay here anymore.

BH: Okay, so talk about that.

CL: Well, you see, this is it, this is it. So if you can picture me sat there, I've started my first, I've started my final year doing two A-levels, I wasn't enjoying them at all. I'd got the five O-levels and I thought right, what am I going to do, I'm not terribly happy, I'm seventeen and Downpatrick was closing in on me.

BH: Yeah, what do you mean by that, closing in on you?

CL: Well, I, I wanted freedom, even at seventeen. Whilst my mother and father weren't particularly, what's the word, they weren't particularly–

BH: Strict.

CL: Strict, there wasn't a great deal to do outside of my sporting interests and I thought I need, I need, even if it's going to Belfast, I need to get away, and somebody at school had told me, I think it might have been a teacher, had said you're not going to get into Stran with what you've got, you're wasting your time applying, so I thought England, England, never thought about Scotland or anything like that, just thought England, and I'd had heard, by this stage I thought right, I'm going to try and be a PE teacher, and I'd heard of, of the only place in England, or the place, was a place called Loughborough. Now Loughborough was the leading PE college in England and I think it might have been through athletics, they've always been big in athletics, so I sent away, I got the forms to fill in to go to teacher training college in England and it would've been around about September '65ish, filled, so there's a list of choices and you go first choice, second choice, up to five choices of college, right, and I had heard, so I wrote Loughborough at the top and then I wrote anywhere [laughs] cos I hadn't a clue, I hadn't a clue, I hardly even knew where Loughborough was, I knew it was somewhere in the middle of England, so, and my mum and dad just said to me at the time look, whatever you want to do Cecil, you just do it, you know, it's your life, you know, we're not going to stand in your way.

BH: That's what I was going to ask you. How did your parents feel about this?

CL: Well, how they actually felt I don't know, but outwardly they were supportive, whether inwardly they were or weren't I've no idea, so, so anyway, off goes the forms and within a matter of days rejection, Loughborough, simple rejection, and then they had a system, it's not like it is now on the internet, they had a system where your papers kept getting posted off, so I kept getting rejection from about at least five or six different colleges who did PE courses that my papers had been sent to, rejection, and I virtually give up and I remember thinking ah this isn't going to happen, I'll have to just wait and see what sort of job I can pick up or whatever happens, and eventually one day a letter came through the letter box and it would've been October time, please come for interview to Sunderland College of Education. I said to my dad where's Sunderland, so he gets a map out, he said oh it's there, it's near

Newcastle in the north-east of England, so he says, right, okay, and he said, they give me a date to come over, right, and they, my dad took me down to the travel agent, said to travel agent get him there, travel agent says no problem, fly you Belfast to Newcastle, bus into, bus into Newcastle city and then a train into Sunderland, that's it, get to Sunderland, have an interview and within three days I'd got a unconditional place, we're offering you a place on a teacher training course to do PE at Sunderland College of Education, and I'm thinking brilliant, suits me, absolutely spot on, unconditional, and it's still not Christmas '65 and I'm still at Down High doing two A-levels, well, you can guess what happened.

BH: You didn't bother finishing the A-levels.

CL: Well, I did, but I failed them both, right, so I'm not liking this anyway, and I'm looking at this letter that says you're coming to us next September, and I'm going into Down High everyday, going to lessons for chemistry and biology A-levels, come on, come on Barry.

BH: Yeah, so ye–

CL: So you saw what happened, so I just took my foot off the gas and then at the following September I'm off.

BH: Right, cos you'd got the unconditional offer.

CL: Unconditional offer, they, they'd said to me that I got in on my sporting ability and my personality.

BH: Right, in terms of that kind of idea, you know, you felt that Downpatrick was becoming more claustrophobic as you got older and you wanted to maybe, a bit more freedom. Was there anybody else migrating from Downpatrick of your age, at that time?

CL: No, very few, you might've got the odd one, but nearly everybody, nearly everybody from my class in that year stayed in Northern Ireland. I was one of the very, very few to leave, in fact, I can't think of anybody else from my own particular class of 1966 who didn't stay. I know a lot have moved since, but most, most people went either to Queen's, I don't think the new University of Ulster was around in those days, was it?

BH: Maybe it wasn't, no.

CL: They either went to Queen's, Stranmillis or some other forms of, there was a couple of girls went to, is it Belfast College of Domestic Science or something like that, and that's about it, and then of course there's others who just left school and went into employment, some went into civil service, some went into banking and there are some who were farmers' sons that just went into the farm.

BH: Yeah, why do you think you were different then? Why do you think you decided that you wanted to–?

CL: I, I wish I could give you an easy answer to that, I don't know. I think, I think I wanted to see a bit of life as well, I wanted a bit of, but it's interesting, when I first went over there I thought, I didn't, my initial thoughts were that I might not stay there, right. I think I always in the back of my mind, if I do my three years I might come back home, **[00:40:00]** and the first term was pretty much hell because I was homesick. Whilst I wanted to get away, there was still this homesickness kicked in, and, and if I can tell you a little bit about that which might help you link this into the, into the, I went, I think I was the only person from Northern Ireland at my college and there would've been about, I don't know, one thousand students, something like that, I don't know how many there may've been. There was one girl who was two years ahead of me who was there and she was doing something like music or something like that, and she was the only one I encountered and she was from Belfast, but I, I, I'm kind of the only one.

BH: Yeah, and how did that feel?

CL: Well, I don't know. I was welcomed, I was, everybody was fine. I think it's this, I'm going back to the sports thing, you got, you got drawn in, particularly if you're any good at anything, people automatically bring you in, cos I played basketball a lot in those days and, you know, and that, but the interesting thing about the colleges in those days they put you into digs for the first year. Now it's not like it is in modern-day universities, most people now they'll go to a hall of residence and then maybe move out after a year into shared places. The colleges in those days, you had to, there was no ifs or buts, they put you into lodgings and they, they sorted it for you, you, you couldn't do your own thing, and of course it was all paid for, so it was all paid direct, so I went into digs with two other lads.

BH: And you didn't get to choose these two other lads, you were just–

CL: No. I was, I was put in with two lads and they were local, or when I say local, they lived about thirty miles away and they used to go home every weekend.

BH: Ah of course.

CL: I couldn't, I'm too far away. I was there for a whole term and that was, that was tough.

BH: So at the weekend you're on your own, kind of thing.

CL: At the weekends I'm on my own, but then again I keep going back, back to sport as being this bond. I was playing football for the college team and I was playing table tennis for a local club, so I had that to draw on, so I managed to get myself through this first term, but I wasn't too, you know, I wasn't too, I went home at the Christmas, went home at the Christmas, and there was a little niggly part of me that said I'm not sure I want to go back.

BH: Yeah, but you did.

CL: Well, I did, I went back because I realised that, you know, I had to do this, there was no point after one term of jacking it in, and my mum and my dad were really supportive, you know.

BH: They didn't try and persuade you to stay?

CL: Oh hell no, more the opposite, more the opposite, because I have a sneaking feeling that my mum and dad had a little bit of the same thing about this County Down, Downpatrick claustrophobia, that it might be better for our son to get out into the big wide world, so I think they knew that.

BH: And was that coming from your dad again, was it?

CL: I think it was coming from my dad, more from my dad. I think my mum missed me more than my dad, but then of course, so I got through the first term over there and went home, went home every holiday, got jobs, got summer jobs over there.

BH: Back in Downpatrick?

CL: Got, well, the first, first year I went back I got a job working with the council on the roads, surveying the roads, second year, into my second year I went back, I got a job working in a bar in Newcastle.

BH: Right, okay.

CL: So I was serving behind the bar.

BH: So that would be quite good fun in Newcastle, during the summer.

CL: Yeah, so that, that would be, that was during the summer months, I was a barman, and then the final year I didn't go back home, I got a job in Sunderland, I stayed and I got a job selling ice-cream in an ice-cream van, so, you know, all the students, all the stuff where you make a little bit of money in the summer, and then of course by the end of year one I'd been inculcated into the culture and made lots and lots and lots of friends. Never felt isolated because I'm Northern Irish, didn't feel any different to anyone else, other than my accent.

BH: Sure, yeah, well, what I was going to ask next was, I mean, you left in '66 and you're coming back, at least for the first two summers, to work in Newcastle and to work in the council, but by that point it's 1968 and there's a civil rights movement in Northern Ireland.

CL: Correct, yes.

BH: Were you conscious of that, were you aware of that?

CL: Yes, yes, well, I mean, just even stepping back, in '66 it was simmering, although I wasn't following it, I remember seeing reports on the newspapers and the TV or on the radio about this civ-, I mean, even in '66, '67 there was I think, you might know better than me, I think it was starting to simmer.

BH: Yeah, there was definitely civil rights protests and there was the famous murder of Paul Ward in Belfast as well.

CL: Yes, yes, yes, but that, but down in Downpatrick nothing was too apparent, it was a very settled town, in fact, in fact, during the whole history I don't think too much happened in Downpatrick during the Troubles. I know, I know there was a bomb at the racecourse, Downpatrick racecourse, cos I've got a photograph of it actually, of the buildings that were blown up, and my dad worked at the racecourse, well, when I say he worked, he helped out when there was race meetings cos he had, he knew everyone, but yes, going, and not a lot of it crossed my mind, even though I was going home constantly, and I never felt threatened going back, '69, '70, '71, '72, whilst it was all going on, never felt threatened.

BH: Yeah, and did you wonder what it was about, I mean, the civil rights?

CL: I knew what it was about, didn't take a genius to work out what was happening, did it.

BH: Yeah, yeah, and did it make sense to you, you know, did it?

CL: Well, it, it, it, it did, when I say I knew what it was about, I'm not going to say that I know the ins and outs of it.

BH: Sure, yeah.

CL: I knew that it was to do with equality and domination, etcetera, etcetera, I'm probably not using the right words, but it's not something, it's not something Barry that I dwelled upon. Now I don't know if I'm unique or not in that respect.

BH: No, no.

CL: It's not something that I thought too much about. It was happening and, and when I went back in those years I don't, like I say, I don't recall ever being frightened, strangely enough.

BH: What about over in Sunderland? Was there, did anybody pass comment on it there when you were observing it on TV and things?

CL: Well, we'd talk about it.

BH: Talk about it, yeah.

CL: People would talk about it and I would kept getting asked what's it all about.

BH: What would you say?

CL: I'd, well, I'd say look, there are two different communities and, and there, see I blamed the religion, I'll be honest with you. I think the, the religion, both sides on the religion had a lot to do with it, that's my own personal view, I might be wrong, but I just, I just felt that,

that, you know, that there was equalities and there was one group seemed to be kind of dominating everything in Northern Ireland, but that's as much as I could tell them, and, and I'd say I don't know, I don't understand, there's a group of people want a united Ireland, there's another group of people that want to be, stay part of Britain, and you've got to look back at the history of it, and that was it, but then we move on and nobody, nobody spent too much time thinking. We weren't, we, we were in our, we're in our nineteen, twenty, twenty, twenty-two, nobody was too bothered. We were all too bothered about when the next football match was, how was the, how were Sunderland going to do, right, what girl were you out with last week, you know yourself, you've been a student.

BH: Yeah, yeah, what about your parents then, because obviously they're in a different position from you? You're over–

CL: But they never seemed to be fazed by it, never fazed by it, and, and probably brings me neatly on to, in my second year at college I met my wife. She was a year behind me, she's English. We met, we basically fell in love and within, phhff, a couple of years later, we'd, I'd been going out with her for about eighteen months when my mum and dad said are you going to, they'd been over, don't forget they were, kept coming over.

BH: Of course, right, yeah.

CL: They came over quite a lot and vice versa, and they said well, when are you going to bring her over, so I said, right, we'll go over one summer, I can't remember which year it was, and we arranged and we flew over, and her mum and dad were a little nervous.

BH: Well, that's, yeah, was she from Sunderland herself?

CL: Yeah, just outside, she's local, she's from the north east, and they weren't too happy.

BH: Right, with the fact that she was going over or the fact that she was going out with you?

CL: No, the, no, not, not me, they, they, they were lovely, I was the bees knees, but no the Troubles and, and I'm guessing this must be, where am I now, this'll be 1970.

BH: Ah right, so it had definitely got a bit more violent by this stage then, yeah.

CL: Yeah, this would be 1970, I think, but she said, I kept saying it'll be alright, it's okay, we're in Downpatrick, there's not much happening in Downpatrick, so we, we, we fly over and my dad picks us up from the airport and what does he do, he says right, he says I'm going to show you and he takes us up the Falls and down the Shankill and all round the trouble spots of Belfast, and I'm going, I remember, because she doesn't really realise and he's pointing out all these, this has been bombed and that and blah, blah, blah, and I'm a little nervous on this, but fortunately nothing happened, but that was my dad, he didn't have any fear. **[00:50:00]**

BH: Yeah, and what did, at that stage, your girlfriend think of this?

CL: Pfff, I'd have to ask her now actually [laughs], think I should've asked her that this morning before I left [pauses]. I think, I don't know, I don't know, but what did happen was that she fell in love with Northern Ireland and she's still to this very day in love with Northern Ireland, and she has said to me on numerous occasions that she could live there.

BH: Yeah, yeah, and what did you say to that?

CL: I don't think I could.

BH: [laughs] Right, why could you not live there?

CL: [pauses] That claustropho-, claus-, I use that word a lot, that claustrophobia is still there, even if you were just, if you were outside, I, I still feel that it's quite a closed, I don't know, quite closed. I go back quite regularly and I love going back and, like another one of the questions, it's home and it'll always be home, there won't be any, but she, she, she would go back, she would go over there, but of course we've got so much on our plates here that that's never going to happen, but it nearly happened, I've just remembered. I was working here for the university, I was assistant director of sport and it would've been, what year would've been, it would've been round about 1989, '90, and a job came up as director of sport at Queen's in Belfast, so I said to her what do you think, and she said yeah, go for it. At that stage, you know, we didn't have any commitments, our boys, our boys at that stage were almost reaching university age, we've got two sons, almost reaching university age, I'll come on to them later actually, and I said yeah, let's go for it, cos it was a good job and it was a lot more money. So I got my application all sorted out and I sent it off and do you know what happened, I missed the closing date by a day, and I got a phone call from Queen's saying we received your application blah blah blah blah blah, but unfortunately we can't consider you for the post because the application came in one day late past the closing date, and he said in Northern Ireland they're very, very strict on things like that, and this woman said looking at your CV you'd have had a very good chance. Not to be.

BH: Not to be.

CL: So I could've ended up back there, working back there in 1990.

BH: Yeah, so what happened then after? You met your girlfriend at university, she was a year behind you, two years behind you. What did you do after university then?

CL: Oh gosh, this is where, how long have you got. I qualified in 1969. I am a PE teacher, that was what I wanted to be, I loved doing it. I got a job in a local comprehensive school in Sunderland teaching PE. It was one of the earliest comprehensive schools, cos comprehensive education only came in I think it was 1968, '67, '68, this was '69. It was the amalgamation of a grammar school and a secondary modern to become a comprehensive, so I did one year there and then my wife she, after that, she qualified, she got a job teaching back at her old school actually, nearby. We were renting property. I then got a job teaching PE at another school in a place in Durham called Bishop Auckland and that was a secondary modern school, so I got like, a head of department's job there, but there was only me, so I was a head of myself, if you like, there wasn't any other teachers, but it was an allowance,

and I taught there for three years and during that time we got married and we bought a house, so–

BH: Was this in Durham?

CL: This was in Durham, yeah, in one of the little villages just in the Durham area, cos that's where she's from and that's the area that we liked, and we had kind of, we thought right, let's just see what'll happen. She's teaching, I'm teaching, everything's hunky dory, I'm still playing sport, we have a good social life, lots of friends, still going back to Northern Ireland though, you know, and my mum and dad are still coming over to see us and it's a constant two-way thing, and then I, I realised after about four years of teaching that I was, I wasn't particularly enjoying it, it was a rough school I was at, I wasn't particularly enjoying the hands-on stuff, but what I was very good at was organising things. I used to love doing all the fixtures and getting the teams sorted and running sports days and the school used me to do a lot of like, organising and admin for a variety of events, and I thought this is me, I love doing this, so I moved into sports centres.

BH: Ah right.

CL: So in the 1970s in England that was the boom years for building sports centres, local authority sports centres were booming and they were all over the place and it was easy as a PE teacher to move sideways, where it isn't that easy nowadays, but in those days we were the only ones that had any current kind of link to the sports centres, and I got a job as assistant manager in the sports centre, and then I went on and on and on and on from there. Do you want me to tell you about it?

BH: Yeah, please do, yeah.

CL: And I'll come back to the Irish connection a bit later. So I went up in, this was in Northumberland, north of Newcastle, I was assistant manager there for two years and then I thought right, I'm starting to climb the ladder you see now, so I wanted a manager's job, and a job came up in Scotland in a place called Forfar between Dundee and Aberdeen, they were building a new sports and leisure centre, so I applied and got the job and moved up to Scotland.

BH: The whole family moved?

CL: The whole family moved up to Scotland. So my wife was pregnant then at the time with our first, so she packed her job in, we moved up there, there was a house with the job etcetera, etcetera, and my son was born up, first son was born up there, I was there for five years, second son was born up there, and then sort of I kept getting bored after a while in places, so I thought right, what's next, where do I go from here, I've opened this, I've managed this, we're comfortable, but I want to be a director of sport for a council, so I applied and got a job down in Yorkshire [laughs]. Oh man, I've been around a bit, I'm telling you, I've been around a bit. It was a council in a place called Northallerton in north Yorkshire, it was the Hambleton District Council. I saw a job there as director of sport and leisure, so I applied and got it, so I went there, two years there, very comfortable, moved all

the family back down, you see we keep moving, stuff's still in suitcases, and did two years there, and then I got a phone call one day from a company in Durham that built squash courts and they said somewhere my name had been given to them as somebody who was good at opening new facilities, cos that's what I did, I could set up a new facility, which is what I did here [laughs]. We're opening a big new squash and leisure private club near Durham, would you be interested in running it for us, so I went up to see them and they made me this fantastic offer, twelve squash courts, fitness, gym, bar, restaurant, good number, a company car, free petrol, so I thought oh yeah, go on, biggest mistake I ever made because the company went bust after eighteen months, they were a building company as well and they hit a really bad depression in the, I think it was the early eighties, everything went down the pan, so I was out of a job, wasn't I, so for a while I'm thinking I need to get back into this, and I saw a job in Saudi Arabia as a sports and recreation coordinator for a college in Saudi Arabia, so I applied, cos I needed a job and it was a one-year contract and it was a really good tax-free salary, and I said to my wife, I said what do you think, she says yeah, go for it, go for a year, we'll get a bit of money together and then we'll see where we go from there on. So I popped out to Saudi Arabia on my own, I got some, yeah, well, it was a year's contract, but I got home every three months for a holiday, you know, I was like, so it wasn't too bad, and at the end, towards the end of the year, that first year, I was thinking, right, I'll come back and I'll look for some more employment and I'm probably, where am I now, I'm 1983ish, '84ish and I look for employment, when the boss of the college I was at in Saudi, he was a German guy, he called me in one day and he said would you sign on for two more years, because they had a contract that lasted another two years, he said I'd like a bit of continuity, you're doing a decent job for us, what will it take for me to get you to sign for two years, and I said the only thing that'll get me is if you bring my wife and kids out, he said okay, so three months later, two kids and my wife, Saudi Arabia, gave us a house, did three years in Saudi Arabia.

BH: My goodness.

CL: There you have it, and then, at the end of that, my eldest son was then becoming about eleven, twelve, he needed to go to an English school, I didn't want to send him to boarding school, I could've stayed out there for longer and got a lot more money, but we sort of talked about it and we thought **[01:00:00]** right, no, we'll come home, we've done three years. So I was browsing through the papers, somebody was sending me newspapers with jobs as the contract was coming to an end, and I saw a job advertised as manager of the Armitage Centre, University of Manchester, so I sent an application off from Saudi Arabia to here where we're sitting today, and they wrote back to me and said we'll invite you for interview, but we can't pay your expenses from Saudi Arabia obviously, but we'll pay you any expenses you have when you hit the UK, so I, I thought right, five hundred quid it cost me for a ticket, I'll take a gamble. I had some leave, I took five days and came back, just took a gamble and I thought well, even if I don't get the job I can see some friends while I'm here, came up here and the interview was down at Owens Park and they offered me the job, so I left Saudi and came straight back here, June '86.

BH: And moved to Manchester?

CL: And moved to Manchester.

BH: Right, so that's how you ended up in Manchester.

CL: Yeah, and we were put into one of the University halls down here in Fallowfield for six months, cos I didn't have anywhere to live and I needed to look for a house and they put me into one of the halls down on the Owens Park campus, and I had an office just in that building across the way, in the main building for six months before they opened.

BH: So that's quite a lot of moving around then, you've been quite a few different places.

CL: I have. I'm an interesting character.

BH: You definitely are. So during this period, and after finishing university in particular, who were your, who formed your main friendship groups?

CL: Sport.

BH: Sport, yeah.

CL: Without a shadow of a doubt, I mean, I could just say sport end, end of.

BH: Yeah, so these, presumably then, mostly English and Scottish people then?

CL: Yes, yes, obviously I came across people from Northern Ireland, I always do in every walk of life, if I'd have met you in the street and heard you talking I would've been straight in talking to you, that's just the way I am, but I never, I, I, it's a weird one Barry, I, I lost my connections with Northern Ireland, but I still have that in-built something, and wherever I go if I can find somebody from Northern Ireland to chat to I'm happy.

BH: Sure, yeah, what about people then, Irish Catholics or Irish people from the South of Ireland, a lot of whom moved to England after the Second World War and so on?

CL: Same, same, same, same, same with me, same, same with me, same, same with me, but you, it might be an interesting time to bring in my parents again here.

BH: Okay, sure, yeah.

CL: Because when, because of all this moving around my parents would never know, cos I remember my dad saying to me, he said my address book's full up, they would never kind of know, he, he, they knew, they were happy, I think, I think my mother in particular really suffered when I left, I never realised now that until that I've got children of my own and grandchildren of my own, how important it is, you're kind of ploughing your own furrow, aren't you, maybe the same thing'll happen to you, but, but when we moved here I bought a house in Stockport and I thought right, I'm pretty much, wa-, I'll be honest with you, my wife said I ain't moving again, if you go again you're on your own, so we thought right, this is it, we're going to be pretty much settled in this area, and my mum and dad then knew that,

and one day when I was over, we were over visiting, and one evening they sat down and said we've been thinking we would like to move to be near you.

BH: Is that right?

CL: And I said well, because, by then I've got the two, two grandchildren that they love to bits, my dad loved them particularly, and they said we only see them maybe twice a year and we, we would like to move to England. Now my initial reaction was that this, this is something else, are you sure, and they both said we've talked about it and yes, we are sure, we would like to sell our house, cos they own their house now, they bought it as a, it was a council house originally, but then through the Maggie Thatcher thing they bought their house. We'll sell it and we'd like to buy somewhere near you so that we can see the grandchildren, be near you, but I tell you what, I was really worried about this. They're both getting on, my mother wasn't in particularly good health, she suffered a lot from breathing difficulties, they, her in particular, she'd virtually, other than holidays and coming to see us, had never left Northern Ireland. My dad obviously had been away during the war and I was scared about this and we both, Liz, my wife, and I said look, are you sure, this is a big step for you two, you're moving into a new culture, cos obviously we were young when we did it, so I was young when I did it, difficult for them, they said no, no, we're certain, so right, okay, let's start looking. So I started looking for some property for them and the best I could get was a one-bedroom flat because of the disparity in house prices, and what they were going to get for their bungalow would only buy them a one-bedroom plot near where we live in Stockport, and they really wanted two bedrooms and they would have liked to have had a bit of a garden as well, so it was a bit difficult, so I had extra land on the end of my house, so I said well, I'll tell you what we'll do, I'll build on, so we built a big extension for them, so they were separate, but connected.

BH: Like an annex?

CL: Yeah, an annex and I, we built it ourselves, when I say we built it ourselves I got jobbing builders in, a friend of mine's an architect, so we built this and my mother and father moved over, cos we needed the money from the house, so they sold the house and they moved into a little rented flat round the corner, while it was done, and my dad was brilliant because he worked, he was like a clerk of works, cos when I was, both my wife and I were out at work at the time, he would come round and keep an eye on the builders and, you know, make the tea and that sort of stuff, which was great. But sadly six months after they moved in he developed cancer and a few months later [clicks fingers] he'd gone, thirteen months later, cancer, my mother [clicks fingers] gone. So within two years of them moving over to England both of them died. Now I still to this very day don't think my mother wanted to leave, don't forget she's leaving all her family.

BH: I was going to say, it's a big, big transition, like.

CL: She's got five sisters, she's got five sisters.

BH: Yeah, yeah, why do you think they did it?

CL: I think they did it because I think they both, one thought the other wasn't very well and they wanted to be near me and my wife, so that if anything happened they could lean on us, which is exactly what happened, and I think they had that in the back of my mind and I think, when I think, my mother, I think my mother might have been the driving force behind it because she felt that she wasn't well and she thought if anything happens to me, to her, then my dad might struggle and they wanted that support, I think. But from an Irish perspective it was a huge step. They found it a big culture shock, more of a culture shock than me, don't forget they're in their early seventies.

BH: Sure, yeah, and did they go back to Downpatrick at any point after?

CL: They didn't want to go back.

BH: Didn't want to go back.

CL: From when they moved over it was a two-year period, from when they moved till they'd both passed away, and within that two-year period neither of them wanted to go back.

BH: And why do you think that was?

CL: I don't know, I don't know. I, I, I think it, they had decided they wanted to draw a line under it and that this was it. It's a tough call, it, it's, I don't know, and they didn't even want to, when my dad died, oh they went to a local church near us, cos they were churchgoers.

BH: Well, I was going to ask you next about this. Was the church still important for you when you moved over to England?

CL: No.

BH: No interest at all?

CL: [makes severing sound twice] I'm not going to say any more than that.

BH: Sure, yeah.

CL: I, I, I lost it completely and utterly.

BH: And what about your wife, was she interested in church?

CL: My, my, we got married in a church, she went to church in, she was brought up, but she, she still, she, we don't go, she doesn't go to church, but she's not as much an atheist as I am, she's still, there's still a little bit of a connection, she never wants to talk about it, she just wants to, wants to go on. But I was going to tell you that my mum and dad went to this little local church when they came over and when my dad died she wanted a stone put at the church here in Stockport.

BH: Is that right?

CL: And they'd only been going there a year, and I said well, would you not want to take that back to our church, that you went right through in Downpatrick, no.

BH: No, that's very strange.

CL: She didn't want anything more to do, they both drew a line under it.

BH: That's very, very–

CL: But since then that stone's back in Downpatrick.

BH: Did you move it back there?

CL: Cos I took it back, I said it's got to go back.

BH: Is that right? Why did you feel you needed to do that?

CL: Cos I think that's where their heritage lies, that, that, that particular church, and, and, and interestingly enough I contacted the new minister, not the old minister, another minister for the church and said, explained the situation to him **[01:10:00]** and said would you be able to find somewhere for this and can we do it, and he said course I will, bring it over, and so we, what are we saying, about ten years ago now, put it in the back of the car, took it over and, and he's found a little spot at the end of the church that looks straight across to the British Legion club.

BH: Is that right? So is that about your heritage as well then, that stone?

CL: Yeah, I think it's a bit about me, I think, you know, I mean, I would certainly like to go, be back there.

BH: Yeah, sure, well, then, on that kind of point then, your children were born and the first child was born when you moved to Scotland. Did they, when they were growing up, did they have any sense of a Northern Irish heritage or an Irish heritage?

CL: Yeah, very much so, very much, so yeah, they knew, they knew where I was from, they always, they, of course we would take them over on holiday and they would love it.

BH: To Downpatrick?

CL: Yeah, well, because, well, my dad would take them out everywhere, you know, and we're talking about, they would be like, four, five, six, seven, eight years of age and they loved it, country life, up in the Mourne Mountains, you know, down to Newcastle.

BH: Yeah, yeah, and did they have any sense of the Troubles? Cos obviously when they were growing up–

CL: No, well, gosh, it would be quite nice to ask them now. Certainly, my eldest is forty-three and my youngest is forty, the youngest one has very little in the way of connections to Ireland for some reason, although he knows the heritage and he knows the background, he, he would probably say well, I'm English, even though he was born in Scotland, he would consider himself English cos he's lived here most of his life. My eldest boy, who is, he would say he's very, very Irish connected, more so of the fact that his wife's father is also Northern Irish.

BH: Yeah, oh is that right?

CL: Yeah, yeah, his, he married a girl, they live in Oxford and he married a girl and her dad is Irish and he was born in Fermanagh, I think it is somewhere in Fermanagh, but then came over, the family, their, her family came over when her father was very young, so we'd be going back, oh gosh [pauses], well, where, he'd be about my age, so [pauses] just after the war.

BH: Just after the war, yeah, and would your children have a sense, would they talk about being Irish or Northern Irish as something different?

CL: See I knew you were going to ask that question cos I read that, and that's the one that I wrestle with all the time. I, I, I can't answer on their behalf, I'm actually curiously going to ask them that now, next time I see them, but I think both of them consider themselves being pretty much English, but my eldest boy has certainly got a great leaning towards being Irish and he's just applying for his Irish passport.

BH: Is that right? Yeah, of course, yeah, good idea.

CL: Because he's very, very much for Remain, the eldest one, in fact, he said to me, I don't know if he was joking or not, he said the company he works for has got bases in Ire-, Republic of Ireland, he said I might be able to move to Ireland if Brexit doesn't work out the way we want it, so I can't, I wish I could answer, I wish I could give you a bit more of what their feelings are, but I can't give you much.

BH: Did they ever ask anything about the Troubles or anything about the conflict or what it was about?

CL: Well, no, they, no, but they were taken over during the Troubles, they knew that it was going on.

BH: Yeah, did they experience anything directly themselves, did they perceive any–?

CL: The, the, yeah, roadblocks, going, being searched going into shops. I remember one particular incident when they'd be five, six, seven, eight years of age, something like that, went out for the day and my dad bought them both toy guns and they were, we were coming down this road towards Downpatrick and the boys were in the back seat playing with these toy guns, and there's a bloody roadblock and my wife went give me those guns,

and shoved them under the seat [laughs], yeah, well, just, very, it's jogging little things in my head I'll throw in, even if I have to step back a little bit.

BH: Sure, yeah, go for it.

CL: I remember one of the early days when my wife first went over with me and my mother took her to see a friend of theirs. It's actually the mother of the guy from Mackie's that I mentioned earlier, they lived in a big house on the outskirts of Belfast, he had quite a lot of money actually that guy, but, and they were very, very pro Protestants, and she's, first thing she said to my wife as she walked into the door, and what foot do you kick with, and my wife looked at her and looked at me as if to say what's she talking about, and she said I don't play football [laughs], so at that stage we all burst into laughter and I had to explain to her, oh is that what it means, she didn't know what this, what foot you kick with.

BH: She'd never heard this phrase before.

CL: It just shows you that, you know, at that stage.

BH: Yeah, sure, in terms of your own experiences, in England and I suppose in Scotland as well during those years, do you have any memories of the effects of the Troubles in England? I mean, sometimes people, perhaps if you lived in Birmingham, they might remember the Birmingham bomb.

CL: Well, obviously followed it on the news, saw the bomb, saw the Brighton stuff, but no direct affect I guess from a, from a feeling of oh no, horror, it's spreading to the mainland now, but that's about as, that's about it, and I remember saying look, for God's sake, please get your act together and stop this, you know, it can't go on, it can't go on, and it, you know, and it brings you in to talking about a united Ireland and I ain't got a clue, I ain't got a clue, but I'm going to step back again and I'm going to say, as I said to you earlier in the tape, and I don't care I'm going on record, my experience is this iron fist of two churches, well, probably more than two churches, but you know what I mean.

BH: Yeah, exactly, yeah.

CL: And that iron fist for me caused a lot of trouble.

BH: Yeah, sure [brief interruption by person knocking and opening the door], so let me just think [extended pause]. Did you ever experience any kind of hostility in relation, in response to your accent or anything like that during those years, in England I mean?

CL: None.

BH: Yeah, none, at all, yeah.

CL: I can't expand on that, absolutely none.

BH: Yeah, what about politics in England then, were you interested in politics?

CL: Not particularly, I wasn't, I'm not a polit-, I wasn't a partic-, I'm probably a little bit more interested in politics now as I've got older [fire alarm goes off].

BH: Sure, yeah. I think that happens every Thursday.

CL: Ah right. I'm probably a little bit more interested in politics now, so obviously been following all the Brexit, read everything about that sort of stuff [fire alarm stops], about the DUP, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, but not in the early days, politics didn't interest me.

BH: Yeah, yeah, even British politics?

CL: No, I wasn't a political person, so, I mean, no, I wasn't interested.

BH: Sure, yeah, but what about the Brexit thing then? Cos that's kind of brought a lot, some of the stuff back, back up again.

CL: Well, I remember the days of the old border, I remember going across the border and I remember my dad smuggling stuff back, but I can't remember what it was, I think it was cigarettes and something else, I think cigarettes were cheaper in the Republic.

BH: Yeah, they would have been, yeah.

CL: But I don't know, I don't know, and I remember going on day trips across, but now that you've brought that up I do recall the feeling of going into a foreign country.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

CL: Oh very, very much so. We, we did, we did a few holidays in the Republic when I would probably be eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve years of age, and we'd go down to Killarney and we'd go across to Donegal and places like that, you know, for a week or a few days or a long weekend, and I seem to recall it felt, I felt uncomfortable.

BH: Mmm, and what do you think that was about, like, what was–?

CL: I don't know, I think it might've been just about that, being brought up in a Protestant culture and subconsciously being fed this [pauses], I don't know.

BH: Yeah, that's really interesting.

CL: Can I, in case it escapes my mind, though it might not be particularly relevant or it might, you can take the bones out of anything I say, how many **[01:20:00]** years ago would it be, now where am I, 2003, a year after I retired, I'd wanted to raise some money for Marie Curie Cancer Care, who looked after, Marie Curie nurses looked after my mum and dad, they were fantastic here and they both, I don't know if you've heard of a place called St Ann's Hospice.

BH: Yes, I have, yeah.

CL: They both spent time in St Ann's Hospice and my mum died in St Ann's Hospice, so I wanted to do some fundraising and I thought right, I'm not just going to go through the normal channels, do you know, there's, I mean, collecting and that. I wanted to do something different and I cycled a lot, so I was, one summer I was reading a book called *Round Ireland with a Fridge*, have you ever read it?

BH: I haven't read it, but I know exactly the book you mean.

CL: Right, I can rec-, right, if you want a good laugh, summer holiday read, get *Round Ireland with a Fridge*. I was reading *Round Ireland with a Fridge* and it just suddenly hit me, right, I like cycling, I think I'll cycle round Ireland, the whole country, the whole coastline, cos I was still pretty fit and I was cycling everyday. I thought if I cycle around the country I can just raise money, I don't have to mess about with anybody else, I'll just go, so I thought right, let's do it, let's do it, so I got the maps out and I started to work a route out that would take me away from the main roads and how long it was going to take me, do you know how far it is round Ireland?

BH: I've no idea.

CL: If you follow the coastline all the way around Ireland, how many miles do you think it is?

BH: Oh goodness, the coastlines are so windy like, and up and down. I'd say it's about three hundred miles from Cookstown to Dublin.

CL: [laughs] Go on, just have a stab.

BH: Oh it must be well over ten thousand miles.

CL: Oh no, you're way over the top there.

BH: Too, too, that's too far.

CL: Three thousand seven hundred, actually when I ask people they don't normally go that high, they normally go a bit lower, it's three thousand seven hundred, so anyway, cut a long story short, I'll get on, crack on with this, right, so what I decided to do was not go right round, but cut across, cos there's all those inlets, especially down the south-west, so I worked out a route that would do a thousand miles, so I cycled a thousand miles round Ireland, and the reason I'm bringing this up, right, is that, that, let me think now, why, what, yeah, the reason I'm bringing it up was because of the way I was accepted around the country and particularly in the Republic of Ireland, and I found in many ways, I, what I did was, my wife dropped me off with my bike and all my kit on the back at Holyhead, got a ferry over, cycled anti-clockwise and did about fifty mile a day, and just did B&Bs all the way round, and I would stop, get a B&B, go out for a pint of Guinness and meet the people, have something to eat, and the people in the Republic were much friendlier towards me than the people in the North.

BH: Is that right? And what do you think that was about?

CL: I don't know.

BH: Yeah, and had you, did you have a slightly sort of north-eastern accent by this stage?

CL: Well, my accent was probably more Northern Irish than it is now, but it's very similar to what you're hearing now, my accent's pretty much, but nobody bothered about that, people, people would just, in, in, particularly in the pubs, you'll know this as well as anybody, in the pubs in Ireland people talk to you. Now they don't talk to you here in England unless you make an effort, but if you walk into any pub in Ireland and you're on your own somebody will talk to you, and somebody would, would, they would all say to me oh where are you from?

BH: Yeah, no, they're nosey [laughs].

CL: They'd notice the accent, where are you from, so I'd tell them and they'd, I'd say what I was doing and they would go here's a pint of Guinness, and that went on all the way round, and it just felt they were a bit more friendly in the Republic. I've written that up into a book by the way, but I've not had it published, but maybe that's another story. Sorry, I've digressed.

BH: No, no, that's, so that was immediately after–

CL: That was after I retired, a few years after I retired.

BH: And this was for charity as well?

CL: I did, I raised about three grand, not a vast amount.

BH: And why did you particularly choose to go round Ireland?

CL: Because of *Round Ireland with a Fridge*, it was so funny.

BH: Because of the book?

CL: Well, I'm looking for something to do, but I thought well, Ireland, Ireland's Ireland, so I did the whole thing. I mean, I initially thought well, I tell you what I'll do, I'll cycle along the border, but then that's not very far, it's about three hundred miles or something like that, so yeah, so I just decided to do that, but that was in, I diverted there, you'd asked me a question, what was it [pauses], anyway, pick up your notes there.

BH: I haven't got a huge amount more things to ask, a few things to ask. What about the Irish community in Britain, so Irish centres, Irish clubs, things like that, was that something that you ever had any contact with?

CL: I never had any contact with them. They, they, I guess, I, gosh that's a tough, that's an interesting one, I guess that I felt they were all Catholic based. You probably had this, you probably know this.

BH: Yes, yeah, yeah.

CL: I, I, most of, I have been to one or two, there was one down on, down on Fallowfield.

BH: Oh yes, was that St Ann's?

CL: No, when you go down to, past Owens Park, the traffic lights you turn right, what's that road called, it's along there on the right hand side you, you know, you know, at Owens Park where the traffic lights are.

BH: Yes, yeah.

CL: And there's a pub on the corner, there's a big like, old church on your right, on the corner, you turn right there and go along there for about half a mile, there's a pub on the right, saint something or others.

BH: Yeah, I know, I thought it was St Ann's, maybe it's not, must be something else.

CL: No, I don't think it's St Ann's, saint, anyway–

BH: I know the one you mean, yeah.

CL: Anyway, doesn't matter, there, there was a family, when I was at the Armitage, manager of the Armitage Centre, we contracted our catering out to, and there was, contracted out to a Catholic Irish family, and they were very, very good, and they were very much involved with that club, and I remember going with them for a few drinks.

BH: Yeah, yeah, what about things like, over here in particular, St Patrick's Day and things like that? Did you ever go to any of those things?

CL: Well, we went into Manchester, we've been to a few of the St Patrick's marches in Manchester, thoroughly enjoyed them.

BH: Yeah, is this, has this happened recently or is this–?

CL: Oh well, I haven't been for the last, the last one we'd have probably been to had been about five years ago, but prior to that I'd say it would've been two or three times.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

CL: Into town to watch the St Patrick's, just, you know, just go in for the day, to watch them going past and all the counties and all that sort of stuff. But it was not something that I

necessarily would've went out of my way to do, and, and over here it, it, now it's not, it's not something that I want to particularly be involved with, Irishism, if that–

BH: Yeah, yes, yeah.

CL: You know, whilst, whilst it's still me, I've mellowed.

BH: You've mellowed, yeah. What about whenever you returned then sort of to Northern Ireland for holidays and things? Did you ever go back for like, July celebrations or anything like that, no?

CL: No, never, never. Twelfth of July doesn't necessarily excite me, didn't particularly excite me when I was living there, you know.

BH: Yeah, and then I suppose over here then there was no equivalent sort of thing, certainly by that stage maybe Liverpool, Glasgow, but not other places.

CL: No, not where I was, no, no, but it's not something that, that–

BH: You would've been interested in, anyway.

CL: No, not, not something that I'm interested in. I just, if we're kind of getting towards the summing up stage, I, I, I personally would like all of this to be put away and let's get on with it, and if we can do that, and the churches don't stick their fingers in, then they might be able to achieve something. I, I, I could live with a united Ireland, right, but that united Ireland would have to be, have no religious connections, but I don't think that's going to happen. I still think there's, there's a tremendous input, and of course the other big thing is I'm a huge, huge rugby fan and the Irish rugby team.

BH: Do you, would you support Ireland or would you support England now?

CL: Oh wait a minute, Ireland by a hundred miles. My, my eldest son supports Ireland before England and he, he, so, oh Ireland by a country mile, strangely enough this is, this is odd, if we're talking purely rugby here, Ireland first and foremost, but my second team would be Scotland.

BH: Ah that's interesting.

CL: Don't know why, but maybe the fact that I was there five years and I played rugby there for five years in Scotland, that, that drew me into Scottish rugby, but then England would kind of come, would come third. In terms of football I would obviously support the Northern Ireland football team.

BH: Is that right, yeah, you would, yeah?

CL: Yeah, course I'd support Northern Ireland, with George Best and all that sort of stuff, and, but I would, I would like to, always love to see the Republic winning unless they were

playing, playing Northern Ireland. I don't know if you saw recently, in the papers recently, there are talks going on at this very moment **[01:30:00]** about the two football associations amalgamating.

BH: Oh you mean the, the, the All-Ireland league, yeah.

CL: Yeah, if, what's it called?

BH: Smirnoff, used to be called the Smirnoff Irish League.

CL: No, they're talking about bringing the two Irish organisations together.

BH: Good idea, I think.

CL: And having an All-Ireland league.

BH: Yeah, yeah, I thought it would be a good idea, improve the quality of the standard there.

CL: Well, yeah, but, but there was an interesting article in the paper about that because some of the, was it Glentoran or Linfield, one of those two teams were, were saying that they'd, when they'd played Dundalk in, in, in something, the bus got stoned.

BH: Yeah, yeah, I mean, there probably will be those things happening, you know, but then again, you know, there's an incentive for teams like Linfield to not want to amalgamate the leagues because they're top dog where they are and they, they may not be top dog if they–

CL: Well, that's true. I don't, I was slightly digressing, but yeah, it's difficult, it's a difficult one. I, I, I, as I said to you earlier, I probably will apply for an Irish passport, cos I'm entitled. Have you got an Irish passport?

BH: I've got one, yeah.

CL: Have you got both?

BH: I've got both, yeah.

CL: Well, I've only got a British passport, so I can get my Irish passport, but whether it's going to be of any benefit, I mean, who knows.

BH: Who knows.

CL: But I've got an English wife.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

CL: But my son, he's applying for his.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

CL: And only recently, I, we have been sort of thinking should we try and buy a little holiday home somewhere. But one of the most interesting things when I was over, I was over about three months ago, researching for my book, and I couldn't believe the property prices compared with here, a lot cheaper.

BH: Oh yeah, you can get a lot bigger houses for less money like, definitely, yeah.

CL: I think we're probably chit chatting now, aren't we, rather than–

BH: No, well, I actually wanted to ask you, a few more things I wanted to ask you about.

CL: Yeah, go on, fire on, fire away.

BH: Actually, your books, so how did you become involved in that?

CL: Oh gosh, well, first of all I did a masters degree in the sociology of sport when I was about forty. I was, I was at the university here, I was working down at the Armitage and I just had the old CertEd, and I sort of had a thing in my head, I, I want, I want a proper degree, the CertEd is not really classed as a proper degree.

BH: Right, okay.

CL: It was a three-year teacher training, gives you a Certificate in Education, so anyway, I thought right, okay, and I'd heard about this course at University of Leicester, and I've always been interested in the history of sport and how, how, why people play sport, so I did a two-year distance-learning course on the sociology of sport, and my dissertation, I chose for my dissertation the social history of archery.

BH: Archery?

CL: Yeah, well, you could do your dissertation on anything that was sport related, but had either a historical or a sociological link, and I wanted to do something that nobody else had ever done, so I thought right, social history of archery, and across there, there is the most fantastic exhibition of archery, but you don't know it's there, do you know it's there?

BH: No.

CL: Have you heard of the Simon Archery collection?

BH: No.

CL: Do you know the Manchester Museum?

BH: Yes.

CL: Down in the basement, it's called the Simon Archery, Google it. Nobody can go in unless you make prior arrangements, and they've got bows dating back thousands of years, they've got books, manuscripts, documents all about the history of archery, and I used to go in there to do my dissertation and I, I made arrangements with the lady who looks after it, and I used to go in and spend hours in that building down there, so anyway, I did the social history of archery, twenty thousand words.

BH: Yeah, that's quite a big dissertation.

CL Well, yeah, but you see there were, there, my masters had no exams at the end of it, it was all coursework, so for two years there was, over two years I had six three thousand word essays and a twenty thousand word dissertation, so anyway, that triggered my writing. I wrote this and I got slated. I got a pass, but I, I suddenly realised the way they criticised it and I thought I can do better than that, and that's what happened, and then in, what year would it have been, about fourteen years ago I thought, I wonder, I was researching my dad's history, my dad's military history.

BH: Yeah, that's what I was going to ask about, yeah.

CL: Yeah, well, it's my dad's military history. I got all these military records, the, the army, military records are all held in Glasgow, I got all his military records, I found his Japanese record card, Japanese kept record cards, I found his release questionnaire, where they had to fill in all these when they were released, and then I thought I wonder if there's anybody still alive. So I started trawling the East Surrey Regiment, which was his regiment, and I found a man down in south London called John Wyatt who was in the East Surreys and he would've been in, would he have been mid-eighties, so I got his phone number and I rang him up I said do you know Hugh Lowry, told him who I was, blah, blah, blah, blah, and he goes oh I don't think so, I can't remember him, was he a regular soldier, this is an interesting one, was he a regular soldier, I said yes, he was, he joined up voluntarily, he said oh I was conscripted.

BH: Ah right.

CL: So he said I was called up just as the war started and my dad had been in three and, and he, what he said is the reason I probably don't know him is that we didn't really mix socially, the regular soldiers looked down their noses at these men that were brought in, right, so I said oh well, that's a pity, told him, blah, blah, blah, and he said oh, he said if you're ever down Sydenham, south London come and see me, I've got some things you might be interested in about the East Surreys. So a few months later I happened to be down that way, went to see him, went to his flat and I was like, blown away. He pulled out all these documents, he pulled out all these notes that he's made that his daughters had typed up, and I'm going oh my God, that needs to be done, so I said John would I, would you mind if I just put these together into like, a document. Originally I hadn't thought about a book, I just thought it was so interesting that what we have to do is pull it together, make it, and make a little thing that we could just produce for friends and family, and he said oh yeah, yeah, go ahead, so he'd given me all these documents. I went away started working on it, put it all together and I ended up writing sixty thousand words.

BH: Unbelievable.

CL: And then I thought I wonder can I get this published. So I'd heard of Pen and Sword, who are a publishers in Barnsley, and they were military, so I thought oh sod it, so I just sent it off, I just put a covering letter in, ran it off, I posted it actually and I said I've written this book, I don't l know if it'd be of any interest to you, and within twenty-four hours I got a phone call saying we want it, we'll take it, we'll give you a thousand pounds.

BH: You're joking me.

CL: It's an advance on royalties, it's called, and I said oh, I was taken aback, I said I haven't sent it to any other publishers and they said we'd rather you didn't, we want it, and that's where, that came, where is it?

BH: There.

CL: [picking up a book] That's where that came in, so, and within eighteen months, two years, that's his story that I'd written up, and then I got the bug, just got the bug, and I'm doing all this research and I thought oh here we go, and then I stumbled across this young girl, well, she's not a young girl now, but she was sixteen, she's Dutch. You can keep that, I've got loads of them.

BH: Thanks.

CL: It's a nice little read. She was Dutch, she's sixteen and she was a prisoner of war and her dad, she lost her dad, but I tried to get that, that's a much smaller book and Pen and Sword wouldn't touch it.

BH: So who published this one?

CL: Nah, we self-published, I self-published, I just self-published.

BH: And does, I'm looking at this one here and I'm looking at that one there. There was another one you showed me–

CL: That one, that's the latest one, that's the regimental history.

BH: That's the regim-, that's the whole regiment, right?

CL: That's the history, that's their Far East conflict, that traces the East Surreys from 1936 to 1945.

BH: Okay.

CL: So, so just, just to finish the story off, so the writing bug got me and here we are today with Frank Pantridge.

BH: Well, that's what I was going to ask you about next. Some of these lead back to Northern Ireland in some ways.

CL: Pantridge.

BH: Yeah, and was that a–?

CL: About my dad.

BH: Your dad, yeah.

CL: Well, I, I was just doing research, internet again, you see you get so much on the internet, and it threw this Frank Pantridge at me, and it's the inventor of the portable defibrillator, and then, and then it said he was a Far East prisoner of war, so that triggered my, my, my mind, and then I started, then I found his book, he'd written his own autobiography and it's hard to get.

BH: Yeah, some of these are out of print and things.

CL: Well, it's way, way out of print, '82 I think it came out and you can hardly get it and it cost me about forty quid just for the one that I got, and then I contacted a few people who knew him and his nephew, and then they all said we'd love you to do this, so that's how it's all come about, and then I found out that Dame Mary **[01:40:00]** Peters was a friend of his and knew him really well and was on the Pantridge Trust, they set up a Pantridge Trust which raised money to put defibrillators into various places in Northern Ireland, so, and a few other people, and the original ambulance is in the Ulster Transport Museum, the first ambulance that was sent out with a defibrillator in 1966 is now in the Ulster Transport Museum, so I've got photographs of that, so, and that's the story of Pantridge, it's with the publishers now, and of course he's a big man in Lisburn. If you're ever back over go to Lisburn Civic Centre, there's a huge statue of him outside.

BH: Yes, I must mention it to my dad.

CL: Huge statue, yeah, there's a huge statue of him outside. So I've got a launch coming up on the thirteenth of June in Lisburn Civic Centre.

BH: Is that right?

CL: Yeah, they, because he's so famous in the area I, they, they, have agreed to host a launch, they've giving me a free room, they've giving me a buffet lunch for fifty people and they're doing all the publicity.

BH: You're joking me.

CL: Lisburn City Council.

BH: That's fantastic, yeah.

CL: And Mary Peters is going to be their guest speaker.

BH: Is that right? That's unbelievable.

CL: Do you know Mary Peters, have you ever come across her?

BH: Well, I know, I ran on that track, that Mary Peters track, but I don't know her like, you know.

CL: She's lovely. Just bear with me, you carry on while I'm looking for this.

BH: No, I'm just going to, you show me that and then I've just a few final questions just to ask [pauses].

CL: Yeah, go on [pauses].

BH: [extended pause] So I suppose just these are just like, summing up questions. Looking back over your life, first of all, are you are you glad you left Northern Ireland?

CL: Before I answer that, could, could I just put a hold on while I go to–?

BH: Sure, of course you can, yeah, yeah, yeah, go on ahead, you've to go the toilet, yeah.

CL: Yeah, please.

BH: Do you know where to go?

CL: No, but I'll ask them to point me in the right direction [interruption while CL uses the bathroom].

BH: Okay, so that us off again now. So this is basically the last few questions and just really summing up. So first of all, looking back over your life, are you glad you left Northern Ireland back when you were seventeen or eighteen?

CL: Yes.

BH: Yes, why, why is that?

CL: I just feel I, I, I just feel that I saw the world. I saw life outside of what might, what we could class as a bit of a bubble, and I've never regretted it. Following on, do I miss it, yes, do I still love it, yes, and the people.

BH: Yeah, do you think moving away has changed you in any way?

CL: Now I did read that question and I put a big question mark. It's a difficult one to answer because you don't kn-, if you'd have stayed, you don't actually know if you'd have felt any different today, so I'm, I'm, I'm partially going to sidestep that. I would probably say yes, it has changed me, but I couldn't give you any evidence for that. I don't know what I would've been like had I stayed and not moved away. There was something mentioned about jobs and things in there, but of course I didn't have any jobs, I went straight to college from school and you didn't do, you didn't take years out in those days, it wasn't the done thing.

BH: Yeah, what do you think's been the most important thing that's happened to you over the course of your life?

CL: Probably leaving, leaving at eighteen is probably, well, I mean, there, there's obviously milestones as we go through our lives, there are milestones, and that was probably the first milestone that, that hits me, and then the second milestone is probably getting married, then your third milestone is having children, and then for me, if I'm tracing those milestones through, going to Saudi Arabia for three years was an incredible experience, not just for me, but my wife and my children, and then retirement and writing books. Does that, does that sort of trace the pattern?

BH: Sure, it does, yeah.

CL: There's a series of milestones.

BH: How do you think of yourself now? Would you think of yourself as British or Irish or–?

CL: [laughs] I knew that one was coming. How many times have I been asked that, I have been asked that loads of times.

BH: Who, who's asked you that before?

CL: Just, just people, just friends.

BH: And what do you say?

CL: The funny, can I, before I answer it, right, about three weeks ago I was at the doctors for an MOT, once you get over a certain age they give you an MOT once a year. There's a nurse and she did all the checks, which were all fine, thank God, and then she said to me the most weirdest thing that I'd ever heard in my life, she said do you consider yourself Irish or English, and I'm going what, what's that got to do with my health, and I said I've never been asked that before, why, and she said, do you know what she said, she said it's got something to do with, that you might be vulnerable to certain things, and she said the Irish have got higher incident rates of cancer and heart disease than the English, so I said well, I've got a, I've got to say I'm British. But going back so, back to the question [sighs], I meet loads of people and I say I'm Irish, simple. I could turn it back on you, couldn't I?

BH: You could indeed, yeah.

CL: Could ask the same question. I say I'm Irish, but I say I'm from that funny part of the world, the funny part of Ireland, that top bit, and that's the one where we're none, a lot of us are not quite sure what we are, and I'll leave it at that.

BH: And that was what I wanted to ask. Are there distinctions within Irishness, is there–?

CL: I don't know. If it's the Ireland rugby team, I'm supporting the Ireland rugby team, if it's any sport, if it's, if the Irish are competing, I'm there, athletics, I'll support both, you know, I watch some of the Irish, Republic of Ireland, runners in the Olympics and that and I'm going come on, come on, you know, so I, I, I'm kind of sidestepping this one.

BH: No, but it kind of sounds that you're saying you're both, that you're British and you're Irish.

CL: Yeah, I am, I'm probably both, it's about as close as I'm going to get to giving you an answer, and it would be really interesting to hear what other people are saying.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

CL: Do you know?

BH: Well, that's kind of what we're interested in seeing as well, you know.

CL: Yes, I know, I can hear, I can see where you're coming from.

BH: Yeah, where's home now?

CL: Well, home now is where I live just down the road in Stockport, but the family home is where I was brought up in Downpatrick and I still, every time I go over and I drive down, when you, I don't know if you know County Down very well at all?

BH: I know it a bit, yeah.

CL: Well, if you're coming down the main road from Belfast you come through Crossgar, cut through Saintfield, Crossgar, and then as you're approaching Downpatrick you come through the hills, and the cathedral is straight in front of you, up on the hill, and you, I always, it always tugs at me as soon as I drive down there that that's home.

BH: Yeah, well, then, my very final question then. I think I've asked most of the things that I'm going to ask, is there anything that I haven't asked about which is important and maybe you want to talk about that I've missed?

CL: I think we've pretty much covered the lot, haven't we.

BH: We seem to have covered a fair bit I would say, yeah.

CL: I don't know. Let me just have a quick look to see these [pauses]. I think you covered most of them [pauses]. Sorry, I'm just having a quick look.

BH: Yeah, go on ahead.

CL: Oh yeah, there was something mentioned here about when we got married.

BH: Yeah, who went to the wedding?

CL: Well, there wasn't many because of the, the kind of distances involved, there wasn't really, there was only like, my mum and dad and about two or three other relatives came over.

BH: So did you get married over in England then?

CL: No, we got married, yeah, we got married in Durham, yeah, yeah.

BH: And why was that? Just cos with the difficulty of travelling over I suppose.

CL: I don't know, they all got invites, but I guess the difficulty in travelling over, and a lot of my relatives would've been older, you know, so my mother and father's age, **[01:50:00]** and my cousins, my cousins were scattered all over to the four winds, I mean, I'm not the only one in the family that have left home, oh I should have mentioned that, oh yeah, I've got a, I've got a cousin, oh she's another one that might be of interest to you, she married an army man from the base at Ballykinler, one of my cousins.

BH: Ah that'd be very interesting.

CL: And she's a one, borrow your pen a second?

BH: Yeah, sure.

CL: Just so I can write that down, but she lives in, see, how, how are you on for where people live?

BH: We're pretty relaxed, to be honest.

CL: Yeah, but you might, some of them, you might have to travel to get to them.

BH: That's fine, yeah, we're fine with that, we've budgeted for travelling.

CL: She lives near Leicester.

BH: Oh yeah, certainly.

CL: Midlands, yeah, I forgot about that, my cousin, and I've got another cousin, interesting cousin, but he, he lives, he still lives in Banbridge, he was a prison officer in the Maze.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

CL: He was there during the Bobby Sands thing.

BH: Yeah, I mean, that would be interesting–

CL: But did didn't leave Northern Ireland–

BH: Yeah, we'd–

CL: He did, he did, he joined, he joined the Royal Marines, but he, he didn't, and then I've got another cousin, she left Northern Ireland and she married a military person as well, she lives down in Plymouth now.

BH: Right, yeah, yeah.

CL: There's, when I dredge up, there are quite a few.

BH: Well, if any of, if you can contact any of those, if they're interested, we would be–

CL: Digressing a little bit, but, you know, it links the Irish connection. My, one of my uncles, the youngest one, my dad's brother, he joined the army towards the end of the war and he was the black sheep of the family and he disappeared, and the reason was that he stole his older brother's ID cos he was too young, so he managed to sign up with his older brother's identification.

BH: So he really wanted to join the army then?

CL: And all I know, all I know was that he stole money from my parents, my grandparents, right, he stole it out of a jar in the house, my dad told me once, and he was called my uncle Robert Lowry, and my dad had told me that he was sent away with the army to Germany after the war, the occupation forces, British Army of the Rhine or whatever it was called, and he was never seen, and we know that he married a German girl and had children, but that's it, and my dad had said that nobody wants to know him anymore because he wasn't a very nice person, my uncle Robert. So about five or six years ago I began to think, I was doing a bit of a family tree and I began to think I wonder, I wonder is there anybody still around, so I knew that he'd gone to a place called Hanover, there was a lot of British Army bases round Hanover after the war, so I Googled Robert Lowry Hanover and it threw up an IT company in Hanover and the managing director Robert Lowry, so I'm thinking, and the whole thing was in German except for Robert Lowry, and I thought hey, come on.

BH: It couldn't be.

CL: So at the bottom was an email address for this company, so I fired off an email and said I hope you don't mind blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, but are you the son of Robert Lowry from Downpatrick, my uncle, and he came back to me and said yes, I'm your cousin, so I found

German cousins and there are six of them, six of them, and one in particular, his daughter Ilona, she was really, really keen to visit Northern Ireland, and two years ago we met her, took her over and took her all around, all of Northern Ireland, did the whole tourist works and she was absolutely delighted to have found where her dad was originally from, so there's a wee story.

BH: There you go, unbelievable.

CL: No, I think that's about it, I can't think there's anything else I'd want to ask you mate.

BH: Okay, okay, well, then, I'll end this and just say first, thanks very, very much Cecil for doing this.

CL: No problem.

BH: It's really helping us out and I appreciate you taking your time and giving your, your morning and part of your afternoon up to do this, so, so thanks very much basically.

CL: No worries, thank you, I hope this is useful for you.

BH: It will be, it definitely will be.

INTERVIEW ENDS