

Green & Blue Project
Pat O'Leary

I'm now seventy two.

I am from Kilcummin, Killarney.

I was promoted sergeant here in Clonakilty in 1972... and my first posting, for a very short period was to Terelton, which is over near Macroom, I was sent over there and I fondly remember it, because... we had a fall of snow, and trying to get to the place was nigh on impossible, and when I arrived there there was no other Guard there at the time because somebody was sick, and the other person was on holidays, so I was there on my own, I was there for about maybe two, three weeks I'd say, when I was told to then that I was... being transferred to the border.

Well it wasn't really because I think we kind of realised that we would be going, there were twenty five of us promoted at the time, and while I suppose we were all hoping against hope that we wouldn't be going too far, but nonetheless I think in the back of our mind we felt, I did anyway, that we were going to go to the border... and I always remember the morning that I was told, I was going down town, leaving my house which is quite near the Garda station in Clonakilty, and our district clerk at the time... left down the window in the office because he saw me going out the gate, and he called me, and he said 'your transfer is out' and he said 'would you like to know?' so I said 'don't tell me 'til I come back' because I knew where I was going I said 'I don't want to be bothered now' so when I came back I went to him, and he told me, he said 'you're going to a place called... Burnfoot in County Donegal' now, number one, I'd never heard of the place, and to make matters worse, when I went to the map to try and find out I couldn't find Burnfoot in the map at all. In the map that I had anyway, a road map, and the only thing I could find was Bridgend, which turned out to be... very very adjacent to Burnfoot, Bridgend would be the Customs post at the time, next to Derry, going from Donegal to Derry so then I found out where Burnfoot was, but... I had to pack my bags anyway, and leave.

I was leaving behind Noreen my wife, and two children at the time, yeah. And the two were young at the time... one would be seven, and the other would have been three, yeah. And I think, which was a bit disturbing at the time as well, our daughter Elaine who was the three year old, wasn't well at the time, had a medical condition, and we were up and down to Cork a good bit to a specialist, and I was kind of conscious because we had only one car, even though a small car at the time! A very small car, but I was very conscious of the fact that... I was leaving, I had to leave the, my family without a car, number one, I had to travel and... Noreen was going to be saddled then with looking after our sick daughter as well, and do you know I was afraid that the condition might deteriorate as well, but anyway I had to go, so I went in the, I'd say if my memory serves me right now, about the first week in March I'd say, I head off for County Donegal, Ulster. And I had a Mini Minor car, now I'm fairly tall, and I was scarcely able to get into this car myself, but the

amount of luggage I had, my little car was packed, heading for the border, and I distinctly remember... the day that I went, I left early in the morning... somewhere outside Sligo I thought at this stage, now... I was nearly there, there was this guy doing something to cattle on the side of the road and I pulled up and I got out of the car, probably wouldn't be able to do it now at all because 'tis probably a highway now, 'twas a very minor road at the time, and I went over to him and I said, 'do you know where Burnfoot is in County Donegal?' and he said 'never heard of it'... so then I mentioned Buncrana, because I knew that was the next town, so he said 'I do, now I have an idea now' he said 'where you're probably heading for' and I said 'by the way' 'how far is it?' he said 'you're all of seventy miles still from Burnfoot' and I thought I was there, I thought I was there at the time.

Seventy miles in a Mini on a bad road, yeah... but I got there and I remember when I arrived in Burnfoot, trying to find the Garda station, it was an old rectory, well in off the Buncrana-Derry road... line of trees leading up into it, it still looked like a rectory, the only difference that there was, there were two Garda houses built at the end of the driveway, and there was a sergeant and a Guard living there, but anyway I found the Garda station.

I knew I was going there as a sergeant, but what *role* I was going to play as that sergeant I didn't really know on the border, because we were ill prepared to be quite honest about it now, I served all my time here in Clonakilty principally as a patrol car driver for the, for five or six years, doing mundane... police work around West Cork which was quiet at the time, you know? Here I was facing the border in the midst of the troubles at the time, because it was 1972 now you know, and... I was trying to figure out myself as I drove that day to Donegal, what am I going to be doing, when I arrived there, the sergeant, one of the sergeants that was there, said to me, 'I'm delighted that you have come because I'm trying to get out of here' he said, 'I want to, I'm hoping to get a transfer, my only hope for a transfer out of here is for a new fella to come, and you happen to be the new fella', so I said 'fine' so I... got to realise very quickly that I was going to be a jack of all trades really, because he was going, and hell-bent on going so he had lost interest in the place obviously, and I didn't blame him for it, either because he'd a young family as well, I was really in at the deep end then because I was, I was there as a sergeant, a young sergeant, totally on my own, like starting off... and we were straight into trouble there like, because we'd problems, we'd problems, practically every day there like of one sort or another, now it wasn't any better, any worse than other Garda stations along the border, but nonetheless... the fact that we were the next Garda station to Derry I suppose didn't help either, you know?

Well, we would have things like, there was one particular day I remember, I was sitting down talking to a Guard in our public office, and... we saw these two guys walking up the avenue, and I just happened to say to the Guard, this is a problem' you know, when we saw the two of them, this was in the middle of the day, when they arrived in anyway, we discovered they had been travelling around in a travelling... shop... and the shop was actually... commandeered by guys who had

taken the shop off them, this is a mobile shop, a van or a truck, or whatever it was... and of course, they were after the money, and the contents, and the two boys were left Shanks' mares, back to the Garda station to tell us about their ordeal... and we, the Guard that was with me realised immediately, I wasn't long at all there now when this happened, the Guard and myself realised immediately... this is an international problem now, because these guys are gone across the border with this, this is not in our area anymore, but anyway we had to go out and search and we did, and... possibly got to know very quickly what had happened. That was the biggest problem that I felt while I worked there was trying to... conclude anything that you, you started, you started investigating something, but you never came to the end of it, you were left, a lot of things were left in mid air, or in mid stream, because 'twas very hard to pursue them because you were dealing practically all the time with cross-border traffic, and this would refer now to very minor things that we would take for granted down here, maybe traffic accidents and... minor things like driving licence and insurance on cars and things like that, you held up somebody, you found that things weren't right, but they were living across the border, so... they were out of jurisdiction, you know as far as we were concerned, but... we had robberies as well, serious robberies, I mean I distinctly remember one, they had a big dance hall there on the Buncrana road, just outside Burnfoot, 'twas in the area where we were... and one night just after the dance, about 2.00a.m. just after it had finished, there was a raid on the dance hall and I remember the time, that night I was off, Noreen actually happened to be up and the children, 'twas during the summertime and there was a raid on the dance hall for the proceeds of course of the night, they were looking for the money, and there were shots fired... and we were called out, and of course we were all unarmed, we would have batons stuck in our pockets, and into the unknown as well like you know, not knowing what you were facing, and as well as that the routine stuff was difficult as well because like if you were doing say, you often hear checkpoints on the border, we were doing checkpoints on one side of the border, the RUC were doing their checkpoints on the far side of the border, but [pause] some trouble happened in the north, it was likely that the cars were going to come to our side of the border, vice versa could happen then, there could be some problem that we had on our side, and the guys were going back in across the border, so... you were dealing with... like I said, inconclusive type of duties, which made it very very difficult, you see, I suppose anybody in the workplace, no matter what you're doing, you like to be able, if you start something, you like to be able to finish it but it made it difficult, I also remember one evening I was in in Derry with the sergeant who was there at the time, he was the replacement of the man that left... and we went in to Shantallow, into a big supermarket, we used to go in there, maybe pretty often enough, but we'd always go in in pairs shopping, 'twas a fine supermarket, and of course we were going in there to bring things home as well because we were buying stuff in Derry cheaper, a lot cheaper that time than you were buying them in the Republic... and we were in the supermarket, came home and I remember I was in where I was in digs, in Burnfoot... and at teatime we were all sitting down, there were a lot of the other lads that would be working with me there as well... there was a bang... and the windows of the house shook... now we hadn't a clue at the time what was after happening, so we discovered later that evening in the BBC news... that there had been an explosion in the supermarket that we had been in ... 'twas bombed

actually that evening... and all the contents, everything was destroyed in the supermarket, and there were people injured at the time as far as I remember, but... the, the tale to that story is... there were people going in across the border for weeks and months afterwards, because they were buying off shop soiled stuff from the supermarket, even though 'twas cheap enough before, but 'twas now being sold much cheaper.

If the RUC were there, and they held us up, they... and naturally they'd ask who we were, and they would be looking maybe for documents and things from the driver, so they would, they would, sometimes they'd get to know that you were, other times except you were asked, you just gave your driving licence with your name, maybe the driving licence then had a Garda station... address or something, maybe depending on who the driver was, but if 'twas a kind of a general name that somebody had been living in a townland somewhere, there would be no identification... but you were always on tenterhooks, because... the one thing that I was always afraid of, and particularly when I was travelling up and down, because I usually, to make the journey a bit shorter when I got to know my way around, went into the border at Aughnacloy in County Tyrone, and I came out at Strabane... further up, but you were always conscious then at a lot of checkpoints along the way that... you could have crossfire, somebody could attack the checkpoint, you could be just unlucky to be there at the wrong time, so... we had to pick the time that you travelled as well, you'd have to be very careful about the time that you travelled... but having said that, I just remember having good relationship with the RUC, because we'd meet them at the points, just at the points, we'd be talking, you'd be kind of cross-border talking if you know what I mean now, but you'd be kind of general type of, rather than... official type of... discussions, 'twould be kind of a general discussion about the problems that there were maybe at that particular time, or whatever, you know? Because it affected both of us.

I mean we were there for a purpose, to try to prevent, because the problems were across the border mainly, now... we had a spinoff in our place from... what was happening across, because we'd a lot of people who were maybe committing that type of crime across the border, were coming across to us, so there would be, there would be... that, but the liaising, and I think you know was kind of at a higher level than us, really, the main liaising with the RUC would be, would be a higher level of the Guards than what we were, we wouldn't have much recourse, talking about... say political duty matters or anything like that now with the RUC at all.

That is it, that's the kind of general conversation more than anything like that, yeah 'twould be, yeah 'twould be,

Oh yes, certainly, certainly because... there was an understanding like that we were both trying to do a job of work, which was probably as difficult for them and more difficult for them than 'twas for us, really... I suppose we were in the happy position

as well, some of us that were there, that knew we were only there for a short time, we would be getting out of the place... but having said that, I was there on a permanent transfer, so I didn't really know when I was going to be getting out of there.

It was difficult from that point of view, I suppose not so difficult from my side because I got into my stride in the work very quickly because you got to know like what was required and things like that, but was shocking difficult to be so far away, I mean I was... single journey three hundred, and almost three hundred and fifty miles from home, where I was. Thinking of your wife and a young family back home... also thinking about yourself like, you know that they were worrying about you, they didn't know what was going on either, and probably was much worse for them because they were seeing things on television, and hearing of events that were happening, even they could be miles away from where I was,

You have to imagine now, the people up there are living on the border... they would have been some of the people, relations or... people connected with people that we would have been looking out for maybe inside the border, maybe involved in activities, so therefore you were always, you had to be very much on your guard, we had gone in there, and this is what I am saying about no preparation in the world for this thing, you were going into strange territory really, the dialect also of course was slightly different, and very hard to grasp because, like... I used to hear them talking when I went up there first about weans, and I didn't know what they were talking about at all, these were the children, and they had, they had different words for much different than we had down south, of expression, I found that extremely difficult for a while, but then after a while you got to know it... talking about the policing aspect of it, I must say now around Burnfoot... I discovered very quickly that there were an awful lot of... parents in the Burnfoot area, and the Buncrana area, and the Muff area, which was close to us as well, who had sons in the Guards, in different parts of the country themselves... and like, from once you got to know those... they were kind of a rung on the ladder... to get to know the locality a little bit better, or talk to them or find out what was happening... the other great problem we had there was you see when we were off, what were we going to do? When we were off duty? I mean you're out in Burnfoot out in the heart of the country, 'twould remind you of down this part of the country, now say Ardfert or Ballinascarty or somewhere like that... I used to go playing bingo. I wasn't in a bingo hall in my life, until I went to Burnfoot, I always remember there were small little halls out in the country, there was bingo there practically every night of the week, but the one thing I discovered very early on was 'twas busloads of women, that used to come from across the border, 'twas all older women playing bingo... and the small little hall, full of smoke, I can still remember it well, every bloody one of them were smoking, and the place was full of smoke, but like you'd very little to do... we used to go on walks, and... they'd a football pitch there... and some of the younger fellas used to play football locally, I was into football at the time, I liked it, so I used to just go watching them ... but that was difficult as well then trying to kill time.

Yes, well I think especially when you've, you're having children,

Oh dramatically, it had of course, yeah it had of course, and as well as that you know, you were there with a total strange group of Guards as well, that you didn't know at all like you went straight into a situation, where I didn't know anybody when I went there, because some of them had been there, most of them were brought in there, transferred in there... and a lot of them were there against their will as well, through no fault of their own, because they didn't, 'twasn't that it was County Donegal now or anything, or 'twasn't because 'twas the border, but the mere fact they were taken away probably from their children, a lot of them married, were leaving families behind, and it made it very difficult for them... it makes Garda work difficult, and it made Garda work very difficult, I always firmly believe looking back on it that... the powers that be at the time didn't realise at all what they were putting us into... I felt we were half useless actually, up there... I did really, because even though police work is the same no matter where you go... the fact that you were dealing with cross-border stuff meant that there should be a little more thought put into it and a little bit more training, like I felt that there were plenty of places to put sergeants down the country who were promoted into stations further down the country, there must have been a lot of Donegal fellas who would be delighted to get back home, into stations in their own county, maybe there was a reason for not doing that, I don't know... but I felt that was the road that they should have gone down rather than sending strangers like us up to the border, but I would find fault with the *fact* that we weren't prepared for it, I think that should have been something that, because it meant you were going into a serious enough situation, you know.

The political, as well as the police side of it as well, the policing side of it, the Garda side of it as well, prepare you for the type of work that you would be doing, prepare you for the fact like that you were going in... in charge of Guards, some who were new in the area, others who, who knew the area pretty well, you had to find out, the fellas that were there like, what were their intentions, what did they think about the situation on the border, because like... true enough, some of them were lukewarm about it, because they were living there as well, they were finding it difficult to deal with people from their own area as well.

So you didn't know, and we didn't know, and it was very difficult for us to find out, extremely difficult, but having said that, after a couple of months there I discovered that the vast majority of the people who were living in the place... were very very friendly towards us, because we were out *all* day and all night, and we had checkpoints here and checkpoints there, and people were being held up continually, and it must have been very difficult for them as well, going about their ordinary daily work, you know you were sticking your head in the window of a car and you were looking for identification, you were searching cars and... you know, which made it difficult for the local people as well, but...

I, I would say the raid on the hall, the night in the hall was... to me it could have been dangerous, because... when we got there, we didn't know what we were facing, number one, number two we didn't know if the people had gone out of that territory or whether they were still around there.

We didn't, hadn't a clue and we didn't know what they, well we knew what the motives were, a robbery to get money... there would have been another one another day that there was a shooting actually across the border at Bridgend, which was, which was near the Customs post, and I remember going there with two young Guards, now again we were facing the unknown, and again unarmed, we were just there checking cars, quite close to where the activity had been before we arrived, and again we didn't know whether the people who were doing this, because it came from our side of the border, they could've been still quite close to us, and we didn't know, we didn't know when they were going to maybe open up fire again, even though we were there, because 'twould have been common knowledge we were unarmed, so it could have been possible that they would do it again, those type of incidents would be the worst really that I think that I was involved in anyway there on the border, but there was always a danger, we were always particularly on the alert, particularly at night, dark nights, you know out doing checkpoints and things like that, and I remember there was a famous showband person at the time, now I'm not going to mention any names but... he travelled mainly in his own car in and out across the border, the van with the other members of the band... would be either gone before him or after, but every night that he came back to the border and he used to go in up at Bridgend... he was always enquiring, about how things were in in the north that night, because he was afraid, he didn't know what he was facing into, he wanted to get back to his home safely, but every night that we were out, he'd stop at the checkpoint enquiring about things in the north for the night... to me 'twas a dangerous place, really I would classify it as dangerous now, I mean there was a another time when a showroom in Derry was broken into... I remember at the time there were four cars and they were all yellow, yellow coloured cars, now whether they were in the showroom or in the garage at the time for a particular group of people like taxi drivers or whatever, they were all the one colour, but the showroom was broken into one night, all the cars were taken... and we were told that they were actually driving them on a beach out in our area... and... we went to check anyway, and ... when the Guards arrived... the boys had left the beach with the cars, and of course within minutes they were back in across the border with the cars, but there was a fleet of yellow cars actually removed that night from the showroom, and taken...

I usen't come down that often really, about every second month, I'd say.

[Noreen:] Every two months.

Every two months, yeah. I'd travel up and down every two months, yeah.

And how like, would you try and keep your days off together?

I would, I would and I can tell you I remember one... I left Burnfoot in my Mini... after night duty... which was a highly dangerous thing to do, and I said, 'I'll drive part of the journey now and I'll rest', and I got as far as Athlone, and I always remember going into a hotel in Athlone, and I went into the foyer of the hotel and I remember saying to the receptionist... I was going to have... breakfast or food... and I said, 'do you know, I'd have a sleep first, call me at a certain time, maybe an hour, an hour and a half, I'll have a rest, because I was dead tired, and I went to sleep and she called me at about an hour and a half... and I sat into my car after having something to eat and drove all the way down to Clonakilty... but... 'twas a long lonely drive, was grand coming home, but to sit in your car then in Clonakilty and face back again, and like... I was conscious there were twenty five other sergeants with me that were doing the same thing, all in the same boat, now some of them were lucky, they went to towns where they got accommodation, that was the other thing, I could not get accommodation where I was, I'd have to get accommodation in Buncrana or Letterkenny.

Well, Buncrana would have been, I'm not sure now the distance, but I suppose, twelve, twelve miles maybe from Burnfoot, I don't know how far it is, Letterkenny would have been farther away, but even at that time to get accommodation there wasn't easy either because you had a lot of personnel on the border looking for accommodation at that time as well, and from time to time there were a lot of temporary people going to the border that time as well, if there was something serious happening ... there was a time there, when there was riots in a place called St Johnston, up on the border, 'twas before I went there, and there were an awful lot of Guards taken in there in temporary transfer at the time, they would have been... maybe thirty, forty, fifty Guards taken in there, there was a lot of trouble there, serious trouble... so 'twasn't easy to get accommodation, and we... I, my family went up for the summer, we lived with a lady in a place called... Fahan, 'twas Fahan, yeah, Fahan, she was still living in the house when we were there, we just had the use of the kitchen, and our bedrooms, we had the two children at the time, but that was grand then because my family were there so you know, you'd be somewhat happier. I had peace of mind.

Well, you'd be a bit happier anyway, that's for sure, you weren't kind of isolated or left on your own or anything like that, but of course 'twas great for people as well because a lot of stuff was brought across the border at that time, I mean people were bringing car parts and everything home, tyres and batteries and all this type of thing, cigarettes or butter, all these things were much cheaper in across the border, and they were markets and people used to go into the markets, but again you had to be a little bit careful going in as well, because 'twasn't a kind of free for all that time at all, like you would go in and walk around you know I was much happier when I had somebody with me who knew something about Derry, because you didn't want to drive into the wrong areas or you didn't want to do something that

would draw notice to yourself, so from that point of view, lot of pressure, lot of pressure, we were working under extreme pressure, that's what I felt as well... yeah I didn't know anybody on the border, from working on the border who said that they were relaxed, because they weren't, even the local Guards would find it difficult enough because... they were conscious as well... had they to take action... against somebody they were living close to in the locality possibly, they had a family, you know, maybe some of their children going to school, so therefore you were looking over your shoulder all the time, it put... a lot of extra pressures on... the police forces, I'm sure... much worse on the RUC in across the border than it was on us, but it did on the Guards as well along the border, yeah and you know 'twas a kind of a strange feeling to have all these strange Guards moving into an area all together at once, I mean I was staying in digs in, Burnfoot... beautiful landlady and landlord in the house, would do anything for us... but like, they were totally overcrowded, because they were the only place that would cater for us, they were able to look after the Guards there at the time, you know? And they gave us accommodation, and good accommodation, we were lucky to get it... and... but you felt all the time that you were away from home and you were isolated and you were in strange surroundings, you were dealing with strange people, but again having said that, the people found it difficult I'm sure as well, you know?

I was there from... very first week in March until the middle, almost the end of November.

Oh 'twas a good spell, yeah and lucky, we were extremely lucky because... I would believe myself that the only reason we got out of there at that particular time was because new people were promoted, so they replaced us and we were able to get away, and I think gradually as well, they learned that they were inclined to put people who were promoted more close to the border, to the border duties than bringing people from very far away, because after that for us down here there were few people that went, for long stints, now having said that, there were then monthly... terms on the border as well, and I think, a lot of the members of the Guards from around Cork, would have given the short stint of a month rather than the long stints that we were in, because... except that you went on promotion or something you weren't there for a long stint.

Oh you would, 'twas much easier, I never minded a month, because I... like I said to you, off air at all... I thought I was finished with the border when I came down to Athea, in County Limerick that that was me finished with the border, but I discovered very quickly that I was on a list again to go back to the border, I said 'oh no, this is what happens' the only good thing about it was that I mainly went to either one of two places, Scotstown in County Monaghan, and I was staying in Monaghan Town... or I went to Dundalk, staying in the town, I'd be able to get accommodation and stay in the town... I loved to be quite honest about it, the duty didn't worry me at all in those two places, because I knew I was only there for a month, much different... kind of attitude to monthly work than it would be for the long term work.

It was difficult from the point of view, but the one thing that I will say about it... I did find in Dundalk and I've often thought back on it, there were a lot of young Guards in Dundalk station because it's a big district headquarters station... they were very very active young fellas, very interested in what they were doing, now then the Guards, most of the Guards would be permanently there... and we usually when we went there for a month would have a group of fellas working with us, young fellas, and I always remember our main work in Dundalk was... if we were on the early morning shifts in particular, six, seven o'clock in the morning, starting... we were searching vacant properties, searching vacant houses, which was dangerous really because you know, you were obviously looking for something... that could have been booby trapped, or we could find somebody or we could find explosives, but the young fellas were used to doing it, and we were very well versed in how to handle the situation... and I must say that I learned an awful lot about policing in Dundalk, I learned an awful lot from the young guys who were there, because they were so used to being in an area that was, that had a lot of trouble, that they were prepared or I presume their authorities had them prepared for it, they had certain techniques, certain methods by which they worked, and it made, it made work very easy. I was also in Scotstown, which was on the border as well, with Fermanagh... and again, mostly a lot of checkpoints out in the wilderness, out in, because 'twas mostly rural, very rural, mountainous, well I won't say mountainous now, but hilly, lot of forestry, again lot of searching, lot of that type of work, mainly. Again, 'twas grand because we were only there for the month, I enjoyed it, I used to get to a lot of football matches because Monaghan was a great county for football, we'd get a lot of matches, we'd great comradeship there as well, because there was a lot of people up there on temporary for the month, so we'd all meet, we'd go to the pub together and go wherever we went together and things like that, so 'twas, that was fine from that point of view, but... the long stint in Donegal was much much different, a much different proposition altogether, yeah.

[Noreen:] We went up to Donegal, myself and the children for the summer, but we went for a walk one evening, I'd say 'twas the first evening we went for a walk towards Buncrana, and we heard this big bang... and we said 'there's thunder, we better go back home' and Pat came back and told us afterwards there was a bomb in Derry, I'll tell you we didn't go for a walk or anything there... no I, I enjoyed my term up there really, I did, the lady in the house was lovely... Margaret... we can't think of her second name, but we enjoyed it, 'twas beautiful weather and the children enjoyed it, and everything, 'twas lovely and 'twas great for us because we had been alone for so long, you know and the children loved it.

[Noreen:] Oh it was awful, it was awful really, and I had no car, and it was lonely... it was lonely with two small children really, they'd go to bed at night and you'd sit down and be there on your own, and... you know it was very lonely, it was really yeah.

[Noreen:] Oh it was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. Now we lived near the O'Callaghans next door, down below in the houses as well, like as we're here now as well, and you'd have that company but it was lonely, really. You know, very.

I used to try to, when I was coming home, you'd always bring something. I wasn't the best out shopping at all, for anything to be quite honest I suppose, it'd be said that I'm still not the best for it anyway... I always made a point when I was coming home, I'd bring clothes for the children... and again there were a lot of markets, as I say, and now sometimes in Monaghan, particularly when I was going on temporary transfer, you'd buy things reasonable in Monaghan itself as well, but then there were, markets across the border, Jonesborough was a great place for markets... but I always made a point of bringing home clothes and I can still, in my mind's eye see the clothes that I bought and when I was buying them, because there'd be a few of us together and we'd be comparing notes, we'd say 'would this suit somebody now, this age?' you know, and you had men buying children's clothes, lots of men...

Totally unusual.

[Noreen:] Very unusual, that men just didn't get anything...

I went in so far as to buy...

[Noreen:] But he bought me a dress!

I remember buying a dress for Noreen...

[Noreen:] I still have it, I said 'I don't know it's ideally... put it in a museum! Pat bought me a dress!'

I remember two sergeants with me and I buying it, and we were inside, and they had the girl modelling the dress inside for us, we were trying to decide... and they were trying to get me to describe what kind Noreen was, her height, her dimensions! Colour hair, eyes all this type of thing, we were trying to buy the clothes.

[Noreen:] And sure I was pregnant when he was away as well, which was difficult really.

'Twas difficult, yeah.

[Noreen:] There was great excitement when he came home, we didn't care where we went.

And of course, 'twas nice coming back to the children as well, because the children, like 'twas totally new for them, I was away, when you come back like, but they'd be absolutely delighted when you come home.

[Noreen:] Ah sure there was great excitement.

Oh there was big excitement and you know, I usually brought stuff to them, if it wasn't clothes it was something else, but again, 'twas grand coming home, but then facing back like you know, and then what used to kill me then was the drive, I changed my car then one time when I was at home, and I thought I'd get a bigger car, a more comfortable car, and I remember I bought an Austin 1100 car in Cork, a nice car, lovely and comfortable... but a day or two before I was due to come home from Burnfoot for my time off... the engine of the car started to give trouble... and I remember driving down, I came home all the way with a water container in the car, the water pump in the car was giving trouble, oh no 'twas a gasket and the car was giving trouble, and 'twas leaking... and I was putting in water, I would have to stop every so often and put water into the car, so I drove the whole way from Donegal with a faulty car and I was petrified that it was going to break down, but like I suppose... the only people that would travel to Donegal are people going there on their holidays and 'tis the most beautiful county, I would compare it really with West Cork and Kerry, the scenery is exquisite in Donegal.

[Noreen:] Oh it was a lovely county, yeah it was, and we always said we'd go back, we never did it's so far away...

It's divided really into two, Donegal is divided into two, you have the Swilly, Lough Swilly, and Lough Foyle, you've the Foyle on the eastern side, but you have the Buncrana that peninsula there, the Inishowen peninsula, and then you have the western side of Donegal which is absolutely beautiful country, beautiful... I must say, the longer I stayed there the better I got to know it, I liked the people there, the local people, and... they had put up with an awful lot like, you know during the troubles and everything.

'Twas terrible for them, they had put up with an awful lot, you know and a lot of inconvenience as well, with road blocks and everything, there were a lot of detours and there were roads closed off, and it made life difficult for the local people, and like when you go there first, you were probably not conscious of that, but as my stay extended there, I got to realise that there was an awful lot of inconvenience for local people.

For them 'twas inconvenience as well, it was really. Now, you had people that exploited the situation, you had people then who of course were... were supportive of the cause that was going on across the border, and they were going to do what they could to disrupt things across the border, and this is, was our purpose there to try and prevent that from developing, and again that placed a lot of pressure on us, the other thing for me I suppose was that the fact that... as I said I went up new, newly promoted, I was young at the time like, I had only about ten year's service in the Guards... was to get to know even how to act as a sergeant, if you know what I mean? In simple terms, how to play the role of a sergeant, because as far as I was

concerned all I did was tuck my Garda role into a sergeant's role... which sometimes maybe wasn't sufficient for what you were supposed to be doing, because there was a lot of work, I found there was a lot of work in, Burnfoot for a sergeant, a *lot* of work, there was a lot of paperwork as well connected with the border, because it placed extra duties on the lads who were working outside... all the time... and I would have been one of those that preferred to be working outside, so I used to go out as much as I could with them, I'd be out a lot with them, we'd a lot of traffic accidents now as well, which...

And it's still, do you know? It hasn't change, sure it hasn't...

Because the percentage of deaths on the roads in Donegal is a way above the national average, has been, thankfully lately I haven't heard all that, but... there was a period there and it was very bad, and in my time there as well, we'd a lot of accidents, and again with a lot of... Northern Ireland drivers involved in traffic accidents, whether it was the condition of the roads, or whether it was lack of knowledge of the locality or what it was, and we had a lot of accidents at night there, I can remember... because we used to be out like with our jackets, and 'twas a highly, highly dangerous place because we were on the Derry-Buncrana road, and we had the Derry-Letterkenny road, we had two main roads coming from Derry, kind of intersecting there and 'twas a dangerous, dangerous place for traffic, but a lot of time spent investigating traffic accidents as well, as well as border duties, so that was...