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Interviewee's First Name(s) Geraldine/ Ger	Interviewee's Gender Female				
Occupation Reflexologist/Massage Therapist	Interviewee's Year of Birth 1960				
Mother's occupation Housekeeper	Father's occupation Gas Engineer				
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Editor's comments					

00:00:01

Pat Rodwell: Right. Good afternoon, everybody.

00:00:04

Geraldine O'Callaghan (Ger hereafter): Hello.

Pat: Hello. This is Pat Rodwell, and it's Friday the 4th November, 2024. And I'm recording an interview with Geraldine O'Callaghan and it's for the Ùna Gana Gùna project, which is about the experience and lives of Irish women. So hello, Geraldine.

Ger: Hiya Pat, how are you?

Pat: I'm good, thanks. Nice to see you again.

Ger: Good, and you.

Pat: Let's start by you just telling me a little bit about you, where you're from, where you live now—that sort of thing.

Ger: Okay. Well, I'm in my sixties, heading towards my mid-sixties. So, I'll be sixty-four this year and I'm from—I was born in Dublin. I'm in Drimnagh. So, I was born in Drimnagh in Dublin. And I suppose I'm coming towards the end of my working life now. I started work when I was—in 1979—so I was just gone eighteen, having done leaving cert [Leaving Certificate] reluctantly [laughs]. And then I did a bit of a secretarial course. I just couldn't wait to leave school. So, yeah—sorry, I drifted off there. So, that's—that's me—sorry, my memory has gone a bit vague.

Pat: Where are your family—are your family still in Dublin or are they from elsewhere?

Ger: Yeah, my family are still in Dublin. I have a sister and a brother. My sister lives in Lucan, which is, kind of, the outskirts of Dublin. Then my brother lives not too far from me in Walkinstown—Walkinstown kind of area. My mother and father—my father was born in

the centre of Dublin, just off Mount Street. And my mother was—came from Tipperary—North Tipperary.

Pat: I remember you saying there was a Tipperary connection.

Ger: Yeah. Yeah.

Pat: So, have you ever lived in Tipperary or have you always lived in Dublin?

00:02:34

Ger: No, I haven't lived in Tipperary but we spent three months—we spent all our summer holidays in Tipperary. I loved it. I loved it. It gives me a real feel of being half “dub” [Dubliner], half—half Tipperary woman or country woman, you know? Well, not really but it does give you—it was lovely for your childhood to be like that. The freedom was immense compared to Dublin really, you didn't have all those green spaces, all that running. And the funny thing was my mother was very protective, so she wouldn't let you go far in Dublin but once you got down to Nenagh, you could go out the door. I mean I was with my cousins but, like, out the door, off you go—play. So, yeah, my brother and sister are still living. I'm single, I don't have any children. My sister has two niece—two girls, so I have two nieces and then my brother has two girls and a boy. And I'd see—I wouldn't see my brother's children so much, but I would see quite a bit of my sister's. Well, when I say children, they're all thirties and forties now.

Pat: I know, I know. Same here. And do you still visit Tipperary?

Ger: Not as much as I'd like to. I still have—I still have a cousin down there and I made a—kind of—filtered out after childhood and you pay the odd—I still had an uncle down there actually and then when he died—but then I discovered a cousin. You know you've had a cousin but you haven't made contact, so, I've been there—down there a couple of times since. And I'd like to go back down there again. I have such an attachment to the place that I thought at one stage I'd love to buy—just somewhere. If you could have afford that—like somewhere to—yeah, yeah. I've such fond memories of growing up for three months of the summer there.

Pat: Yeah, but that's a good time, isn't it? A good memory.

Ger: Yeah, it's lovely.

Pat: As you know, with this interview we're going to concentrate on your years between fifteen and twenty-five, because particularly for women, there's a lot of change in that time.

Ger: Right.

Pat: So, let's go back to when you were fifteen.

Ger: Okay.

Pat: Is there any particular memory or image that comes to mind?

00:05:15

Ger: When I was fifteen. Yeah, I suppose I was still heading down to Tipperary to some extent. And I—an image—my sister would have gone there. My sister—sorry—my sister is eight years older than me and my brother's seven. So, she was heading down there off and on with her boyfriend and sometimes I'd go with them. I suppose I'd have memories of still heading down there the odd time. And then the other thing is—would be school. And I suppose that would have been about what we called inter-cert [Intermediate Certificate], I think. I'm just—this is where—but—and I remember I really didn't like—it was not—it's an interesting thing. I didn't like school because I didn't like the way it was run, because it was run by the nuns and they were disciplinarians. And I'm not very good at—it's not that I don't respect authority, it's just if you're going to tell me there's a rule, you have to tell me why there's a rule. I was always like that as a child, if you're going to tell me something, tell me why. Because I'm inquisitive and so—I think probably that a lot—that applies to a lot of people and children now that we've—we've developed to do that, to say to children, Now, I need you to do this because—. But I wouldn't have been an outward rebellious—you know the way some people act-out or whatever. I was an excellently cooperative child and then I hit my teens and—

Pat: Oh.

Ger: Yeah. I was a bit hard to handle because I suppose I just was rebelling about—against everything really and then you had the whole—because I grew up when the church still had a very heavy hold of society. You were being told what to do constantly. I had arguments with my mother over going to Mass because I just, you know, just being told what to do from the pulpit was just—yeah.

Pat: And was this—yeah. Was this all around the time when you were about fifteen, when you were a teenager?

Ger: Yeah, I think—I can't remember exactly what age but around that age, I suppose, I got to the stage where I could see that I could maybe leave school. And then also I was just dying to—and the sad thing is, reflecting back, I suppose they don't have as an interesting curriculum then as now, but I did like learning because I've since gone back to learning. It's interesting—it was very interesting. I just couldn't wait. And you were doing subjects like Irish—I could never, never—I wanted to learn French. I think at that stage, I'm just trying to remember—I can't remember—there was French lessons—there was—and I got a taste of French and—or in other languages. And to me, I just—it was the way it was taught really—Irish. It was the way it was taught.

Pat: So, tell me more about the way it was taught because I haven't had that experience. What was it like?

00:09:09

Ger: Well, it was just—I suppose it was learning by rote, as in you have to learn this and you have to—I've since learned that maybe conversational Irish might be easier. Or when you see the beauty in the language because I severely hated it. You couldn't speak Irish to me, it was that bad. That for a long time, well into my twenties, thirties. But then it's—if they had more fun activities around it, but it was—you have to get this into you. It was compulsory and there was a compulsory element. And so a lot was riding on you learning Irish. And when you

had difficulty with it, that made it harder. But I suppose it was the way it was taught. I'm just trying to think—we had a lot of—and then we had the famous Peig.

Pat:—oh, tell me. Tell me—

Ger: Peig was—have you heard of Peig?

Pat: No, no.

Ger: Peig was—yeah, she was—she was a woman in the west of Ireland, I think the Blasket Islands, and she had a pretty miserable life—well—and she—it was heavy stuff. It was historical and it was heavy stuff and it was miserable [Pat laughs]. That poor woman had—this is the impression we got. She had such a miserable life, it was all doom and gloom. It was all very—and it was also very, for us, it was very old fashioned. You know what I mean? If it had been something that we could relate to maybe—like what they do now. If we were using Irish maybe, relating to something you're interested in, I think you'd learn it quicker. But we were learning about this woman. We all hated her, God love her. And she had this miserable life in the west—hard life in the west of Ireland, which women did. It was texts like that and then there was—you had to learn the grammar and it was all very theory-heavy and it had to be done. And there was nothing really to relate to. Now, I know some people did fall in love with it. That's fair enough. But me, it was just another obstacle in school that—and you know the way we all have a flair—I definitely liked English—English literature, all that stuff. And I liked history and geography and it's easier to learn the stuff you love. So, I suppose there was bits of school that I did like, but it's just—between the nuns and their—you just have to experience them and in those days to—it was petty stuff.

00:12:18

Pat: Yeah. Tell—tell me—tell me about some of your memories of the nuns in school.

Ger: Well, they were just very heavy handed. There was no arguing with them and they were quite demeaning. They'd—how would I say—they'd—correct you a bit, not traumatic, but it's a bit hard to—they would pick you up on the least little thing. And it was all very negative and you were a sinner. And you had to—this was religion in general—and you had to—you

had to suffer to—there was no lightness. It was all just—and I suppose they were just so strict and there again, you couldn't relate to them. I know my sister had it a bit worse than I had. And I remember they used to do things like this—they did this to my sister—her skirt was too short, so they made her kneel down and then lengthen her skirt for her, things like that. And they did hit in school, they—they did. Capital punishment hadn't disappeared by then. I remember, actually, my friend who is nearly six foot tall, now, she's about five [feet] eleven [inches] and she said—we had this head nun who I think, actually, probably—reflecting back—she was living on her nerves, as we would say. She was highly strung. She was very—and so it wouldn't take much for her to snap. And I remember her lecturing—she'd lecture. She'd be very fierce and frightening. I remember this tall friend of mine and she was—this nun was probably less than five foot and Jennifer said she was terrified of her—terrified of her. And she was towering over her, you know? Actually, it's making me think, they were just nasty to us. I know—we'll go back to the French. For instance, the French nun, she just wanted the very best in her class. So, she'd pick on the ones that were weak and she'd keep at you until you gave up. She was just nasty, it was the way they spoke to you. It was—it could be quite vindictive. But on the other side of it, I felt—I felt really bad over this. We had a lovely nun—a lovely—she was Canadian, I think. And she was just—she taught music. It was a great—actually—subject—when you think of it. We learned to write music—we learned to write music and whatever. And she was a real sweet woman. And they used to give her a terrible time, the whole class used to give her a terrible time. Because she was the only one that—she took the brunt for all the others. I looked back in later years and I thought she was teaching us something really valuable because I'd like music as well—she was teaching us how. And she was just so sweet. She was a relief from the others. We did have lay teachers as well but we—it was just—because I remember, it was just the way they run things. I suppose they'd be very disciplined themselves, the nuns.

00:16:09

Ger: And so, now, this is when I was about—just to give you an example—I had to go into hospital to get a breast lump out, it was only breast—a small amount—when I was about nineteen, I think. There's a hospital in Dublin called The Mater [The Mater Misericordiae University Hospital] and that was run by the nuns. Now, the only thing you would say is, Spotless, absolutely spotless. Great standards of hygiene. But they used to also give the nurses that worked for them—they'd give *them* a really hard time as well. But anyway—so anyway—I was in and most of the time I was well and it was this—the corridors were

pristine. And so a friend came in to visit me, we went to sit out in the corridor on a bench and the corridor was empty and we were just sitting there having a little chat, and this thunderbolt from the top of the corridor came down, “Get in, get in, get in!” [laughs throughout] and she was waving her arms, “Get in, get in, get in!” Of course, we were just out of school and we were going, Feck you. You know? And she came down to us and chased us in. We were waiting in the corridor, we were doing nothing. Jesus, it’s a strange mindset really.

Pat: Can't tell you [laughs].

Ger: I know, yeah, yeah, you just have to laugh at those things. But the two of us just going, She can feck off. Until she came closer [both laugh]. But my mother—you swear I was dying. My mother sent a nun in to me and she was—my mother knew her—she was actually a lovely woman, but I had such a hatred of them that I said, “Do not send a nun in to me,” and she said, “Oh, okay, okay.” And she sent a nun into me. And that poor woman got such a bad reception. And then I spoke to her and she was lovely but—now a friend of mine said, which may be born out, that my cousins went to a fee paying school. I went to just one of the ordinary, you know, normal schools. And another friend said to me—she said, “The nuns treated those girls better in the fee paying schools.” And to be to be fair, my cousins loved their nuns. They were really—yeah. Now, that's just—that may or may not have been true, but that just bears out. So, I suppose—yeah, they were—they were—they were fairly formidable.

00:19:25

Pat: Sound it. Yeah. What about having to go into hospital when you were eighteen, nineteen? Was that a scary experience for you?

Ger: It was, yeah. It was, yeah. And the only reason things—that would have been, what? That would have been about 1980 or 1979—1980 and so—yes it was, sorry. What I was going to say was, we were almost scared of cancer then, even though it's scary now. That's what I was trying to say, sorry. And so, I found a lump and they tried to aspirate it just to drain it. And so they told me, I'll just have to go into hospital and they would have to remove it by surgery. But I suppose you always worry, now, they did reassure me but it was a very scary thing. And I think my mother was more scared. Well, not more scared, but you know—

you have the concern of your mother as well. So, yeah, it was—it would have been—I don't remember being in hospital as a child, really. And so that was—yeah, that was—I, kind of, settled in and what they did in those days, which seems extraordinary now, given that we're—our health service and your health service are all under pressure—of beds and whatever, but they actually brought me in early because they had a bed. So, say I'm—say my operation was in four days' time or something, they brought me in four days early. And I don't know how long they kept me in for recovery. But nowadays you would just—that would be a day procedure.

Pat: I was going to ask how long you were in and did people visit you while you were there?

Ger: They did, they did [laughs]. This reminds me of my mother would have been—I suppose she's not overly religious or very discreet or always telling you to mind yourself and whatever. And, so, I asked her to bring me in a nightdress and instead of what you'd expect—like a mother who is very conservative will say to bring in, she brings me in this nightdress that's got this deep V in the front [both laugh]. My brother-in-law came in to visit me and he looks at me and he goes, “Wow, that's lovely.” [Unintelligible]. I now realise—oh yeah, that is a bit revealing. Yeah, I suppose I was in—I suppose I was in a good week or more—seems extraordinary now to be in that long for something that—maybe they were doing tests or something. They kept me in and there was a bit of recovery, but there wasn't really, you know?

Pat: And you were okay after—things were okay afterwards?

Ger: Yeah, that was that was just complete—a one-off, so to speak. And—it's nothing came from that again. But it was just—yeah. But it was shocking to find it, nobody wants to find—especially young—

Pat: Yes. No, and you don't expect it so young—yeah.

Ger: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Pat: Let's go back to school and you let—when did you leave school? And what did you do afterwards?

Ger: Oh, I stayed on for my leaving cert because my mother played mind games with me. She said, “You can go if you find a job.” But she knew I wouldn't find a job. So, yeah, I stayed on and did me leaving cert and I did get me leaving cert. And then what I didn't realise at the time which you don't, I suppose, when you're that young, was the eighties. It was a horrific time for employment in Ireland. And she just seemed to be, kind of, desperate to get me working. Which I was going, I'm not—I'm not in any hurry. I was like that. And so what she did, actually, was through the school. They must have had contact with local employers. So—oh no—sorry, after school, I beg your pardon. They sent me on a secretarial course, which was just down in Crumlin and it wasn't that far away. It was so old fashioned because they still had some school subjects—it was a bit bizarre. They had—I don't know if they had religion or they had some—I expected—now they did teach you typing and shorthand and there was things in those days that—what were they called? You typed on this Teletape, I think—or tele-something. It was really interesting—really old fashioned things. Now that, I haven't told you so, you know, I know what they are, nobody else does these days, but you typed into this thing and you produced a message. It produced this stream of—it cut out dots, so to speak, and then you—

00:25:16

Pat: Yeah, they used to have them on sports programmes on the telly.

Ger:—All right, okay—

Pat: The results would come in on those sort of type—tapes. I think that's what I remember.

Ger: All right, yeah. Oh, very good—yeah, because I'm trying to remember the—I remember it looked bizarre. I don't think I ever used that. And we also had this keycard thing as well, which was much similar. And then there was Telex machines. And then there was—how you duplicated was Gestetner—you put on—use carbon paper and a few sheets—yeah, no matter how many copies you wanted. So, we learnt all those kinds of things and—

Pat: This was—I guess—was this in the early eighties?

Ger: It was. It would have been '81 or so, yeah. So, huge equipment. But I used to—I never used to—I just can't think of the subjects they had that were just bizarre. What happened anyway, was I used to just skip those. I never skipped school in my life and I used to just go with [laughs]—because I had just had enough at that stage. I just thought—I suppose I didn't take it that seriously and me mother had—my parents had paid good money for this, you know? But—so that's what—and I didn't complete that course because the following—now, I did, say, two thirds of it because the school had come up with a job for me, in the meantime, in one of the local—what would you call them—industrial—so it was a secretarial job. And I ended up with this company. And so it had—they sold building materials. Heavy duty joints on the roads—the materials that goes into those. So, yeah, that's what—within—within the next year I was working then.

Pat: And were you still living at home at that stage?

Ger: Yeah, yeah.

Pat: And what was the job like?

Ger: Okay, I suppose. Yeah, it was. Jobs were much more laid back in those days. You didn't—no, it's not that we didn't work hard, it's just, there seemed to be more—I don't know—people stopped and chatted. And there was more friends—it was more social, seemed to be more social and more social outings. And I was working—so they would have had a director or manager and then a sales team. I loved working with the sales team because that was just—you were part of a team. Whereas—I suppose I just would have done secretarial for any of that—for any that—that needed it. And then they had an accountant and someone—accounts assistant, they would have called it. And I actually made—I don't know what time—when I went there, there was someone there, but then a couple of years later this other woman came or girl, whatever we called ourselves, and I'm still friends with her to this day. So, that was—that's the kind of relationships you made in those days.

00:29:25

Pat: You mentioned social activities. What was—what were those and what about the rest of your social life? What did you get up to?

Ger: Oh, right, right. Yeah, there was social activities. There would have been—now, I suppose sometimes people went for a drink after work in those days. And there was a pub—there was always a pub not too far away. So, you'd go and people unfortunately didn't worry as much about getting into the car with a drink on them. Now, I would have been walking because I lived about half an hour's walk away, which was grand. Then we had these—that was back in the days of the formal Christmas dos [laughs]. So, you would have had them places like The Burlington [The Burlington Hotel], which would have dinner-dances kinds of things. And I remember thinking, This is so bizarre. They'd have this huge ballroom and there'd be tables for each company and then the entertainment. There'd be whatever—we'd all pay for the same meal or it would be paid for. And then—but you'd be young and there'd be older men asking you to dance—only because they were in the company. It all felt a bit formal. But, sure, I suppose we went anyway. In those days I'd go anywhere [both laugh]. Well, you know what I mean? I was more—socially—you go out. And that was the days when they paid for your meal and they bought you a drink. So different nowadays. And then—sorry?

Pat: And did you have to dress formally? Did you have to buy a special outfit for the Christmas dos?

Ger: Yeah, I suppose we would have dressed up. I wouldn't—I never dressed that formally, really. And I suppose we were young. The men—men would wear their suits, yeah—definitely. As opposed to now, they just—they'd wear—they'd go casual because it's your Christmas do. They all wore suits and it did feel formal because they were there in a—but we'd dress up nicely, you'd put your best on. But I suppose women always do nowadays—or they always do, but there was no—and, well, it wasn't to the next level kind of thing.

Pat: And what about the men in the company and the older men in the company? Did they ask you to dance? Did they behave well? What was it like?

Ger: They did and there was one man there and a lot of people did go to excess on the drink, there was one of the sales rep there and the man—you'd dread him to ask you to dance because he'd be already slush when he got there. He'd be half-cut and then he'd be sloppy dancer and the breath—the drink breath. Yeah, yeah. And then I didn't particularly like my boss either, he's an alright man, but you know what I mean? He wouldn't have been dancing. So, I suppose, it was just a couple of them that would and so—and the dances would have been more like your waltzes or your—yeah. It wasn't—it was more a formal like that, whereas people dance with each your other now and they never touch each other, which is a good and a bad thing [laughs]. But yeah, I have that vivid memory of Joe, I think his name was, and you'd be trying to hide because when Joe would be heading towards, you'd be, “Oh, I have to go to the toilet.” I think I got caught once or twice alright. Just the—yeah—this general sluminess and messiness of a drunken man, you know?

Pat: Yeah.

Ger: Yeah, yeah.

00:34:06

Pat: How about outside work? What was your social life like outside work?

Ger: Yeah, I went out quite a lot actually. I suppose we'd go to music, I'd go to a lot of music. There was—yeah, when I think of it now, we went—so, you would have had smaller venues. This is what's interesting. Now, I don't know—I suppose we do have venues now in Dublin, but we had the infamous Baggot Inn, which was—it's just—Baggot Inn is just in the centre of town, just a bit—just a bit out and that was falling apart but you got the best artists there. I would have—so we all listened to—I suppose it was rock and pop—light rock and pop but I really liked heavy rock because my brother-in-law was quite an influence there so I would have—of the likes of Rory Gallagher and Jimi Hendrix and all that. But my friends would have—you're talking about your James Taylor's and I'm trying to think now, you know those kind of—Jesus, I can't think exactly. But I remember The Baggot Inn had up-and-coming bands. A few people would have played there and I would have really liked some of that. I still have some of their albums that—they're bands that started out and did quite well and didn't continue on, but they were really good at the time. And the likes of Bagatelle might

have—which people of my age would remember and they're still drift [ing] around the scene somewhere. But it was really the kind of the place your mother wouldn't want you to go [laughs] because it was dark. And I remember—crowded and I remember the wires. There was wires—you'd be sitting in, say, how do I describe? Little alcoves and there'd be things like that but there'd be pillars and there'd be wires hanging—you could see the wiring. So, it was a bit risky. Health and safety wouldn't be too happy with it at all [both laugh]. And then there was always a takeaway van, like kebabs or something just outside. Their business acumen was great because they were just outside and as we all drifted out, drunk and happy, we had kebabs. But that was, actually, do you know where it is? It's—sorry. It's down—it was down from Stephen's Green. So, you would have gone to O'Donoghue's. O'Donoghue's is still standing, it's a great pub—I loved that pub. So, we would have done some of the pubs around there. There was Madigan's in Fleet Street, which is just off O'Connell Street. So, we would have—and you would have gone through a few pubs before you reached your venue. And then I would have gone to—on the South Circular Road, which is a boxing stadium. And its principal is a boxing stadium—it's a national stadium—I think boxing stadium, but they had concerts there and they were some of the best concerts. Oh, yeah, they really were because it was a lovely, small venue. And I would have seen—Moving Hearts is another one that—I love Moving Hearts because they had this rock-celtic element. It was a mixture of Irish music and you would have—you would have seen quite a good few bands there. That was kind of—and I always—now we have the likes of the Three Arena and Bord Gáis and all that. And I suppose before you had—before you had the Three Arena or whatever, you had the Point Depot, which is down in—off O'Connell Street where you go straight down towards the docks. So, that was a bigger—that was the bigger venue. So, you would have gone to the bigger concerts there, like your Rod Stewart and such like.

Pat: Yeah. Were you—did you go just with one or two friends or was there, like, a big group of you would meet up and go?

Ger: Yeah, there was—you'd have different friends. You'd have school friends and then you'd have—sometimes people from work. You'd go with—I'd go with different people depending on what their thing was. But I would have had a group of friends that—if you're going out for drinks or birthdays or whatever. So, a lot of those would have been school friends.

Pat: Were there any particular close friends that you went around with and met up with at the time? And are you still in touch with any of them?

Ger: Yeah, yeah. Jennifer that I mentioned—I didn't know her in school, but I knew Brenda was—I was close to in school—this girl called Brenda. And so Brenda would have been friends with Jennifer. So, I would have gone through school with Brenda and Jennifer then. And Jennifer—the three of us are actually still very close friends, which is lovely.

Pat: Well, that's lovely, yeah.

00:40:23

Ger: Yeah. So we would have—and then Theresa would have been a friend of—Theresa would have been a friend of Brenda's as well. And then I had another friend called Deirdre. And then I had—I used to go out with these other two girls and I can't—Bernie and someone. And I can't remember who I met them through, I might have met them through Deirdre. So, there was all these different connections. I remember going on holidays with these two girls a couple of years and then in other years I'd go with Deirdre and Teresa and then another year ago with Jennifer. And so you'd—I suppose you'd have a big enough group of friends from that and then you'd go—

Pat: And where did you used to go on holiday with them?

Ger: Well, the first—my very first holiday, who I went with—who did I go with on that? I think it was Deirdre. It was a funtrek. I always remember—I still remember this holiday as being really great craic because what it was based on was camping—camping throughout Europe. They took you and they minded you a bit. So, I was saying my mother was quite happy that I was being minded on my first holiday. So, they took you—

Pat: How old were you at the time?

Ger: I'm trying to give you an exact age now, but I'd say I was twenty-one.

Pat: Right, right.

Ger: Twenty—twenty-one. That kind of age, yeah.

Pat: Tell me about the holiday.

Ger: Oh, it was great. Well, it was it was good and it was—so, what it was, was they literally—they covered a lot of countries. You got—you set off. You set sail—I think we sailed out. And then you met a bus in Europe and it took you to these campsites. And so we went—there was so many that—France, so, we went to Paris and we went to the south of France, Saint-Tropez. And then we went to Germany—we went two places: Heidelberg and Black Forest in Germany. And we went to Switzerland. We went a couple of places in Italy as well. I know Rimini was one of them. We ended up in Italy. Switzerland was amazing because I'd just never been. I'd never—probably at that age—I'd never have gone to a country like that. So, you got a lovely flavour of the countries and you're basically on this bus but they have the tents already set up. And you would—I suppose it was a good one for mixing in with people, as they say, because you'd obviously camp with your friends but then what they did was, when it came to mealtimes, you shared the cooking and the cleaning up. So, everyone did their bit. Yeah, you got to—we covered a fair amount of ground. We got to—the guy, though, that was the courier—so, you'd have a driver and a guide. The guy that was the guide was very unethical because I know at some stage we were—oh! We went to Florence as well. Florence—yeah, I'd love to go back, I didn't appreciate it then. But he would spot someone—he was chasing one of the—and we were all girls, let's face it. We were all seventeen, well, I don't know if it's seventeen. I think this girl was younger than the rest of us and she was stunning, now. She was, and she was—but—and it was mostly women—I don't know, there was few lads on it. There was lads on it, yeah. Anyway, he'd chat them up and at one stage I remember we were quite concerned. What you do is—I know we went to nightclubs in, say, Florence and—which was really exciting because they were so different. And I know that he tried to take her back in a taxi to the campsite on her own and female solidarity at that point, we said—and we didn't know her that well. We were—antenna was raised and we said—we just headed him off anyway. I don't know who she was friends with, we said to our friends, “Have you have you seen what he's doing with her?” And she was—

Pat: That was good. Good.

Ger: I think she was a bit naive. She was—she looked older than she was, but she just didn't realise what he was up to. And I think he was charming her and saying, “I'll bring you back if you want to go back.” I don't know what went on. But anyway, so, I suppose we—you generally got on with the people on the—the other groups.

00:45:48

Pat: I was going to ask whether you made any new friendships or whether there were any romances as part of that holiday.

Ger: Well, my friend—no, I didn't go. My friend Brenda went on a separate one. I don't know, she was going with Theresa or someone. So, she was going separately at a different time and she met her husband on that. Yeah, she did, yeah. And I always remember her saying—God, she was impressed at how neatly he packed his suitcase [laughs]. Sounds bizarre, but if you know Stephen—he's a typical fella or whatever, but he worked in a man's outfitters or whatever you call them—men's shop.

Pat: Right. So, he was from Ireland too, was he?

Ger:—He was from Cork—

Pat: Or was he from somewhere else? Right.

Ger: Yeah, from Cork.

Pat: Right, yeah.

Ger: We lost her to Cork [both laugh]. I remember being heartbroken when—well, obviously, she was—it was heading that way. You always think, Ah no, well, she'll live in Dublin or something. But she's a lovely life in Cork now. Oh, I didn't lose her—yeah, yeah. Because it's great when you have those kind of deep friendships and everybody has to work at it but I have to say, Brenda is great because she keeps the contacts. We all—we do but—

Pat: Oh, that's good. It's great. You've still got that contact.

Ger: Yeah, yeah.

00:47:27.45

Pat: Can I ask you about your love life as you were growing up from, sort of, fifteen onwards? What, if anything, would you like to tell us about that?

Ger: Oh, right [pauses]. There wasn't—I didn't meet—we hung out in groups. There was lads in the group at some stage, I know that. And you'd, kind of—mixed with them and sometimes there'd be sparks of romance or whatever [laughs]. And I remember actually, this guy got—coming home with me—walking me home or whatever and then he'd come in for a cup of coffee. And he wanted to see my [laughs]—he wanted to see my record collection. I know this sounds very—as I'm saying it, it sounds really—I know what he was up to as well, but unfortunately my parents were upstairs, so, there couldn't be much done. He was just chatting and I did get on really nicely and he's going through my album collection and he comes across Thin Lizzy and I had—it was *Live and Dangerous*—it was a live album. And we got into a row about live albums and how he said, “They weren't as good,” or “They were rubbish” or whatever. I know this sounds—but I have to say, I do love a good debate now. I still do and I did then but he got kicked out [both laugh] because it soured the—whatever—so that—

Pat: You went off him, didn't you?

Ger: Yeah [both laughing]. So, I suppose I would have dated. How did we get our dates? I remember going out with this guy and he was military police. I really didn't like that at all. I don't know why. You're young and you get these things in your head. So, that didn't last long, but I can't remember where—do you know, actually, probably when I think—we did go to dances. So, I suppose you'd get—that's where you'd meet people outside your circle. I must have met him—because we used to go to a dance in D'Olier Street, just off O'Connell Street as well and I might have met him at one of those. Well, we went out for a couple of times but—and he was a nice guy but, just—it's just such a different lifestyle. It just—you can tell I was quite fussy [laughs].

00:50:15

Pat: Yes, yeah. Was there any—was there anyone who was—who lasted a bit longer or was a bit more serious?

Ger: No, not really. No, no. They were always just short term. Yeah. No, there wasn't any. That's how I never really settled down with anyone.

Pat: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ger: You know, they were all just—you'd go to parties and you'd meet someone and yeah, there was a lot of looking, but I didn't settle down with anyone.

Pat: Yes. Well, keep looking.

Ger: And I suppose, yeah. Well, one of the things that—growing up, young fella's—you'd meet some very nice guys. I suppose I just didn't meet anyone—there was a lot of macho-ness. I hate macho-ness. Guys that are—yeah. And I just didn't meet anyone that—and you have to have common interests as well. And I suppose I didn't. You'd be dating and there'd be nothing, really. Everything really—and do I want to keep seeing you? And, I know, it's fussiness, I know, but I suppose—

Pat: Oh no, be fussy, be fussy. What about your—what about your parents? Did they worry about you? Did they want you to settle down? What was their view?

Ger: I suppose my mother was really overprotective, but she wouldn't really interfere. She—well, what I did was, I never used to tell them where I was going or when I'd be back. I was—I was really—how would I say? Not hard to handle, but I was a different—different to my sister. Anyway, she didn't have much control. Not that she was controlling, but she was protective. But yeah, at some stage, I suppose she was happy. They were happy enough. I think my father would have liked to see me settle down. And then, she wasn't too worried about it. And then I remember—I don't know what age I was, it was probably late twenties and I realised at some stage, she was trying to fix me up with someone who was a barman

[laughs] in one of the local pubs that we used to go to. And I thought, Jesus, this is bizarre because she never—but she must’ve—she wouldn’t really—they wouldn’t really talk to you about things like that or they never said, “You should be settling down.” And I was having a great time, I have to say, I was having a great time.

Pat: Well, that's the important thing.

Ger: Oh, God, yeah. I suppose I was thinking of—maybe late twenties, early thirties, I might be meeting someone and settling down. It certainly was in me head in my twenties. I mean, twenties, you know? And what happened, actually, was my mother and father died when I was—he died when I was about twenty-nine, then she died when I was thirty-one.

Pat: Right. That's quite—that's quite young.

Ger: Yeah, yeah. That's all consuming at the time as well. So, that takes the spark off things or you're not as—so, no. But I know that it's strange that they wouldn't—my father would talk to you about things. He'd say things. Men don't have chats, they say things, which is—and he was very—he was a lovely father, because he was—he'd be very concerned for you. But my mother just didn't talk about—I can't say she was prudish, but she didn't talk about sex. She didn't talk about a lot of those things that mothers would talk to daughters—you know?

Pat: Right. Did you talk more with your older sister or brother about things like that?

Ger: Yeah, I would have spoken to me older sister about things like that. Yeah. Yeah. Because I know this is—my mother just didn't like things like that. When I had my period, she got my sister to explain it to me. Yeah, yeah. So that's kind of the way things were in those days, I suppose. I would have—

00:55:10

Pat: So, there wasn't any talk about sex—having sex and boyfriends and things like that with her.

Ger: No, no, there wasn't. No, it's like she didn't want—she didn't want to talk to me about it. I'd love to—now that you say it, I'd love to know why because—but she just didn't. She had this thing of—don't leave me. She definitely did have—but at the same time, if I had of left to get married or whatever, she'd want me close. Yeah, she definitely—and I think maybe when she said that, “Don't leave me” thing—when I think back, that was probably when she knew she was ill because she didn't tell: it was cancer.

Pat: Right. And she didn't tell you?

Ger: And she didn't tell me, no. I think she told my cousins a few things, but she never told me. It was a protective thing.

Pat: Were you—you were still living at home with her then?

Ger: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And in a way, I was glad that—I had thought—made thoughts of moving out myself in my early to mid-twenties. And trying to buy houses as a single person is still as bad as it was then. But—and I did actively look at houses. But in hindsight, given how short they lived, I was kind of glad in hindsight. But, yeah.

Pat: Was that difficult? You were the only child still living at home then? Was that difficult for you?

Ger: It was, it was, although I have to say I had her sister. She was very close with her sister, so I was very close. We—you know the way you baby—she worked. She went in and she'd housekeep—she had—my aunt had a confectionary shop in town. So, my mother went and minded the kids and did some of that and she worked in the shop. She'd bring me in, so, I'd be very close to those cousins. Those cousins were as fond of her as she was dying and as supportive, which is the lovely thing about cousins and families being close. I didn't—and obviously my sister and my brother would have stepped up as well. But I did, to be fair, I did have plenty of support, but it's still hard to watch the parents, you know?

Pat: Very hard, because you were quite young, really, weren't you? To cope with that?

Ger: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And she didn't—she didn't want to talk about any of it, which is her right. But I think, because I've had cancer myself a couple of years ago, I'll talk to anybody about it because it's probably a reaction to—although people do nowadays. But it's a reaction to what she would—she didn't want to hear the word. That's how bad it was. It's sad because you just like to—and she didn't want to acknowledge she was dying and then she was—she was—I suppose they—did they give a lot of morphine then? But she was confused a lot. And then you don't want to believe she's dying either. It's all very—yeah, yeah.

Pat: Yeah, it's hard. What good memories have you got of your mother and your father?

Ger: Oh, what good memories. My father was just a character. He was hilarious. He was just—he was a lovely father. He was very involved with his kids and I've lovely memories of walking down—he used to bring home sweets every Friday night after work and then on a Sunday morning you go [Ger's recording stops].

00:59:21

Pat: Oh we've lost her [long pause].

[First recording made on 04/11/2024 was cut off and a second recording was made on 23/04/2025. Both recordings have been combined into one transcript and the timestamps are continued for ease of reference.]

00:59:28

Pat Rodwell: Okay, good afternoon.

00:59:31

Geraldine O'Callahan: Good afternoon.

Pat: This is Pat Rodwell from the Ùna Gan a Gùna project and it's the 23rd April 2025 and Geraldine and I are here to finish off the interview that we started a few months ago. Hello Gerldine.

Ger: Hi—hi Pat.

Pat: *Where are you today?*

Ger: I'm at home in Dublin. So, I'm Geraldine O'Callaghan and I'm from Drimnagh in Dublin. And so, yeah, I'd like to finish this interview—

Pat: *Yeah, yes—*

Ger: Please.

Pat: I think last time when we met we talked about your family, about your years of school and starting work and your social life and interests. And I remember the music and the bars—sounds really good. And the holidays and the friends that you'd had. We'd just got to the point in your—sort of—mid to late twenties when both your mother and father had unfortunately died and that was, obviously, a very sad period of your life. But we'd also begun to talk about good memories you had with your father and mother. What—if we go back to that, what good memories have you got of both of them?

01:01:09

Ger: I remember them as being very, very loving and I had a solid base. They taught you good morals and how to be with people. And they were fun: my father was great fun. My mother would have been the more serious one, although she's fun as well, there's always one that has to keep the show on the road and he—no, he was great fun and unusually for a man of his time, he was very involved with his kids and he would help out around the home because I learnt that his mother died at an early age, and they were all only boys in the house so he was well-able to do that and quite liked to do that. So, I mean that he had a kind—he'd a great sense of humour and he'd wind you up, you know? So, he'd tease and I remember he did a lot of reading with me and so he would have—and maths—so, he would have had me reading at an early age which stood to me. And then he always thought maths were very important—well, the basics. And then my mother would—she was very practical as was her mother. So, she would've—great at cooking because they came from—her mother trained as, I won't say a housekeeper but she was a servant in a kitchen. So, she brought those skills and then my mother—they were all taught those skills. She was fantastic because from an early

age, we all knew how to cook. I knew how to sew—I was very good at sewing before I went to secondary school. So, any of the skills—we all liked to *do* things, like, I look at my brother now and he's very practical, as in my father would turn his hand to DIY or anything—liked challenges and I'd be the same. If you could have a go at doing it yourself, you know that kind of thing? We used to have—I was looking back at photographs actually and—just to put photographs in and they're all really happy, they're happy photographs because during the time I spent with my Grandmother—my mother's mother—three months down in Tipperary. So, there's lovely meeting-of-the-cousins as well that used to go on. So they looked very happy and then I was seven years younger than my brother, so, there was quite an age gap. So I was the only child, so to speak, for a while.

Pat: As the youngest one.

Ger: Yeah. So, I got a lot of attention, I suppose I did. I was lucky, I went places with them.

Pat: What were your parents—when you were a teenager and perhaps being a little bit rebellious—how did your mum and dad cope with that?

Ger: To be honest, I don't know how they coped with it because I went from being a really, very quiet child—I suppose at school in those days, you didn't really—it was safer not to put your head above the parapet (laughs). Because I went from being a very quiet child who didn't really do anything wrong to outright rebellion.

Pat: Right.

01:05:09

Ger: Yeah, it was strange and I was so stropky and I gave my poor mother a terrible time and she was very patient with me, now—she would—she wasn't soft. She would lay down the law. And I remember a lot of battles, a lot of verbal battles. I would—I would use a bit of—I remember the big one was—everyone was—if you were Catholic, you were *very* Catholic. And I remember—I could've been about fourteen, fifteen and I just didn't want to go to Mass anymore because I could see the hypocrisy in it and so I told her I wasn't going and she said, I was, blah, blah, blah. And eventually she said—well, I'd made such a case for it because I

had said, “They’re such hypocrites, they don’t practise what they—” you know? Whatever. “I’ll tell you what,” she says, “You’ll probably come back to it.” Is what she said. It was very balanced.

Pat: Well, that’s good.

Ger: Yeah, I had to admire her for that because I found out later she was quite religious; I didn’t realise. She let you be yourself, to some extent.

Pat: Was it your mum who tended to deal with those sorts of issues with you rather than your dad?

Ger: Yes. Yes, I suppose she would have really. He might have dealt with them but—how would I say? She had the final word. She would’ve sorted it.

Pat: And did you go back to the church?

Ger: No. Never.

Pat: Right [both laugh].

Ger: But I did find—now, to be fair, __[??] odd years—I did have a foundation in spirituality. In my mature years I went on to do meditation for my own—how would I say—spirituality. And I got a good moral compass from it.

Pat: So, you took the best bits.

Ger: I took the best bits, yeah, yeah. And I now realise people need their faith for a reason—each to their own. But to be honest I really couldn’t stomach it, so, the Mass was the bit that got me.

Pat: Are you still living in the house that you lived in with your mum and dad? Or did you move on from there?

Ger: No, I'm still living there. Still living there, yeah.

Pat: So, you've been there sixty years?

Ger: I have, yeah. Yeah.

Pat: Yeah, well that's nice.

Ger: It'll be over sixty years—I have, yeah. I did try—at some stage—I think it could have been—well, before they died. So, it must have been somewhere in my twenties—say, late twenties—excuse me—I was going to buy a house myself and move out. You know, independence and all that but I don't know if my mother knew she was sick or whatever, but at some stage she said, "Please don't move out." And she kept at me and I couldn't—I didn't find anywhere. You know how difficult it can be on your own, I wasn't with anyone. So, it turned out I didn't. And I suppose, as it turned out—for the best because I was there to—probably would have come back or whatever, anyway.

Pat: Was it unusual that she said that to you—that she asked you to stay? Was that unusual for her?

Ger: It was, yeah. I know we were very close because I was the last one—we got on well. I suppose it was, I was surprised—was it unusual? Yeah, I mean you might get your parents saying, Ah, don't move out. Would they know you should? It's just in hindsight, I wonder. She never really told me she was sick, you see.

Pat: No.

01:09:42

Ger: It came as a bit of a shock.

Pat: I remember you saying that she hadn't shared that and that must have made it difficult.

Ger: It did, yeah. It was like she was afraid—it was in the days people were afraid to say “cancer.” So, I can understand. And then she probably didn’t want to—I was her baby—so, she didn’t want to be telling—you know—

Pat: Even though she was the one that was ill.

Ger: Yeah, yeah.

Pat: And what did your mum and dad think of the job that you had? Because you had a—you went to secretarial college and then worked with a local firm for quite a long time.

Ger: Yeah, for nearly nineteen years. That was—sorry, excuse me [blows nose]. She was quite happy. I did say—I used to say, actually—excuse me—that I might—I should change jobs and [coughs]—sorry. It was my father who used to say, “Oh, you’ve got a solid job now—don’t be giving it up.” And she was the same and she had actually got me that job. I actually left secretarial college to take the job because it was the eighties, it would have been the very start of the eighties—no, ’79—things were bad, employment was very bad here. Although, I have no idea but they obviously did. I’m coming from a tradition where a solid job was important—sorry—the attitude was, hang on to your job. And it was reasonably well-paid as well but ten years before I left—I knew. I should’ve—you know the way you have to expand yourself.

Pat: Yeah, yeah.

Ger: That was the attitude, yeah. Why would you give up a solid job?

Pat: Remind us of what type of work you did there over the years.

Ger: It was secretarial. So, they would have had a secretary who—there wasn’t really a reception but I would have done the phones. I would have been secretary to the director and did the accounts. It was quite a small, little outfit. It would be admin, really. I started off with all the old machines like a manual typewriter. A Gestetner—

Pat: I remember you saying! Gestetner's and typewriters and what-have-you.

Ger: Yeah and it's really interesting now, to have used those because you're part of history and you're—

Pat: Yes, so very different now.

Ger: Very different. The only thing—

Pat: Had it changed in the period you were there? Because you joined after secretarial college—had the type of work or the machinery used changed during your nineteen—was it—years you were with them?

Ger: Definitely it did, it did. Because it went from manual typewriter to electric typewriter and then I was pushing for—and they were just too mean to buy—Word package—the old name—word processing.

Pat: Yeah, that was it.

Ger: And I went and did a course and I just wanted to do it and then, I used to say to me boss, “Well, I know how to do it. Why won't you get me going?” They eventually gave in.

Pat: Good [both laugh].

Ger: I always wanted to try new things but they used to have the Telex. We used to have to go out of the building for that, and then we had, as I say, the Gestetner for copying and for—sorry—the telephones, there used to be a little “flicky-switch-thing.” You know the plugs? And you'd plug—I want to speak to so-and-so, and you'd say, “Okay.” And you'd disconnect from this one and put it in to this one. God, when you think—

01:14:10

Pat: Those were the days. How did you—as a young woman working there, how did you find the attitude of the men and the sales team to you?

Ger: It was a two-pronged thing, it was terribly sexist. But, I suppose, you still felt part of it. It's a strange one because so much of that was accepted and would still—it didn't mean that—it didn't make you feel lesser or the touching—casual touching. I suppose we were part of the team and the men were always the higher—you could never have a woman on the sales team. The sales guys were okay, I suppose they didn't have any of the ego, that power thing. Our accountant was gas because I had stand-offs with him because he thought that everyone was lesser than him.

Pat: Did attitudes change in the time that you were there or not?

Ger: When did I leave? I left—did things change? I don't know if they did really. It's hard to—I'm just trying to cast my mind back now because it's so different now. But I don't think so. Sorry, I know that's a long winded answer to say no.

Pat: No, no. It was good to think about it. What lead to you leaving and when did you leave?

Ger: That was a tricky one. I—there was a takeover of the company and I suppose I was bullied out of my job, really, because we had—a lot of us had been there—you know, takeovers. What happened was—we belonged to an English company and we always got on then, it was a Northern Irish branch but then they got taken over, so, they were doing this—well, we didn't know these things— it's like an acquisition and then they try and change staff so they wouldn't have redundancies. To be honest—psychologically now—I suppose I had— was very comfortable there. Not really as tough as I am now—not that I would be tough but you know what I mean? It was the first time any of us had been experiencing things like that. I just left. I just walked out. The very thing that you shouldn't do [laughs]. But I did just walk out.

Pat: How old were you then, when that happened?

Ger: 1998. So, I would have been thirty-seven. Yeah, I would have been thirty-seven, yeah.

Pat: And what did you do?

Ger: I temped. I panicked for a—I sat at home and then my sister-in-law—God bless her—said, “Get yourself down to the dole office and sign-on.” [Laughs]. Because we had this attitude of, you don’t sign-on or whatever. And then—I’m not very good at sitting around and doing nothing and then you need the money, so, I temped. And that was an interesting—the scariest thing. And then the temping actually made me more—what’s the word—adventurous. It was a great step, actually. And this charming, old-fashioned woman just off—just off Nassau Street, just beside Trinity and she had her own little staff agency. I don’t know who put me on to her, but she went, “Geraldine, sit down there and we’ll sit back and have a chat. Well, I’ll sort you out a job.” And she did actually sort me out a job in Trinity. Just admin work basically—it was a research team or something. Then—what did I do—oh, I know what I did, I went—one of the hospitals were looking for staff because I thought I’d better get myself something more permanent. It was one of the smaller hospitals in town called the Adelaide and I used to work just off—not George’s Street—Aungier’s Street which is city centre. Then they merged three hospitals and I ended up in Tallaght. So, that was an adventure. It was all in the space of a year and in the meantime, then I decided to—that was quite stressful. I enjoyed the medical side of things but those jobs are always—then I decided I was going to train in holistic therapy. So, that’s when I decided to do a year course and did the reflexology and massage.

Pat: Had you thought of that before? Was that something that had been an interest?

01:20:08

Ger: The aromatherapy had been. The aromatherapy I had done a weekend workshop, so, I suppose I had—the first interest I would have had were the essential oils. I think I always wanted to do massage as well and I had no clue what to expect but, actually, the whole anatomy side of it then became really interesting and massage was quite interesting from that point of view. So, no, I had dabbled and I would have done yoga and meditation and stuff like that and I would have had an interest in nutrition. There were little sprinklings of that along the way—I beg your pardon—yeah.

Pat: And how long have you worked in the—would you call it alternative medicine field? How long have you worked in that particular area now?

Ger: Well, I'd say holistic I suppose.

Pat: Yes, that's better.

Ger: But since—I'd like to say in 2001 and up to seven or eight years ago, I was doing it full time. Now, I would take on little temp jobs sometimes in admin but for the best part of twenty years or more. Twenty—twenty-five years.

Pat: So, a substantial second career.

Ger: Yeah. Substantial and the only thing that made me stop was—remember the financial crash in 2008? And it was extraordinary, people just didn't have money and clients used to say, "I've no money." And I appreciated that honesty, "I'd love to keep coming to you but I've no money." And that's when I—and it took a long time to get back on the road with that. That's when I think I decided I was doing—because I was going to sign-on again and I decided that was my chance to do a third level degree. Because that would pay for it.

Pat: So, what did you do then, then? What was that that you studied?

Ger: English and History.

Pat: Right, yes and I remember you saying that those were the subjects that you'd enjoyed at school and you eventually came back round to it.

Ger: We got a choice of eight subjects to—I went to Maynooth in Kildare—Maynooth University and it was a great—for the first couple of weeks we went, we attended whichever lecture we wanted and then made a final choice. And of all the things that I was going to do, it turned out to be English and History [laughs]. Of all the choices I had.

Pat: Yes. They were the subjects that still appealed to you.

Ger: Yeah and I still have a strong interest in history and the critical thinking element—you could write critically as well was useful—it's useful for anything really.

Pat: If—would your fifteen or twenty-five year old self ever imagined that you'd end up with that type of career and that sort of study at university?

Ger: No. I'd say no. It was like I had an idea—I had a wild, fanciful idea when I was leaving school that I'd love to try college, I'd love to try university. But there was no—there was no way, I think—when I didn't try it then, that was completely—that was never going to happen. So, I suppose I scratched that itch and I was right, I would have—but you see, I wouldn't have had the confidence—.

Pat: The right time for you was later.

Ger: Yeah, that was the right time, yeah. Exactly.

Pat: When you look back at your life, between aged fifteen and twenty-five, what do you think now? Of that period of your life?

01:24:37

Ger: I think I had great fun. I don't really think—I don't really think I wasted—well, we obviously did waste money getting drunk and whatever but—

Pat: So you should.

Ger: [Laughs] Exactly! [Pat laughs]. In hindsight, when I saw the age my parents died at, I was so glad that I'd lived it up because life got more serious then. I think I was quite happy to—I was quite immature as well, probably more immature than some of my peers, you know? I don't regret that at all.

Pat: Is there anything else about your life between fifteen to twenty-five that you'd like to add? That you've remembered or thought of that we perhaps didn't cover before.

Ger: [Pause] Just one thought struck me when I was looking at—I sent you photographs there—

Pat: Oh, yes. They're brilliant, thank you.

Ger: Thanks. One was the awkward looking fifteen year old or sixteen year old—whatever it was.

Pat: That's my favourite.

Ger: [Laughs] Was it? I couldn't believe how awkward I was—I could feel it—I was that—I used to blush for nothing and when I think of—I would—more reached sexual maturity when I went away and a bit more maturity. Because I think I was very cosseted and I was very much an introvert. My dad tried to push me out but I snuck back in—you know what I mean? I think that was the time of really growing up as well because the difference—I'm looking at the photographs and the difference—

Pat: Yes, can't you see the difference in confidence?

Ger: In confidence, exactly—

Pat: Over that period.

Ger: And I was quite cheeky as well with it. As I got to mature—cheeky, as in I didn't hold back. I told people what I thought. I know you can't always—you do rebalance that, but from someone who never said anything and towed the line. I'd put people in their place. I don't think I'm even as good at that now [both laugh].

Pat: And how have—I mean the photos obviously brought back memories but how have you found the experience of talking about that period of your life?

Ger: Oh, it's been great to be honest with you. It's been like a trip down memory lane and it's made me reflect on my life which is interesting. And remember the girl that was because we don't often.

Pat: No, you don't stop and look back, do you?

Ger: No, and it's lovely to look back and just remember times and things like that.

Pat: And would you recommend this to others? Being interviewed and talking about that period of our lives?

Ger: Oh I would, yeah, definitely. I would because, as I've said, it's been a positive experience and—[coughs] excuse me—been really positive and it's been really interesting and it's good self-reflection as well and to see how far you've come. Because I think we don't—we should look back. It's always good to—we shouldn't look back, as in, "I wish it was." And I think it's great to share because women don't always get a voice. Certainly not in those things.

Pat: Exactly, yes.

Ger: It's lovely to hear other women's voices. Sometimes you think, Oh was that like that for you? But I find other people's stories really interesting, so I thought I should contribute.

Pat: Well, it's been really lovely to hear yours.

Ger: Thank you.

Pat: And I'm glad, as I said, in a way that we had to meet up again to finish off this interview. So, that's been brilliant.

Ger: Yeah, thank you.

Pat: And I've found with a few of the interviews, that there are similar themes. Things like friendships over a long period and return to education as well for older women. So, there's been—and travel too. So, there's been some nice themes have come out with you, and with others.

Ger: Interesting, yeah.

Pat: Well, I'm going to end the recording now. Hopefully, this time the end of the interview has gone well. So, I'll just say thank you Geraldine and I'll stop the recording.

Ger: Okay.

01:30:04

[END]