

Romany Theatre Company

Atching Tan Project

Reminiscence Interview – Transcription of Edited Interview

Date of Interview	Interviewer	Interviewee	Age Range of Interviewee	Duration of Edited Recording
	SB	PM		00:17:59

Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of Interview
00:00	SB	Right now recording, so umm perhaps you can start off by telling me your name.
	PM	My name is Patrick McCarthy and I live in Smithy fen in Cottenham in Cambridgeshire.
	SB	So we'll start off by asking you umm what was life like when you were growing up?
	PM	Life for me when I was growing up was around during the war, it was very, very hard times, there was no money, money was very, very scarce and just very hard to be earned. At a very early age I was working with my father, we used to go from door to door selling lino on a pony and cart in all the weathers, so that was the life in Ireland and then later years I moved to England and I came to Birmingham, I got a job as umm and I worked at this job for a few years and I got a few pound together, and then I got myself a van and a caravan and we moved away travelling all over England. We were doing door to door sales, that was all of it, there wasn't much more could really do because we had no education we didn't know what. We couldn't get a job anywhere because we weren't a scholar and we couldn't read and write.
	SB	So how old where you when you started doing this kind of work?
	PM	When I started doing work first you mean? About seven years old
	SB	What kind of work did you start doing at seven?
	PM	I started selling the lino from door to door, we used to buy in cork from the Jewish people, it's imported, and we'd sell it door to door, callers of our own. In them days you'd get about 15 shillings which is about 75 pence so you wouldn't have a lot for your days work. Some days you might have 5 shillings more, you might have maybe half a crown.
	SB	What was it like doing this kind of work?
	PM	The work was very hard, you had to do it in all weathers you see, cause in them days if you hadn't any money you couldn't eat food so you had to go out no matter if its hail, rain, or snow, you'd go from door to door and it was I'd often come back home with my shoes full of water, my clothes drowned. We lived in a horse drawn caravan and we had a stove and you had to dry your clothes on it. The food at the time, everything was rationed, you had a quarter

03:51	SB	<p>of butter for a full week and my mother used to get a pound of sugar and that would last for a week, a quarter of tea you had to stretch out for the week, no meat. The one good thing about Ireland was that there were lots rabbits around so you could kill a rabbit and cook it for your dinner, so that situation wasn't bad, we would always have a few dogs and we'd go hunting. So with everything when I got older I came to England and I got a job, and seeing as I'm a traveller life is very hard a had a labourers job and we're talking about things were rough in Ireland but when I came to this country in 1959 It was on the platforms and the billboards around London and Birmingham 'no Irish or no blacks need apply' so if you were Irish or a black man you couldn't get a job.</p>
	SB	<p>Can I stop you there, Patrick? Can I talk more about Racism now and we've moved onto a different subject really umm can you talk about the racism you faced when you were growing up?</p>
	PM	<p>The Racism when I was growing up you weren't allowed to pull into a town, you had to pull your caravan at least 3 miles outside of the town and the thing is, people coming to passing would call you tinkers, the police would come and move you on, you couldn't stay near a house, you had to stay may be the nearest house was a quarter of a mile away, and you weren't allowed to stay very long, and the Garda in Ireland is the same with the police in this country, they would move you on there were no council in them days to move you. The Garda anyone felt like moving you on you were moved that was the way it was.</p>
	SB	<p>The Garda anyone felt like moving you on you were moved that was the way it was.</p>
	PM	<p>Do you and your family face racism now?</p> <p>Yes, we face racism every day of the week, as soon as we go into the village her, some people look at you, I've been living here for 8 years and people here don't even speak to us in the village, you say good morning because I was brought up to be polite and to say good morning to people, but in this village where I live in people pass you by and turn their head, and I thinks its rude and racism, they still look down on top of you after all these years. We're in the 21st century and they look down on you as a gypsy that going to do something to them.</p>
	SB	<p>How does that make you feel?</p>
	PM	<p>It doesn't make me feel very good coz if you walk down the street and say good morning to someone you'd like them to at least nod their head at you and just recognize you as a human being, that you're not something that's going to do any harm to them, that's how I feel, I feel very strongly about that.</p>
	SB	<p>What about the rest of your family, what kind of racism are the experiencing?</p>
	PM	<p>They suffer the same things no matter where they go, everybody is racist towards us travellers, even Asian people, as well as English people, every race. If you're a traveller in this world you're not accepted into the community, if you're a gypsy or a traveller your not accepted in this community anybody can come off a boat and get welcomed into this community, but we're not</p>

		<p>welcome nowhere, and I don't think its going to change cause people have this thing for over 100 hundred years, kind of a voodoo, they think travellers are going to do something to them, and its handed down from the mother and father to the children 'beware of the gypsies, 'cos they'll rob and steal' which is not true.</p>
06:45	SB	<p>Can you give me a recent example of racism that you or you're family have suffered?</p>
	PM	<p>I cant pick out just one thing, it happens everyday of the week, there's always some racist remarks but we don't follow it up cause we're travellers and we're used to it all out lives. I'm 74 years of age and I suffered this racism in Ireland and England, I've been to Scotland and I've been to Wales and I've suffered racism all over this planet, and we just take it as something we have to live with.</p>
	SB	<p>How have things changed for you as a traveller over the years?</p>
	PM	<p>Well when I was growing up in Ireland with a pony and cart going door to door selling lino in hail rain or snow, but then when we got a motor car it made life a lot easier, when you're going door to door your limited how far you can go with a horse and cart, but now you can drive on 30-40 miles, so if you go to the first village and you do a bit of business and its not good you can drive on to the next village. So you're covering a bigger area at the end of the day, so that's how life has changed. If you go up to a door with a motor car and people want to know who you are, so they show you a bit more respect, but if you pull up to the house with an open back cart they'd say 'oh there's the gypsies again' so they wouldn't have nothing to do with you, so that's one good thing to happen to people to get on a bit more in life and a better way of travelling.</p>
	SB	<p>What about you, how is your life very different now?</p>
	PM	<p>At the moment I don't work anymore, I've got a heart problem, I'm a diabetic, so it's more leisured, but my family still works. So with me it's kind of changed I'm too old to work, and I can't work, and I can't walk very far so that's my problem. I can't walk because I've got a heart problem and walking is the greatest thing. So that's the situation.</p>
	SB	<p>We can carry on talking because you know, its real life isn't it out there? *laughs*</p>
09:54	PM	<p>Yeah that's real life. Well I think what's better for travellers is that they're getting a bit of education out of it, and without education they're lost. So its coming to a time where they're able to use computer, cause computers are the future of this world, for everyone, except for travellers because travellers are left behind because they never got no education, so when they went in to school they went into a 4 class and these children haven't been in school all their life. So they're put in with bigger kids that have been going to school, and they're that much behind so how can they catch up? Where they set off from year 1 but it goes into year 4, so what they really need here is to do</p>

12:36		<p>something for travelling children, they have to start them off at year1, they've got to get teachers to be a bit more concerned about travellers, set them in with kids from year 1, I know they're bigger and its different difficulty in the classroom but it'll have to be like that to get them into the run of things otherwise they're wasting their time.</p>
	SB	<p>So education is a change for the better</p>
	PM	<p>Without education this life is not worth living</p>
	SB	<p>So what has been the biggest change for you as a traveller?</p>
	PM	<p>Education, because I never went to school in my life, when we were travelling around we wouldn't live long enough in any place to go to school and even my kids couldn't go to school in England, cause we'd never long enough in one place cause there's no sites, and now that they've a chance of going to school, I can see a difference in my grandchildren, they can read and write, there's a future for them now which there wasn't a few years ago. A couple of years ago they were living on their chances, if they didn't earn any money they wouldn't eat food, it was a problem, but now a days its coming in such a way that they can go out and if they get this education which they really need, and I think this government or any government which takes over this world should be in a state to help travellers not hinder them, cause everybody, I don't know why we are the only race of people in the world that's hated by everybody. Where we live it's the same thing, if Asian people came into this country or any foreigners, they're welcomed into this village with open arms and we're still outsiders and I don't think its going to change.</p>
	SB	<p>What do you miss most about the old ways?</p>
	PM	<p>Well I miss freedom, the old ways of freedom, you're free to go and come when you wanted to but saying that if you didn't like your next door neighbour you could pack into your caravan and you could move, so you're always free to go and free to choose who you're staying with or who you live alongside of. If you get any hassle from the local community you could pack up and go, but them days have gone, you're not allowed to move around the country any more. In 1994 the conservative government said they were going to make more sites, build more sites for travellers, and buy you're own ground, we've done that and we still have no peace, they still put us off the ground we're living on. It's the only thing the Irish and travellers are discriminated against so the government, even Boris Johnson is doing it at moment in London, he reckons if they win the election they're going to cut down the sites from 530 to 230 so it's a loss of 300 sites, in Cambridge it's the same story, they're making no provision for Irish travellers in Cambridge.</p>
	SB	<p>So in terms of your education, can I just ask you if you had any kind of formal education?</p>
	PM	<p>No I never had no education, my mother could read and write, and she teach me how, but the best education we get is by the dandy comic or the beano that's how we learned to read and write.</p>

	SB	What was your favourite character?
	PM	Well I think it was desperate Dan, well he was big and he could fend for himself and he was a hero to everybody back in the forties, and then you had the other sly fellow, corky the cat, he was so sly and sneaky and you had desperate Dan on one side and he was everybody's hero, I think a lot of people learn how to read and write through comics. I did want to go to school but we never got a chance, cause we were never long enough in the one place we were always on the move, we probably moved 3 times a week, cause you had horses, and when you had horses you couldn't keep horses on the road, or in the farmers field, and then the places wouldn't let horses in so you're always on the move.
15:39	SB	So have you sent your own children to school?
	PM	<p>Well my children never went to school but my grandchildren went to school and they're doing very well now, they can use computers. I had 8 children, 6 girls and 2 boys and the same thing happened in this country we never got a chance to put them to school, we were never long enough in one place. We were always moved on, once you move onto an area, within two days you were moved, and there was no such thing as sending kids to school they weren't interested.</p> <p>I wanted to put down that we need some water, water is essential and we need a skip to put down and they said 'no we cant do this, if we do this we're saying we're turning it into a site and we're giving you permission to be here and we cant do that'. So that's the situation.</p> <p>I would have loved for my children to be able to go to school and be able to stay in one place long enough to go to school. If there was a site, we'd be able to pull up and my kids could go to school, it'd be a lovely thing for my kids to read and write and use computers. Like just the same thing as every child in this world is entitled to an education and we're being deprived of education. My father and me and my children are privately educated, now the point is we're being barely recognized to go to school to get a bit of education, but I think it will change in the future, although there will always be racism against travellers and gypsies, its not going to change, it will never change in my opinion, probably in 50 years from now it'll change, but with the government in we have its not going to change.</p>
17:41	SB	So we're talking a bit more about the future now which is the last question. How do you see life changing for travellers in the future?
	PM	Well I think the only way it's going to change, the only way it will change is if they get education, go on the computer and the internet. Most of the businesses are done through the internet and eBay. They can look for a job and look for a job where education is needed, without education there is no future in this world.
	SB	What would you like to see happen for travellers in the future?

	PM	<p>I would like travellers to be recognized as an ethnic group which they are, viewed as human beings, not as something you could pick up on your boots as you're walking through a pat or something like that. Travellers have never been recognized, I'd love to see education for one thing, I'd love to see my grandchildren going out and getting a job in an office or a hospital or something. Be a nurse and be a part of a community and without education its not going to happen. If the community in this world can't see that in travelling people they'll just be dying out as an ethnic group. Its about time the government done something about it, instead of using them for saying if there's an election on 'we're going to talk about travellers, so if we get rid of those people we'll get more votes' so that's what its all about, its all about voting. The local council say 'oh yes we need votes, we'll pack up the travel group, we'll need some men or some women to stand up to them and say right enough is enough, its about time we helped these people'. They're helping every race in the world, they're coming from china, India, all over the world and they're recognized in this country, even aborigines from Australia coming is welcome into England, and I lived here for 50 year, all my children was born and bred here, my grandchildren too and we're still classed as Irish. One person told me 'why don't you go back to your own country' and I said to him 'how old are you?' he said 'I'm 40', I said 'I've been in this country for 50 years, so I think I've been here longer than you'. So without a change of attitude towards travelling people it's not going to change.</p>
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