



“One day, the Garda stopped my van at a checkpoint. I thought, ‘Oh boy. Here we go...’ The officer looked through the passenger window and saw all the plastic cowboys, Indians, and toy soldiers scattered around the dashboard. He raised his eyebrows and asked me to open the side door, so I did. When I slid it open, his jaw dropped in shock. He looked at me and said, ‘I wish my father was here to see this.’ I thought, what a coincidence—his dad must have been a John Wayne fan too. I used to work as a delivery man for the libraries, and my van had become quite a spectacle because of its unique decoration. Whenever I delivered to the libraries, staff and the public would come out to admire the van and take pictures with it. My father and I used to watch all the western movies together, and we had probably seen every John Wayne film a hundred times over. He was a great man, and those movies always reminded me of the times we spent together when I was a kid. I spent 44 years working for the council, thanks to a man named Liam Owens who started me in DLR Baths. I’ll be forever grateful to him because I had a wonderful career there. I did everything—working on the roads, as a warden, in housing, and even as a bin man. I loved them all but when I got the opportunity to work as a delivery driver for the libraries, it felt like winning the lotto! The whole van decoration thing started with just one toy soldier on the dashboard. I liked it there, so I added a couple more. I received a lot of compliments so I asked the management if I could put a poster on the cargo wall, and they said okay. I had so many John Wayne posters at home, so I kept putting up more until the entire van was covered in western movie posters. I retired three years ago, and the library gave me the most beautiful send-off. They were a wonderful group of people to work for. It was amazing to see how something as simple as a toy soldier on the dashboard could evolve into a spectacle that brought joy to many people. As I look back, I’m grateful for a life well-lived and the chance to have made a little magic along the way.”



“When you are a child, you observe the world through your senses much more than an adult would. You don’t have the intellect to overwrite or correct your judgment to make sense of the things around you. It doesn’t really matter whether your experience is good or bad; you don’t have the ability to interpret it. For me, a lot about growing older is trying to remember what it was like to see the world through your senses before you learned to interpret their meaning. People used to wear suits back in the day... My grandfather and my father, even if they didn’t have work, would still put on their suits. Without knowing it, as a child, I was inspired by them. I always enjoyed the fabrics and the patterns. Some of my first memories as a child are the feel and smell of their suits. I only realized as I got older that I started dressing the same. Those sensory experiences are now the gatekeepers for my sense of well-being. A time in your life when there was no rent, politics, or romantic love—the feel of a suit on me is a reminder that there is still a here and now.”



“I said to him, 'If you don't like it, Aidan, I won't bring you again, and I won't go myself, but try it.' It wasn't easy to convince him, but from the first time out, he loved it! He had a great rhythm, which made everything a lot easier. We just danced great. There is nothing like dancing together—the music, the relaxation, being close to each other with your partner. I would recommend everyone to try out ballroom dancing. In fact, I would recommend trying out any form of dancing. We had been together for over 50 years, and in many ways, dancing served as a great equalizer. You can't go dancing with your problems in your head. Unfortunately, he had a condition that made him blind, and I became a carer for him for nearly 10 years before he passed. He wanted me to keep going, and this one hour of exercise was my mental saviour. I met so many friends through dancing. When I went back, I always had someone to take me up, but it was never the same. For a while, I missed the dancing together part so much. But then, through friends, I discovered line dancing and I have since joined the choir. You have to push yourself to do things at my age. For a while, I felt I was just counting my days, but I am having such a wonderful life. I've got five kids and nine grandkids. I can't just lie down and die. Not yet. There is so much still to do.”



“I’ve been running this watch repair shop for 54 years now, and not much has changed in my methods or tools. I started with clock repairs and later moved on to watches. Back then, all the watches were wind-up. I was constantly at the bench, repairing mainsprings or balance staffs, changing straps, and cleaning watches inside and out. But with the transition to battery watches, there wasn’t much work to do on the bench anymore. It became mostly about fitting batteries, with the occasional classics coming in. Now, at 75, I have my workshop right here. The back door leads straight into my home. Every morning, I come down to open the shop. It’s important to have something to do. If it were miles away, I wouldn’t bother, but since it’s just downstairs, I easily step into my workplace. You could say I’m pedalling against the tide. I know technology has moved on—battery watches are efficient and need minimal servicing, and there are these new computer watches I can’t even touch. But honestly, life has been kind to me. I just kept going, and it all worked out. There’s always something to do; the locals keep my business going. I’ve lived a simple life, free from the stress of today. I never wanted to work for anyone else, and I still enjoy what I do, so I keep at it. I just have to open the front door in the morning and see what comes in.”





“Painting together was our thing. My mother painted before I did, she taught me so much about art; she was my main inspiration to become an art teacher. I’ve always been painting and spent a lot of time doing it with her. When she got older, she needed my help. She was in a retirement home, but I’d do her shopping, take her to her appointments, and I’d take her out every Sunday. For years, this meant painting together. She used to say, “You are very good to me!” and I’d always reply, “This is payback time.” She had been a great mom. I had a wonderful relationship with both of my parents. My father passed quite suddenly; he suffered a stroke. It wasn’t a gradual decline like with my mother. One day, we were out painting right over there actually on the other side of the pier. My mother was already showing signs of Alzheimer’s, but they were subtle. On that day, we both began to draw, and after a while, I looked over at her sketches and saw that they looked like a six-year-old’s drawing. She had been an excellent artist, a professional painter who exhibited her work and won all sorts of art awards. I was so surprised that without thinking, I asked, “What are you doing, Mom?” She then suddenly clicked, looked at her painting, and recognized what she had drawn. None of us were prepared mentally or emotionally for this, and I think she felt ashamed as she never painted with me again. That was the moment I realized my mother, as I had known her, may not be with me much longer. She began to struggle to connect, to see, and to translate what had once come so naturally to her. It was heart-breaking because there was nothing I could do. It was a long and slow decline, and towards the end, she only recognized me sometimes. Sometimes she thought I was her mother or her sister. All I could do was to be there. I don’t think there is anything you can learn from an experience like this. Maybe I would appreciate and value the time we had more, but I always appreciated her company, and I am glad for the time we had together.”



“I was born in China and came to study Energy Science at Trinity College despite being thousands of miles away. I still work remotely for my parents' hotel business in China. I am interested in climate change and the transition to sustainable energy, there is a global market for this transition with countless career opportunities. Despite being at a great university, studying something with the potential to make a meaningful change, I feel completely miserable and don't believe my satisfaction will improve. I think about this a lot, and it is my greatest problem these days. I have many choices, each with its spectrum of positives and negatives, which confuses me. My parents support me in whatever I want to do, which actually makes things even harder for me. All options focus on a path to a great career, but no one offers an option that guarantees a happy, fulfilling life. Sometimes I feel like the character in the film 'The Graduate'—have you seen it? Society wants me to decide my future now and just dive into the deep end of the pool. Even if I don't want to go to the swimming pool, society is eager to throw me in and say, "Don't worry, you will get used to it." How do I know getting used to it is something I actually want to do? How do I know that getting used to it is not the wrong path altogether? There is this saying: 'Never grow up it's a trap.' I think it may be true.”



“I read a piece in the Irish Times about climate change in 2010. It was the first time I ever read an in-depth article about global warming, and it scared the hell out of me. The article explained how carbon affects the atmosphere, and it made me look at nature in a different way. I began to truly appreciate the intricate systems that surround us. I started to research Irish native trees. Did you know that Ireland used to be covered with large tracts of forests? Today, as little as one percent of the native broadleaf trees remain, and the government does little to replant them. I was a working artist, and painting was always a big part of my life. I decided to start visually preserve Ireland’s remaining broadleaf woodlands. I can’t really describe it, but spending hours every day looking at trees and painting them had an incredible effect on my brain. It made me feel grounded and connected to Mother Nature on a level I had never felt before. I am lucky enough to live close to Killiney Park, and I go there nearly every day to walk and interact with the trees by painting them. I’ve been doing that for over seven years, and I think I have painted nearly all the trees at this point. Being immersed in the beauty and complexity of nature through my art has taught me the profound importance of protecting our environment. Each tree I paint is a reminder of our planet’s delicate balance and the urgent need to preserve it for future generations. By taking the time to look closely at nature, we can all develop a deeper appreciation and a stronger commitment to safeguarding the world around us. Let’s not wait until it’s too late.”



"I'm 26 and still living with my mother. Finding accommodation in Dublin has become impossible. I am aware that this isn't uncommon for my generation but that doesn't make things easier. Being half French, there's always the option of moving there, and Australia or London are also on the radar, but these are my last resorts. I want to figure myself out here, in Ireland. For now, I take life one day at a time, still searching for my path. I work in a café, and while it pays the bills, it's far from my actual career. I graduated with a degree in pharmaceutical healthcare with international opportunities. But my time in the industry left me disillusioned. I started with the goal of finding purpose in my work through helping people, but I soon witnessed the darker side of the pharmaceutical industry. Working for one of the smaller companies, I got a behind-the-scenes look at how things operate on a larger scale. I was shocked by the amount of money funnelled into projects that never seemed to benefit anyone. The industry felt more like a machine churning out profit than a source of help for people in need. The disillusionment grew until I could no longer bear it. It was a tough decision, but necessary for my sanity. In the café I find joy in meeting new people and I enjoy having simple interactions with customers, but it often feels more like a waiting room. Waiting for a new opportunity to show up. Many of my friends share the same uncertainty and struggle to find direction. We're a generation trapped between expectations and reality. Despite this, I hold onto the hope that better times are on the way. I just have to keep moving forward and trust the journey."





"I am a zookeeper turned bike mechanic. - I firmly believe in the power of career change! The buzz of this place is infectious; it's incredibly positive and free-flowing. Anyone who wants to volunteer can drop in whenever they have a free hour and lend a hand in any way they can. There are no expectations here—just a warm welcome. We have secondary school students who come to volunteer and learn the art of bike repair. There's a guy from St John of God who loves pumping tyres, so that's exactly what he does whenever he visits. Another young lad with additional needs is learning to ride a bike, so he comes with his carer and enjoys our tandem bikes. We offer all sorts of bikes for the elderly and people with disabilities, free to use for an hour or two. Bike Hub is more than just a regular bike service; it's a place with a social impact. You can bring in your bike for a repair at a reasonable charge, but we also accept bike donations, fix them up for free, and donate them to those in need—migrants, low-income families, and young people who need to get to school or work. Our goal is simple: to get more people on bikes. It's better for their city, better for the environment, and better for people's mental health. A win-win, and a perfect cycle!"



“My father grew up in Dublin and loved fishing the canals and beaches, but it wasn't until his thirties that he bought his first boat. Since we were kids our lives revolved around the sea; we grew up in Skerries, always surrounded by boats and the ocean. My father always had a boat, and our summers were filled with sailing and fishing adventures. Later, I started working in marinas and boatyards and eventually joined the lifeboats, where I've been for nearly 16 years. I began with maintenance and, over the years, climbed the ladder. Now, I oversee the upkeep of our large lifeboats, ensuring they meet the highest standards. Working in the rescue service and having the pleasure of listening to the stories of the rescue crew often brings back memories of my father's boats. They were small, seven metre vessels, yet five of us would cross the Irish Sea with just a compass and no electronics. This was back in the 1980s. Reflecting on those times, with the knowledge and mandatory safety features we have today, it was a sketchy time to be alive. But to us, it felt like a regular adventure. Those experiences definitely shaped who I am. My father's love for the sea became my own, and now I dedicate my life to ensuring the safety of the rescue teams and their boats while saving others on the water.”