

University of Limerick Oral History Project

Interview: Mrs Stephaine Walsh

Wednesday 5 May 2010

S.W.: So I was born in Cork on the 18 May 1944, and lived in Douglas and my mother's name was Magnier. She was Betty Magnier before she married my father who was Stephen Barrett. My mother's family knew Ed's mother's family because they were both from the Fermoy area. And my father's family knew Ed's father. My father had an uncle, a Vincentian, Fr. Willie O' Sullivan. Ed's father lived in Sundays Well and knew Fr. Willie O'Sullivan. When my mother moved to Cork in 1939, and Ed's mother was there, so they would have gone out and golfed together. They would have originally known each other from playing tennis together. Ed's mother was a bit older. So when Ed was born, my father, who was a very, very sociable gregarious man, went up to the Walsh family to say he had a wife for their son. And it's often remarked that it's just as well it wasn't that sister he married! But Ed is four years older than I am, but as a child, we used go to - they lived in Sundays Well, which is on the North side of Cork, and we lived on the south side. These children's parties, which were quite events in those days, I suppose I'm talking about the fifties, we would have gone to the Walsh's parties and they would have to mine. Ed had two younger sisters, Jane and Ita, who didn't go to the same school as I did. I didn't know them at all other than I went to their parties, so they came to our parties and they both wore their hair in pigtails. And I could never figure them out with the pigtails, even though they are quite different in loads of ways. I actually have a photograph when I was about five or six and Ed is about nine or ten, of the party group, and he's in the back with some other boys, and I had just one sister. And these were these nasty boys who played tricks and all sorts of things. So I would have known the parents and the grandmother who always lived with them from that, vaguely. And then Ed had left college, UCC, by the time I started going, and anyhow, quite likely, I would never have met him because he didn't socialise, sort of, at all, he just studied, and I was totally the opposite direction.

I.: What did you do in college?

S.W.: I did Arts. In first year I wanted to do Theology which of course couldn't be done in NUI and I was brought into Dean Penders office and he suggested I study Logic, which would be the closest one. So myself and thirty clerics studied Logic, and I sat in the front desk and they sat in the back row. I studied English, Spanish and French. So we would get Christmas cards from the Walshs and my mother would meet his mother at golf and come home with these stories of all these letters from the States and the marvelous things he was doing, would throw her eyes up to Heaven! And I did have a vision having seen him from the bus with his violin, I suppose he was in short trousers at that stage, he was going to the School of Music I imagine, in his Christian Brothers uniform, and I thought 'God, wouldn't he make you sick he's so goody goody!'

And this was continued with mother's reports. And so then it was, 1964, before we met as adults, and we went out with a friend, who was subsequently our best man, Mahon Lee. And when Mahon had his sister and Ed had one of his sisters with him. So we went out on St. Stephen's Day beagling! On one of those magic days where there was this crisp ice or frost and the sun was shining. And I'd never been beagling before, never went afterwards either. It was marvellous! And Ed was there, 'Wardy' was the name he was known as in the family, and I remember thinking 'he's not so bad at all, you know!' Anyhow ... so you know we came from similar backgrounds, other than mine was a very political background, my father was a Fine Gael TD, and Ed's family never discussed politics, because his father had been a bit involved in Sinn Fein. He used to drive a priest to Sinn Fein courts and that sort of thing. They never discussed politics, but I imagine his mother voted Fine Gael and his father voted Fianna Fáil . It wasn't considered polite to discuss politics in their family.

I.: What age were you when you met?

S.W.: Nineteen, was I? ... Yes, was it '63 or '64? I was in my third year in college anyhow.

I.: And did you graduate from college?

S.W.: I did, and I did my Higher Dip. So at that stage we had started writing and I remember the first letter I got from him was in a circular shape, it was like a '45' - the old small records you know, and he had written in tiny writing all around it. I thought gee he was different!

I.: Was he in the States at this time?

S.W.: He was in the States, he was in Iowa State doing graduate work. So, then by the following summer I was doing, I remember he phoned up and he was back, and I had a Spanish exam the next day, and he said can you come out, so I said no, no, I've an exam tomorrow, and he coaxed me out.

I.: And when did you get married?

S.W.: We got married in August 1966.

I.: Did you work for a time before you got married?

S.W.: I taught in Belfast for a year, I was very involved in peace work. Père Pire was a Nobel Peace Prize winner for his work with displaced people. There were still displaced persons around Europe. In 1958, I was in the Girl Guides and I remember I was in the Girl Guides till I was fifteen or sixteen, it wouldn't be considered the sort of thing you'd do now. But we had a guard of honour for Père Pire coming to speak in the Gurrabraher Hall. That must have been maybe 1959 or '60, And I got very interested in that as a student, there was a Père Pire committee set up in Cork. My father was on it and then he substituted me, and there were people like Gerald Goldberg, and in fact the overall Chairman was Cearbhall O Dálaigh, who used come down occasionally, and there was a marvellous lady called Geraldine Fogarty who came from the Dublin thing, who sort of took me under her arm. And by the time I was a second year student I was the

secretary of the Père Pire thing. But I followed that through by getting a job in Northern Ireland, partly to just get away from Cork, already I sort of figured I would be going to the States. So I applied for jobs to Protestant schools in Northern Ireland, which of course when they saw the NUI ... I mean some of them ... I got very nice answers, It was quite hard to get jobs that year and I hadn't an Honours degree or anything, but I got a job actually in the Dominican convent in Fort William Park, which is a very nice grammar school. But in fact that year I got Père Pire over to Belfast, but it was very hard to get ... until I lived in Belfast, I just didn't realise just how separated the Protestants and Catholics were. In fact, in our committee, the Quakers were the only people who might have friends in both camps.

I.: Of course this was before 1969?

S.W.: Oh yes, it was. '65 to '66, and I had arrangements with a friend from Dublin, who was a social worker that we'd share a flat, but she got moved to Ballymena or someplace, so I stayed for three weeks in digs, which was a miserable situation! Having to talk to people at breakfast and having no place to go, so I ended up in a bedsit by myself which actually was fine.

I.: Did you enjoy that time in Belfast?

S.W.: I don't know whether enjoy is the right word. It was very interesting, and living by myself, you know I'd never done that, we were a small family, a very close family so I suppose it was a lonely time. And I mean the staff were very friendly but it didn't extend very much outside the classroom. I think there were two older ladies who would have invited me to their home. One was known as being extremely odd! and she used come in early to avoid meeting the other staff. I used tend to cycle to Mass and go and have breakfast in the staffroom, I got to know her that way. And the other was known as 'Mad Mary', fierce Republican!, but she was very good in that she took me out ... there was a Paisley rally in 1966, when Carson came over, they were trying to talk about, the thing was they wanted the Queen Elizabeth bridge to be called the Carson bridge. So Mary said

to me 'I'll take you to that if you don't open your mouth and let anybody hear that accent of yours!' And it was an extraordinary experience, you know, Paisley and Carson junior with loud hailer, and people with Lambeg drums, beautiful, you'd follow them anyplace, you know! It was amazing. And she used take me bird watching. One close friend who invited me to her family home and I would stay there. I played hockey with the past pupils but they didn't play hockey there anymore. So I said 'why did they give up playing hockey?' ... 'Ah well the Protestant girls were all running around nude in the showers afterwards!' so they switched to camogie and this was a very, very middle class area you know. It ran very deep.

I.: And you spent a year there?

S.W.: I spent a year there and of course Ed and I were writing on almost a daily basis and Ed did come back at Christmas and that was the Christmas we got engaged and the following summer we got married.

I.: And you went to live in the States?

S.W.: Yes, emigrated the day I got married. He was in Blacksburg, Virginia at VPI. I had gone out at Easter to sort of see what it was all about. And it was a small university town, it was a lovely place to live. People were very, very kind ... and then I was pregnant sort of straight away, and first I sort of looked into teaching there, but there was enough to deal with, I mean I was just twenty two, I was twenty two in May and got married in August.

I.: So your first child was born in Virginia?

S.W.: Yes. Michael, born just nine months after we married, Ed's mother was very anxious that he might be premature!. My mother came out and he was born in Radford, about thirty minutes from Blacksburg.

I.: Did you enjoy your time in Virginia?

S.W.: I did. I did. Now, looking back, it was hard, you know, having a baby without any support systems. I had been an au pair in Belgium but I knew very little about babies, I didn't have any young cousins that lived nearby. And he was a hyper active sort, he cried from the day he came home, so that was really very difficult. And then, but there was a very nice community, and they were so friendly the Americans. Have you lived in the States yourself?

I.: No, I haven't lived there, I've visited.

S.W.: They were really so good, when you moved house they'd be in , bringing over a pizza or something, and of course, they were very good for introducing themselves everywhere they went. And I got involved in the faculty wives, they had a newcomers club. The Catholic Church was a minority community, and I got quite involved in that and in fact by 1968, I was elected onto the first parish council. This was post- Vatican Two. And we would come back to Ireland then in the summer and of course Stephen, he wasn't born in the States, he was very annoyed about not being born in the States. Because I came home to have Stephen, he was born in '68. We came home that summer – he was born in September. I would have had nobody to look after Michael ... but at one stage he was anxious to go and work in the States and he said 'Why didn't you stay in the States mum?'

I.: It would have been very useful.

S.W.: Yes, yes.

I.: How did you feel when your husband was appointed Director of the NIHE in 1970?

S.W.: Well, we had planned on coming back to Ireland anyhow. We got the *Irish Times*, I forget, and maybe it was the Friday one that had the appointments, so we got that once a

week, and very much went through the small ads. And he had applied for this job in UCD, and he had accepted that job for the following year, that would have been '70, well I suppose it would have been September of '70 that he would have been taking it up. And I think it was I saw the ad., you know, and would have drawn his attention to it. I suppose he answered it with no expectation – you know, he'd had, maybe he told you about his experiences with UCG before, did he, of the interview? So I mean he hadn't any decent Irish and he was too young, but ... so I would have encouraged him to send it in anyhow. Then coming back for the interview, I would have encouraged him to do that but I came back in – Stephen was born on the 25 September, so it was October that year before I came back on that dreadful journey, with a hyperactive two and a half, three year old, and a four or five week old baby by myself.

I.: You flew back?

S.W.: Flew back. TWA at that stage were going from Shannon and they looked after me, whereas Aer Lingus had so many children they didn't give a damn about you. So TWA arranged I had somebody, a ground hostess to bring me through the airport and put me onto Virginia and then to Washington and then Washington to Newark so Ed met me in Washington, I think. So I was only just back and I had these two small children, and I think maybe it was November that they called him back for the interview, I'm not sure about the dates on that. So it seemed like I was just back and he was going off. And just astonished then when he was appointed and delighted. I knew nothing about Limerick at all, and I had the image of Limerick as someplace that was dirty and snobbish, you know. But to me it seemed I was coming home and that. I suppose the main thing about Limerick was how close it was to Cork. And when we used to have these fantasies of where we'd like to live in Ireland, neither of us was too keen on going to Dublin, we thought Kilkenny, wouldn't it be nice if something turned up in Kilkenny!.

And so, and then, it was the end of December, the end of November, he was appointed. I can't remember the sequence but it was all very, very fast. And then the main thing was how would we get home, you couldn't sail home at that stage, without going to

Rotterdam. And we had just a little rented house, and furnished mostly from Goodwill Industries, these sort of charity shops where they did second hand stuff. So the main things were just clothes, books and children's stuff. But the only way to get stuff back was to pack them in boxes and post them. In December! They were thrilled to see me, and I was going into the post office with all these parcels. So I was hanging around in supermarkets trying to pick up boxes. I was assembling the boxes, Ed was assembling the stuff, because he's very organized, of course a master list of what was in every box. And then making these decisions, and getting all of this done. We'd some very good friends in the States, and friends who invited us for Christmas. And then sold the car on the way to the airport, that sort of thing, you know. So it was just so busy, and then my mother and Ed's mother came down to Shannon to meet me. So I came off the plane with the two children, Ed went on up to the Department of Education. So it was just ...

I.: It all happened very quickly?

S.W.: It was just so, there was so much to do, I suppose the main memory is one of tiredness!

I.: Yes, I can only imagine ...

S.W.: But so then I came back and Ed started, he stayed in Hanrattys Hotel which was very, sort of family, at that stage, the staff were lovely and looked after him. I suppose every so often I'd come down at the weekends, or the grandmothers or the sisters, my sisters and Ed's sister were very good about looking after the kids. And I'd just come to Limerick with the baby. So I lived in, then, in a little flat that Ed's father had a butcher's shop in Sundays Well in Cork and there was a little flat over it. So I lived there and I got a car of my own. I remember looking at the various sites, when I'd come down for the weekend and then at the Plassey site. So then, once the site was bought, we had to get a house. And I'd be asking Ed what about the house, and of course he'd be pay very little attention to it and he'd just go off. We used to go to auctions buying furniture, in the summer when we were home. And they were stored up in Ed's family's house and one of them was a grand piano. So the one thing about the house was, it should be large enough

for a grand piano!. We bought this little bungalow up on Castletroy Golf Links road, there was no way you could fit a grand piano. It wouldn't go in it. And he hadn't even looked out in the back garden. I mean this was infuriating really, you know. And ...

I.: At what stage was this? Was this a few months into 1970?

S.W.: We moved in July of '70, and my big problem was I had a little red Fiat and would it break down? And we were moved by Nat Ross in Cork whose, the movers had actually moved my parents and moved Ed's parents and they were looking and saying gosh, I remember them . So then I was telling them I'm worried about ... and they said 'look missus, you go ahead now and if you break down we can fit the car in the van!' And I remember it was the 14 July because I came through Buttevant and the Cahirmee Horse Festival was on. I thought, oh my God, the car will never stop and start. So we came and moved in then and Ed did take that day off.

I.: And did you find it easy to settle into Limerick?

S.W.: No, I didn't really. It was, I mean Castletroy was emerging as a suburb and we were on the Castletroy Golf Links road. There were a string of individual houses and we were next to a cottage, and they were fine, a very nice family called O' Briens. And then there were maybe three bungalows beyond us. But I moved in at the stage you hadn't phones or anything but nobody came in and said 'would you like a cup of tea?' or 'my name is so and so' or 'would the children like to come and play?' Nobody said a word to me!. I mean compared to the American friendliness, subsequently I got to know them all. Just they had all been born and grown up in Limerick, and didn't know what it was like to know nobody. But Paul and Clare Quigley were marvellous to us and, because Paul had been on the interview board for Ed and was very paternal and would have had us down to dinner and would have introduced me. I mean, I'd say for the first two years I could almost trace everybody I knew back through them, you know. And Clare got me involved in coffee mornings to meet people. I knew, I had one cousin, a first cousin of my mothers, Fr. Tom Magnier, who was in the Redemptorists in Limerick. I knew

absolutely nobody. And it was difficult enough, but I mean gradually it became easier.

Ed didn't take holidays and I said 'look the Department of Education, nobody has noticed you don't take holidays, only myself and the children have noticed'. So after that he started to take holidays. He was very distracted and I suppose one of the values of him writing this book is going back and looking at the amount of stuff that was on.

I.: I know that most of the founding academics here, they've told me about the long hours they put in, how it wasn't a job, it was more a life really when they were young and came here, enthusiastic ... was that difficult on family life?

S.W.: It certainly was difficult for me because I always felt that the NIHE was number one. And in actual fact, Ed was much more interested in Plassey House than a home, the house at home. I mean you could walk down there from our house and the kids would be running around in Plassey House, it was like an enormous playground. But it was '72 I think, before staff would start coming in, and at that stage every new staff member that came in, I'd have them to dinner to introduce them to people. I mean at that stage there was no allowance, no anything for it, so I got to know them all pretty well – we were very close you know. And we had great parties. And there was an awful lot of talent. I mean Leo Colgan was a marvelous piano player and his wife Eileen was a great entertainer and Terry Moran was, the early lecturer in European Studies I think, he was a fabulous pianist. He made up fantastic songs, hilarious! Peter Wolk was on classical guitar, and then the Pettys, of course, were there, I don't remember that they had any particular party piece, but Damien and Anne Dyer, he was an early staff member, Damien was marvellous, he was actually part of a group, a marvellous entertainer, and Danny and Betty O' Neill, Betty used to sing I think. But there was a very strong sense of community in the early '70s.

I.: And a lot of this then revolved around your home?

S.W.: I suppose, it did. A lot of it, and a lot of others would entertain, I mean a lot of them were living around Milford. But I think we would entertain in Newport, it was '76

before we moved to ... and then we had a lot more space. At that stage I remember I had given, we were still in Castletroy, it must have been maybe '75, I had given a dinner party for a new staff member and his wife, and they didn't even bother phoning or writing afterwards, and I said to heck with this, Im not doing any more of this.

I.: That was in '70?

S.W.: '75, I'd say, yes, or maybe early '76, but when we went out to Newport I used say, well, if we're entertaining for the NIHE, I want help with it.

I.: I was going to ask you that – if you had any assistance with this entertaining?

S.W.: Well in 1971, when Eoghan, our third son was born in August, a social worker Sr. Caoimhin, one of the sisters of the Assumption came in to see me. I had contact with the social services, maybe I was doing Meals on Wheels or something like that. And she came in and she said, would you think of having an unmarried mother to stay with you? And so this girl was sixteen or seventeen, coming from the Waterford or Wexford area and at that stage, you know, to be pregnant was an enormous disgrace. Family placement had started, other than that you went to a Mother and Baby Home. So that worked out very well, I think we had twenty one unmarried mothers until 1985, I think. So I had that help, there was help to babysit. And of course it was very good company for me. And I picked up some very good friendships that way and it was like an au pair, I had been an au pair in Belgium and it had been a very good experience, so that sort of arrangement, you know. So that was the help I had. When the fund raising came in, that was the late eighties, you know. So at that stage, we had space for the grand piano at last, and we used to have some parties. But I think less so. My father died suddenly in September '76, and ... I just realised, I mean we had only moved to Newport since March, he died in September, and the people who helped me weren't the NIHE people. A lot of the staff weren't Irish, didn't know the Irish traditions, and I remember clearly the few who called out to me. And of course Anne Sadleir was marvellous, she was almost family, Anne was the first secretary, she was always warm and supportive, she was.

I.: She was from Limerick?

S.W.: She was, the Limerick ink, because they were all 'blow ins'.

I.: Was that difficult, do you think? Was it particularly difficult for wives and partners who came from abroad, to settle here?

S.W.: It was I think. Now the result was a lot of them got involved in voluntary activities and one of the spin offs of the NIHE was that so many voluntary organisations were started by spouses, you know. I got involved in the Women's Movement, in Adapt, and through that got involved in the Samaritans and was the founding secretary of the Samaritans in Limerick, that was in '75. I know Pauline Petty started the association for sick children in hospital. Pauline was running a nursery school, a marvellous nursery school in Monaleen at that stage, and you know at that stage, there was nothing for parents and she got involved in this organization, that provided beds to sleep in and things like that. And I know that Cathy Chappell got involved in the ... what was it - I know Bishop Newman was very excited about it - it was the Family Planning Association.

I.: She set that up in Limerick?

S.W.: I think she did, she was certainly involved in it. Jim Kenny and people like that would have been to the fore. But they were sort of the liberal left and they were a great bunch, the women, and I certainly know some of them had problems adapting. I, Hannie Doran, with whom I'm still friends – the first time I met Hannie was out at the dental clinic where I was taking the kids, and she had her son, Hans, and we got talking. And then subsequently I discovered that her husband was working at the NIHE. And I always felt that was grand, we'd met otherwise. I suppose it was gradually dawning on me that I'm the boss's wife and there would have been instances of people trying to get messages about the NIHE, through me. So I suppose from about 1976 on I started, Newport was

my centre, and you had a tennis court, I started to play tennis, got a group of ladies and got very involved in local, local life and less involved in what was happening in the NIHE, you know.

I.: And that was your choice, that was your deliberate choice?

S.W.: I suppose it was almost, it was almost a deliberate choice and I think it was my father's death that you know, told me there's good company here but that's not what real friends are about.

I.: And were you anxious to keep family life separate, you know, your children?

S.W.: Not particularly. We were in and out a lot and I mean the boys all went to college here. And no, I suppose it was really my sense of self- preservation. But I mean Stephen was about seven or eight when he got an essay in school I suppose, he was second or third class, on what his father's job was. And he said my father's job is to keep Plassey House neat and tidy! You know all he saw was coming in and picking up stuff all around the place you know! ... laugh ...

I.: What do you remember about the early years of the NIHE?

S.W.: Well I suppose the early years of the NIHE, like our third son was born in August of '71, and what I remember was Ed was away with the Planning Board of the NIHE. I mean, the child came within two days of being expected. His mother had died five days previously, and he was away with that. Every Eoghan's birthday I bring this up and virtually rant about it, but I suppose it was just the enormous effort that it took that Ed was so absent. I used come down with the kids from Castletroy just to Plassey banks on picnics, it was such a physically lovely place. They seemed to be gorgeous summers, in fact they were lovely summers, '74, '75 and young fishermen and you'd buy a fish for like a pound, gorgeous salmon. And going just up stream there's a lovely little sandy bank up there. It was very interesting meeting these new people. And so many different

types of people and getting involved in the formality of receptions. Now I wouldn't have been unfamiliar with that, in that my father was Lord Mayor of Cork, a TD for fifteen years and I would have been accustomed to that, so I suppose I'd left Ireland virtually as a student and it was like coming back and it was like this totally different ... I mean I was twenty six when I came back, to a totally different situation, and the situation changing all the time. It was never dull, it was always interesting. I remember Anne Sadleir didn't drive and she would have had to get a taxi in and out to Plassey, and it was countryside, absolute countryside. And I remember in 1975 when I was involved in founding the Samaritans and if you were doing an overnight duty, eight o' clock would be the changeover time, you'd be in from Castletroy to Cecil St. in ten minutes, meet virtually nobody. The workers were going out earlier on a bus to Shannon, but very little traffic.

We had spent four years looking for a house. We knew we wanted to live in an old house and there were so many options where we were runners up. And the one house that I sort of regret that we didn't buy was the Nash's. It was a beautiful house up there on the corner where the traffic lights are, and close to where the shopping centre is now. The wall is there on the main Limerick road, an old wall there, a beautiful house; was it Kate O' Brien had an association with that house?. And I remember, they were asking twenty thousand or something for it. This would have been maybe in '70, was it '71 or '72?, beautiful house with a double staircase, absolutely splendid, but with a small bit of land. And I think at that stage, it had been sold to McInerney, and could we afford that?. I mean we had bought our own house, we had saved up for it, and Ed virtually had the deposit. I remember going into the Educational Building Society and the hassle about getting a small mortgage from it. We had paid half of it. And they not wanting to deal with me, the woman, and not being able to sign for it! That was one of the reasons I got involved in the Women's Movement, because it was a crazy situation. Im going off my topic now ... just the early memories.

And then weekends would be, see what's happening at Plassey. In the restaurant once, watching out for the trees, I think it was about '74 when they were doing that, was it Phase 1B, when they were doing the fresco and Fr. Aengus Buckley, a marvellous

Dominican priest. He was great at talking, very amusing, a magician, a member of the Magician's Circle, marvellous with the kids, and having to - Anne Sadlier and myself used to do a lot of running him in and out to the frescoes. And giving him – oh yes, and then maybe it was '74 - '75, stopped at St. Patrick's Church on the way out. Because Aengus had a crucifixion on the ceiling, and he'd heard that they were knocking down his crucifixion. Fr. Gerry Griffin was the parish priest and Aengus said 'stop here, I have to look here', and went in and two workmen knocking all this plaster and picking up parts. Oh, he was very angry about that ... laugh ...

And then he was talking about, he was doing the Stations of the Cross in Ennistymon, and he'd be hours on the phone telling you all about the whole process and what he did in Italy and the rest of it. And I'd be trying to deal with a lot of stuff at home. 'Oh' he said 'its not you know ...' - at this stage Griffin had been transferred down to Glin - he said 'there are two Knights in Glin now, the Knight of Glin and there's the night of the big wind. ! ...laugh...It was then I said that's very uncharitable, Not at all, he said, I really thought of putting him in as Judas in my Stations of the Cross. ... laugh ...

Another priest who I was happy to know was Dr. James Good when he came to Limerick in 1971. I knew him in my student years and he would have been the temporary Professor of Education, I did my Higher Dip. And I was also involved in Pax Romana, a sort of voluntary organization and we would have had Fr. Good coming and lecturing to the students in maybe 1964. So I met him at some formal do and I was delighted to see him. This was maybe '71, and I went up and was chatting to him and he took me aside and said 'do you wish to be seen with the likes of me here?'. And you know Fr. Good's history, do you, that sort of thing. But I did see a bit of him. Then there was Frank Lyddy, who was - Margaret Lyddy was on the Planning Board- her husband, marvellous man, and he got involved as the chairman of the Samaritans, because that was '75 . At that stage we didn't know that many Limerick people and I knew Frank had been involved in Muintir na Tíre. I went to ask him to become involved in the Samaritans and he became the chairman of it. We had to launch it at a meeting in the Cruises Hotel. We got Charles Mitchell an RTE News announcer at that stage, to talk at the launch. And we

had a committee and we had a representative, it was a non religious thing, and we had the Church of Ireland, Dean Empey, and there was a Methodist minister, David Kerr, Aengus Buckley was on it, Trevor Morrow was the accountant, Jim Sexton, the solicitor, Frank Lyddy and myself. Clare Quigley came. But Walton Empey suggested that we could get Charles Mitchell, because he was a Church of Ireland man, and he was a big impact, Charles Mitchell. But, I mean there was a lot of free time in RTE then, as I suspect than there is now and Charles Mitchell used write to all the people who wrote into him. A lot of lonely people used write into him and he used write back to them and Charles came and spoke at the opening meeting of the Samaritans. We thought there'd be fifty or sixty and there was something like four hundred, it was absolutely packed out!. And from that, we got, I suppose, about eighty people, signed up to be volunteers and from that we ended up with fifty people as trained volunteers. But a lot of my efforts went into things like Adapt and the Samaritans and through that, through working with people you make very good friends. I met very interesting people you know.

I.: So you had a very active time?

S.W.: Very, very active. Again which I couldn't have done a lot of it without having the unmarried mothers at home you know.

I.: And then there were huge changes here. The place grew at a dramatic rate and after University status was conferred in 1989, the Foundation was set up. I know that you were very involved in travelling and an in entertaining?.

S.W.: Yes. Well, the entertaining I suppose, impinged on me more in a way. And we had a daughter, the three sons were two years apart. And then in '78 we had a daughter Elizabeth-Jane. She went to primary school in Newport and she would have been going on to secondary school by 1989, so she went to boarding school in the Ursulines in Thurles. And the boys were older and I suppose driving, so that freed me up a lot to do things. And the catering, we had dinner parties out there but they were catered, marvellous, the Campbell's caterers, marvellous staff. Tony Ahern was the Chef. So that

was a grand situation because we could fit fourteen, fifteen at a dinner table, so you could get to talk to everyone. We were selling the University/NIHE to, mostly Americans, with the back up of the local staff and their spouses. And they were also detailed to go home early, you know!. By eleven or half past eleven they were mostly going off, and of course that was one of my big regrets that I didn't keep a visitor book, to get people to sign. People like Chuck Feeney came to dinner; of course typically I'd be left with the most important guest next to me. I remember Chuck had very little to say, he's not into small talk, but I subsequently got to know him well, and he's marvelous, a really good friend. The Foundation, and the people in it became good friends, you know, and Loretta and Lew Glucksmann and John and Pauline Ryan, and then going abroad to fundraise. Malachy Glynn was a wonderful fund raiser who was Irish but living in the States. He was a marvellous man, but I really felt it was like high-class prostitution, but Malachy said 'well these are people who have made more money than they know what to do with and they are really looking for a valuable way to spend it'. But I mean going to places like Palm Beach, was so artificial . But it was grand to be able to escape from it. And then there were individual people in Chicago, California and New York. It worked well, it worked very well.

I.: You enjoyed that aspect of it?

S.W.: I did, I did, I did, I mean it never became a bit of a bore; it just became quite tiresome to have to do it again. From the fundraising, I mean what per cent are going to mean anything, or have a genuine interest? you'd feel it was terribly artificial, but you had to go through it to find the ones who were worthwhile and of course then there was travelling involved, all sorts of academic travel, which was much more interesting with the University Association of Presidents and things like that in Japan which was fascinating.

I.: I get the impression that you maintained a distinct life away from the university and the NIHE?

S.W.: I imagine it was something I learned from my mother who never got sucked into politics. Myself and my sister got quite involved, but she always ... and if people phoned up wanting something from my father ... she'd say 'well, he's at the office, or he'll be such a time at the Fine Gael rooms. At the time I thought she really should talk to these people, but I think it was a valuable lesson. You know that there are two lives.

I.: And prepared you well for your life here as the President's wife?

SW.: Yes, I suppose so.

I.: Thank you.