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Irish Yeast Company

Places

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2013

## Interview with Mr John Moreland: audio interview

John Moreland

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*Interview with John Moreland (JM) in the Irish Yeast Company, College Street, Dublin on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 2012.*

Interviewers: Dr. Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire (MM) and Mary Kavanagh (MK)

MM: So, John, I suppose I'm just going to start off by asking you where and when you were born.

JM: Well, I was born here up the top of the house.

MM: Right, so we're talking about physically here on College Green.

JM: On College Street, I was born up the top of the house. Will I give you the history?

MM: Please do. First give me a year. It's only women you don't ask their date of birth!

JM: The history is that it was the first yeast company that we know of and it was started in 1890. It was started by a barrister, Henry West, and I think at that time a lot of them fellows were fairly comfortably off. They started these places as a hobby because they never did any work. What they usually did was they engaged somebody to manage the place for them. They had staff and they just let the place go along. He took in a junior partner, another English army officer, Captain Hughes and between them they were running the place and my father came into it. At first, he was in here and he'd be getting ready all the orders. The system at that time was that the manager was the traveller and his job was to go off down the country and get orders from different bakeries.

Yeast was a new product and it only had come on to the market. Up to then, bakers used barm for rising bread. So eventually the manager at the time left, or something like that, and my father became the manager. The manager normally lived upstairs so my father moved up here. He used to go off on a Monday morning and his job was to go round to different bakeries but more in the Leinster area. That was the way the travellers used to work then. He knew most of the travellers in the wholesale grocery business that used to go round the country. There were no cars then so they used to bring their bikes with them. They would go in the guards van in the train and they might go as far as Limerick Junction and they'd get the bike out of the train and go round the whole area, round the various bakeries. He told me one incident. He went into one small town where there were two bakeries in it. He went into one fellow and he told him he was introducing yeast for the bakery trade. At that time they were using the barm, and this fella said "no way, I'm not getting into anything like that". So he went over to the fella on the other side and he convinced him, he was more progressive and he said "Ok, we'll have a go at it". So he was sending the orders down to him and eventually every few months they'd go around to the customers again to see how things was doing. So he goes into the town and he looks at the bakery that wouldn't take the yeast - and he has a big notice in the window saying "No foreign agents used in our bread".

So they used to go round and they'd probably have a case with them and be stopping in a bed and breakfast for a few days. Then you'd come back at the end of the week with a dose of orders and they'd pass them on to the staff. It was up to the staff to get the orders ready and send them up to the various railway stations.

Now I remember my father telling me that when he started off first, before he was manager, he was looking at the orders, they hadn't got motor cars then, they had a horse and trap. They used to deliver the stuff in a horse and trap.

MM: Where did your father come from, was he Dublin or was he country?

JM: Oh, absolutely Dublin, he came from the Francis Street area in Dublin.

MM: And was there any link with his family to the baking industry?

JM: No. Actually his mother was in the second hand furniture business. He and his mother moved in here first and then he eventually got married. He was married in Marlborough Street church the day after Michael Collins' funeral. They were to be married the day of the funeral but, of course, it had to be postponed and they were married the day after the funeral.

MM: And your father's first name?

JM: Christopher.

MM: And your mother's?

JM: My mother's name was Margaret. She had connections with cookery because her father and her brother were ship's cooks and her aunt worked in most of the leading restaurants round the city as a cook.

MM: And what was her surname?

JM: Bourke, the Bourke family. So there was the connection, they were all very good cooks; including my mother although she never worked in the game she was a good cook, she inherited it, I suppose, from her father and that.

MM: What year were you born then?

JM: 1924.

MM: I suppose you might as well give us the full date so we can send you a birthday card someday!

JM: 12<sup>th</sup> February 1924.

MM: And were there many in your family?

JM: No, there's only myself and my brother and my brother died about four year ago. So we were working full time up to four years ago. Then when he died I had to say to myself what are you going to do? - are you going to retire or are you going to carry on? And I said why not carry on in a part-time basis; it gives me something to do, if you like. It was a hobby and I know the business inside out, so that's why I continued on.

MM: Bring us back to the beginning. Was your brother older or younger than you, John?

JM: He was two years younger.

MM: And his name?

JM: Christopher.

MM: You grew up in this house, where did you go to school?

JM: One of the best Christian Brother's schools in Dublin, Westland Row CBS. Kevin Street Tech was there before Saint Mary's (now DIT Cathal Brugha Street) and the first fellow they had there was called Sam Anthony. He was the first head of the bakery school in Kevin Street Tech and he was a Scotch man and he married Miss Spall out of the Dublin Gas Company. She was the cookery demonstrator in the Gas Company. When he retired the fellow who came after him was named Pat Carey, a brother of Jackie Carey. They both went to our school, both were past pupils of Westland Row and I suppose you all know that Jackie Carey was a great footballer.

MK: Actually I had Sam Anthony. I do have links back right to the establishment of the bakery school in the sense that he was actually my teacher, Sam Anthony.

JM: At that time, I don't know when St. Mary's started, (Martin interjects to say 1941), before that Kevin Street Tech existed, and at that time there was no qualified chefs. They brought over Sam Anthony, a Scotch man and in most of the places there were Scotch fellas in charge. The DBC had Bill Coghlan and there was another place, Mills on Merrion Row and the fella who did the decorating of the cakes there (he won all the competitions there for years) he was another Scotch man. His brother actually worked in another yeast company here.

MM: Do you remember his name?

JM: I can't remember his name.

MK: Tell me John, did you know John Swift, who actually started the bakery school?

JM: The name is familiar, I didn't know him, I knew of him.

MK: He wrote a book, 'The history of Irish Bakers', and his son Jonathan also wrote a book. It's called the Irish Dissident'.

JM: Was he tied up in the Union?

MK: That's right. They actually started the bakery school, initially in Gardiner Street in 1935 and then moved over. The VEC took it over.

JM: The bakery school was really started by the bigger bakeries here because before that if they had a son or someone who was going to come after them, they were sent over to Scotland, to the bakery school in Scotland. I don't know if it was in Glasgow or Edinburgh. There was a bakery school there and that's how the Scottish were the leading people in the bakery business at the time. So they did courses over there maybe for a year or two. Then they came home here and they were supposed to know more about the bakery business than the rest of them did.

MM: You say you were in Westland Row, what age did you finish school at?

JM: I finished school at maybe sixteen or seventeen and I came in here to work in the business.

MM: And that would have been round the beginning of the war?

JM: round 1941/42. And as it happened it was just as well. I hadn't made up my mind if I was going to stop in this business. I had a tendency towards accountancy, arithmetic, I was pretty good at that and I had the offer of going into accountancy. But the next thing was my father's health broke down. I was only about eighteen at the time and the whole thing was thrown on me then. I had to more or less run the business. He wasn't able to do anything and then after, about two years later, my brother came along as he left school. He came into the business then.

Then as it happened my mother's brother who was the ship's cook had to retire. He worked in the Irish Lights. He was a cook on one of the tenders in the Irish Lights and they were bombed off the Wexford coast and six of his shipmates were killed. I think he had a broken leg or something like that but he had to retire out of the Irish Lights because the ships were going anyway. So he came in and took part in the business. When we were at our best, in the 50's, 60's and up to the early 70's, there was seven of us working here altogether and we were doing everything and anything.

MM: Do you want to talk us through the yeast? Where did you get the yeast?

JM: The story of the yeast! When I was going to school, just before the outbreak of the war, my father got a phone call from the Department of Supplies to know if he would go and have a chat with them as they wanted some information. When he went down they said that the bakery trade here were concerned that they wouldn't be able to get yeast supplies if the shipping was cut off during the war because at that time the yeast was coming in from England and Holland. There were two yeasts. There was DCL yeast from England and NDNS yeast from Holland and they were coming in by ship. There was only fresh yeast available at the time. They were saying if this war breaks out which it will, we won't be able to get any yeast, the shipping will probably be all stopped, which it was. They said to my father "have you got any suggestions". Well he said the Cork Distillers Company tried to get into the yeast business some years beforehand and they weren't successful because they couldn't compete against the imported stuff. But he said if you get back to them and try and encourage them and give them some help they'll probably be able to get the thing restarted. So the Cork Yeast Company came on the market and they were operating here very successfully up to the 1960's because they had the business to themselves. During the war there was no such thing as imported yeast and that's when they got control. They would have to agree to allow any imports of yeast afterwards so they had complete control. But when the tariffs came off, when we joined the EU, all that collapsed and they collapsed as well.

MM: What was the standard of yeast from Cork?

JM: It was pretty good. The Dutch yeast was always regarded as the number one yeast. I wouldn't say the Irish yeast was quite as good as the imported but it was very close to it. I think they used to get some help from DCL in regards to the bases, the cultures and that type of thing because they were very much advanced in DCL in that type of thing.

MM: Stepping back for a second, the barm that was used, that was a by-product of the brewing industry.

JM: I'm not sure; it goes back before my time. The yeast was a by-product of the distilleries.

MM: So yeast was the main thing that was sold here first. When you grew up as a boy did they sell yeast and other sort of things as well?

JM : In the earlier years we were completely wholesale, We sold yeast, we sold cream pauler which was like Becks Tartare nowadays and we sold malt extract and maybe one or two other things used in the baking trade. That was it. But then round the late 1950's we decided to do a bit more retail and we got into the retail end of the business and we were selling everything you could think of in the retail. We were selling almonds, dried fruits, spices, essences, colourings. You name it we were doing it, and we were doing it retail here. We used to be very busy here in the shop.

MM: Before you started retailing all those goods where were they sold in Ireland? Findlaters?

JM: Actually, there was three of us mostly in that end of the business. There was ourselves, Findlaters and Leveret and Fry. Williams was a bit in it as well. So it was very much confined to three or four of us.

MM: And they would have sold into industry as well, the likes of Findlaters, Leveret and Fry, they retailed to the public, but were they wholesale?

JM: They weren't in the wholesale end.

MM: Were there wholesalers of nuts and dried fruit, that sort of stuff?

JM: Yes, we would be buying the dried fruit from importers. There were a lot of importers at that time. Some of the importers were very big. There was Hugh Burns Alexander's, they were off Bolton Street. There was McMaster Hodgson and Searly Spence and Bedford. They were the three biggest wholesalers and they supplied the whole country at that time because the rest of the towns round the country weren't developed business wise. So their travellers, like my father, went around the country collecting orders and all that. I remember going into Hugh Burns Alexander's for something and it was like a counting house. The ground floor was just full of clerks, a mass of clerks, like a huge bank and then upstairs on the next floor it was all the storage.

MK: Can you tell us a bit about the bakeries you supplied to, John, and what bakeries existed back then?

JM: There was Kennedy's bakery. They had two sections. They had Peter Kennedy and that was the bread section and then there was DBC that was the confectionery section. So they had two separate companies.

MM: DBC was linked in with Kennedys?

JM: DBC was a subsidiary of Kennedys.

MM: And DBC stood for the Dublin Baking Company?

JM: Exactly. They had shops here and there as Peter Kennedy had. The idea in Kennedys was to spread their wings as much as they could all over the city. They had shops here there and everywhere. Then, of course, there was Boland's which would have been the biggest of the whole lot of them. Then you had Johnson Mooney's which is still in existence.

You had Downes in Earl Street at the back of Cleary's and you had Rourke's in Store Street and Rourke's in Parnell Street. They were the biggest ones.

MM: Where was Kennedy's?

JM: Kennedy's was on Parnell Street. The place is still there, at the junction of Gardiner Street. It's a huge lot; it goes right down to the next street. That was all Kennedy's and they had the bakeries there, the yards for all their horses and carts and they had a couple of shops. Any surplus bread baked there which didn't go out in the vans was broken down into broken bread (if you like) and sold in the shops to the poorer people round the area.

JM: Then you had a lot of the smaller bakeries. There was Dempsey's in Gloucester Place. Then they moved to Kimmage Road West and were taken over by Brennans. That was where Brennans started. Then you had Corr's Bakery in Camden Street and you had Broderick's Bakery in Gardiners Lane.

MK: Tell us a little bit about the Jewish Bakeries.

JM: Yes, they were all in Clanbrassil Street and we supplied all of them. There was about six of them and they would make bread for all the Jewish community around the area. We used to deliver on a Wednesday, I think, and they'd all get a few kilos of yeast. That faded out eventually too.

What happened to the bakery trade was making the bread was cheap enough but the problem was distribution. The cost of distribution was getting high as wages and costs increased. They were finding it harder and harder because the ordinary bread van went out and delivered a board of bread to this shop and a board of bread to that shop and it was very costly. Eventually some of the bigger bakeries started fading out and some of the medium sized bakeries decided to sell to salesmen. So you got a van and I got a van and we went up to some bakery and made an arrangement to get so much bread every day and then we went off in our van and it was our job to get rid of it. That went on then for years.

MM: Which bakeries in particular were doing that kind of stuff?

JM: I am not too sure but Dempsey's Bakery, Broderick's Bakery and Corr's may have done a bit of it.

MM: Originally it would have been horse and cart or horse and van. Then those electric/battery type yokes came in.

JM: That's right, a friend of mine used to drive one of the battery type for Kennedys, for DBC.

MM: Do you remember when they came in?

JM: I suppose somewhere round 1960, round that time. I remember him picking me up "John", sez he "come on and I'll give you a lift home." It was very slow! There was a fellow who lived round the corner and he worked in Downes on the horse and car. He delivered all the bread round Marino and Fairview, delivered to the houses. I don't remember whether you can remember or not. Did you ever hear of Caesar Romero, the film star? Well this fellow was a dead ringer for him! He was known all round Marino as Caesar Romero. He was a very good looking, tall fellow.

MM: And could you tell us a bit about the product range that was available in the shops. What type of breads were available when you were young?

JM: Well there was a lot of turnovers and pans. It was nearly all loose bread up to the time of the start of the wrapping and slicing of bread

MM: You had turnovers and loaves; you had a double loaf, a single loaf, what were the other ones?

MK: Cottage loaf?

JM: Yes but all the big bakeries stuck more or less to the basic stuff. The bread business was very, very big during and after the War because you couldn't get a variety of foods and people were living on basic foods like bread and potatoes and things like that. There was no such thing as imports coming into the country. So the bread business was booming. The biggest sales of bread ever were during that period.

MM: Was there a problem getting strong flour in during those years?

JM: No, we were producing most of our own flour at that time and the farmers were encouraged an awful lot by the government to keep producing as much wheat as they could. They kept things going very well. Actually they used to leave a lot of the bran in the flour at that time and a lot of the doctors claimed it was healthier bread than you got with the ordinary white flour.

MM: Yes, so during the War years the bread was healthier because they'd more nutrients in it because of the bran.

JM: That's what it's attributed to.

MM: So was the confectionery range more limited during the War years?

JM: No, there were more confectionery shops than ever round the city. There were confectionery shops here there and everywhere.

MM : There was a place, (during my research), I came across owned by Bob Geldof's grandfather, Zenon Geldof. They had the Café Belge on Dame Street and they had the Patisserie Belge on Leinster Street. They felt they had to shut the Patisseries down during the war because they were finding it hard to get sugar.

JM: I never heard of that. Leinster Street? Leinster Street had Peter Kennedy's bakery shop. I do remember Peter Kennedy had a shop on Leinster Street.

MM: They were there up until the mid-30's or the end of the 30's. Number one Leinster Street. Do you remember Finn's Hotel, the first building after Trinity College when you're walking along Nassau Street; the shop was in that first building.

JM: I don't remember. I do know Peter Kennedy had a shop on Leinster Street and DBC were in Dorset Street. They had the bakery in Dorset Street and then they had shops in various places. One of their main shops was over in Stephen's Street near where the old Merciers Hospital was. Bill Coghlan was the manager there. Then Bewleys were fairly big in wedding cakes, they were probably the biggest in wedding cakes. They produced a three tier wedding cake, a six eight and ten and the price was seven pounds and ten shillings. There was a fella named Dessie Moles and he did all the finishing, the icing of the cake.

They were turning out seven hundred a month, wedding cakes, and they were despatched all over the country. People from all over the country would order them and they'd be sent down to the North Wall where the CIE had the goods depot and they'd be despatched from there. If you went in and you ordered a wedding cake you were shown what you'd be given. It would be three tier, plainly done no decorations. So if you said I want a top ornament, I want some decorations round it and they'd say 'Ok, go over to the Yeast shop in College Street, buy whatever you want, bring them back and we'll put them on the cake for you'. So we had that connection with them.

MM: And which one of the Bewleys, was it Grafton Street or Westmoreland Street or George's Street, which had that section in it?

JM: Well I'm talking about mostly the orders they got in Westmoreland Street but actually they had their bakery in Long Lane, near the Meath Hospital. They had the bakery up there and then; of course, they had the two shops Westmoreland and Grafton Street. Victor Bewley was regarded as one of the best employers in Dublin. There was a fellow in here, now he might have been about your age, about six months ago and he must have been a young fellow and worked in Bewleys. He said "Victor Bewley was a gentleman. He wasn't fit to be running the business, he was too good. He'd come along to you and he'd say, 'did you get your tea break? Go and take it now'. He looked after the staff. I do remember one instance I know of from friends of mine that this fellow was working in the bakery and he had a young family and he died suddenly and Victor Bewley saw to it that those kids were educated after that. So that's the type of man.. and he paid over and above the going rate.

MK: He was a Quaker, wasn't that right? And the Quakers were very involved in the food industry.

JM: There were the Jacobs, the Bewleys and then there was another crowd, O. & R. Fry in Hawkins Street, they were wholesale grocers. There was Denis Fry, I can't remember the other name, They were two brothers. They were all Quakers and they were very good people who looked after their staff and all that.

MM: Yes, they had a very good philosophy.

JM : They were a very charitable group.

M: Especially during the famine as well.

MM: Did you have any dealing with the milk bars? Did the DBC have milk bars or were the milk bars separately run. Was there this idea of that you could go to a milk bar and get a glass of milk and a bun round Dublin?

JM: No, I don't think there was anything like that.

MM: Maybe they were known as dairies? Where you could go after a dance.

JM: No, most of the bakeries were just plain bakeries, straightforward. Bill Coghlan, he worked for DBC, for the Kennedys for years and then he had a row with them and he fell out. He went to Kylemore. He built up Kylemore, a wedding cake business and cake business to a great extent. It was at its peak and when he retired it sort of faded out. They had a shop, I don't know if you'd remember, in Henry Street, Kylemore.

At the back of the shop they had a room devoted to displays of wedding cakes and all that so he was ahead of his time, if you like. You could walk in there and see the varieties of wedding cakes you could have.

MM: And back in those days with the wedding cake, was it predominately fruit based cakes?

JM: Absolutely, round or square. Round was the thing up to the time that Queen Elizabeth got married (1953) and she had a square cake and that introduced the square cakes. There was white cake, fruit cake and the thing was to have it as well decorated as possible. Most of the confectioners shops had a top decorator; as I say Dessie Moles was in Bewleys, there was the Scotch fella I was talking about, Mills in Merrion Row. Kylemore had one or two decorators too and they did nothing else except decorate wedding cakes .

M: So what do you think of sugar paste now as a replacement for Royal Icing?

JM: It doesn't compare at all with the old style of cakes. I mean a top decorator could do terrific work. Talking about that, my mother's first cousin was the chief decorator in Jacobs and you should have seen the work that she could do. She didn't use icing pipes or icing bags, just a piece of grease proof paper and then you would see what she could do, making birds all round it. I remember she used to do birthday cakes for us. I had a birthday cake here one day and I had one of the top fellas out of Mitchells of Grafton Street in the shop at the time and I said 'wait till I show you this cake '. 'My God', he said, 'I couldn't do that work'. Fantastic work.

MM: Mitchells was there up until the 70's wasn't it? Mitchells had been there for one hundred and fifty years, it had been this great big restaurant, café and confectioner.

JM: Forsyth and Mitchells was the two people. They were well known round the Grafton street area, property owners and all that type of thing, They were real top class confectioners. They did wedding cakes and all that and I do know the top fellow when it closed down it broke his heart. I won't tell you what happened to him.

MM: They moved on then and focused on the wine business .

JM: They were in a lot of things. The Forsyths also had a shop, FM and Company of Duke Street.

MM: And what did they sell?

JM: They were a tea rooms and a cake shop. The Mitchells were in the wine business as well so they spread their wings an awful lot you know.

MM: That's where McDonalds is now on Grafton Street, where Mitchells' used to be. For one hundred and fifty years it was there.

JM: Yes, that's right.

MK: What do you owe your success to, you're a long time in business, so what would you say has contributed to your success?

JM: Success? I don't know about success! We adapted to the times, We could see the writing on the wall in the bakery business. As I said before the big bakeries started getting problems, supermarkets came on the market and they started doing bits and pieces of bread. It wasn't a very attractive thing to the big bakeries because the supermarkets wanted delivery of bread at a very low price and that didn't suit the big bakeries. They preferred to be going round putting it in the small shops and all that type of thing so that's what faded out the bigger bakeries. Then a new crowd of bakers came along on the market as they are today and they're nearly all geared just to supply supermarkets and nobody else. So we could see that on the way when we saw the supermarket moving into the business, at the same time we were probably one of the smaller ones in the yeast business because there was the United Yeast Company which was a subsidiary of the Distillers Company of Edinburgh. They had a branch in Dublin a branch in Cork, a branch in Limerick, a branch in Waterford, they were very big. Then there was Hauntons on City Quay and they were very lucky in that they had the sole agency for the Dutch yeast which was considered the best yeast on the market. They were the two principal ones, but then they eventually went out because what happened here was, as I said, the Cork Yeast Company faded out and then there was English yeast coming in for years and Dutch yeast, so they were sitting pretty. But then the next thing that I read in the paper, a new yeast company was being set up in Finglas and it was being sponsored by The Irish Sugar Company and an Australian group, So I said to myself, 'they know what there're doing', they seem to have very good backing behind them. So I remember ringing one of the assistant managers in Hauntons on City Quay and I said to him, 'What do you think of this new yeast company starting in Finglas?' He said, 'It won't worry us, we have very good yeast'. They were gone inside of a year or two. So the crowd in Finglas, you probably knew them, they were doing great up to about six months ago, and now they are gone. I was told that the fresh yeast business was going down all the time and all this new yeast was coming on the market. The big bakeries now get yeast in liquid form delivered in tankers and a lot of the smaller bakeries are using this instant dried yeast and there's a certain amount of fresh yeast coming in from different parts of Europe. But it's all being imported now. It's all coming from, I believe, as far away as Poland. I don't know where St. Marys College (Cathal Brugha Street) are getting their yeast now. You were getting it free from the crowd in Finglas. They gave it to you to promote the yeast and we were supplying up to then. They took the business off us, if you like although it wasn't very big, it was only a few kilos a week. They used to come here Monday morning and collect the yeast

MK: So you did supply Kevin Street at one stage?

JM: No, we never supplied Kevin Street, I don't know where Kevin Street got it, but we did supply St. Marys (Cathal Brugha Street). We supplied St. Marys with bits and pieces of things as well as yeast. The only trouble with them was if you got May's account paid in September/October, you were lucky, they were months and months behind. You wouldn't want to be waiting on it but it was only a few quid so it didn't matter. So they were always a four or five months behind with their payments.

MM: When did the dried yeast become popular as such?

JM: I suppose it came in about twenty year ago or so, gradually, it came in at first in a crystal form and you had to dissolve it in sugar and water and reconstitute it that way but of course now with the instant dried yeast, that's in powder form, that hasn't to be done, you just throw it in to the mix and bake it straight off.

MK: I used dried yeast last week and it was quite good actually, I was really surprised at it.

JM: I'm selling dried yeast now, I gave up the fresh yeast because it was gradually going out and out. You might get a box of yeast which will be twelve kilo blocks in here and maybe you might only sell half of it in the week. You could throw the rest of them out so it wasn't a proposition. It was gradually fading out so I went onto the dried yeast. I get it from the wholesalers now and I never get a word of complaint about it. People use it and they find it very, very good. Some of them think it's much better than fresh yeast.

MM: You were saying a lot of the restaurants, particularly the better restaurants, had business with you over the years. Do you want to talk to us a bit about that?

JM: I'll show you (Mr Moreland opens case, takes out list)

You were mentioning Jammets, you probably have a collection... (reading from list) Carlow County Council, Aras an Uachtaran (residence of the President of Ireland).

JM: If they existed, we supplied them, even Aras an Uachtaran in Sean T. O'Kelly's time.

MM: (Reading from List) Irish Press, Eason's, ESB, Arthur Guinness, Great Southern Hotels....

JM: Every one of them had an account of some description at some stage. We supplied hotels, we supplied Colleges. All your leading colleges had their own bakeries at the time, Blackrock College, Rockwell College. All those colleges had their own small bakery and we supplied most of them (and most convents as well).

MM: I'm looking here at Lalor's of Naas, the woman there, Mrs Lalor, they were huge into the outdoor catering. They used to do the races, they used to do stuff up in Aras an Uachtaran too. Did you know Mrs Lalor?

JM: I didn't, no. I can't remember a lot of them. I'm not saying she was a regular customer but she must have got some stuff at some stage from us. I compiled that list from our books some years ago. I was interested to see how many places we supplied. It's amazing some of the ones I came across.

MM: There's a few here that are long gone. I'm looking at The Russell, but The Moira Hotel as well, Trinity Street, that was a very good hotel.

JM: I remember it well, it belonged to Jurys.

MM: Then you have May Roberts here

JM: May Roberts were up the top of Grafton Street, a restaurant at the top of Grafton Street.

MM: Originally they were Robert Roberts. I think they were Quakers as well. I'm wondering did May Roberts have any relationship with them?

JM: I'm not sure.

MK: Liptons as well. Weren't they in Grafton Street?

JM: Liptons were in Grafton Street.

MM: (reading from list) I have Robert Roberts here in Grafton street, you had Robert Roberts and May Roberts. You have Sion Hill, the home economics school was out there. It's very interesting .... (reading from list) H. Williams that was Galen Weston.

JM: He was the first one to start the supermarket business. He was ahead of his time because people couldn't get used to it. Williams's had a shop in Henry Street and a shop in Baggot Street.

MM: There's a list here of all the ingredients sold, (reading from list) malt extracts, spices, cream powder, icing sugar, marzipan, almonds, raisons, currents, pastry, margarine, essences, colours, cherries, cut peel, whole peel, skim milk powder, wheat germ, bran, cake foil, Christmas decorations, chocolate vermicelli, hundreds and thousands, wedding ornaments, wedding decorations, icing sets, piping bags, icing syringes, icing tubes and meringue tubes.

(Mr Moreland is called away to deal with a client). The next few minutes of the tape is concerned with Mar. Moreland advising a customer.

(the interview resumes)

JM: We were talking about Williams, he started it off first. In the shop, he put the baskets out the front and the women would go in and the staff would say, 'take a basket and they'd say 'I don't want a basket. I know because my own mother was the same. They weren't used to it so he was really ahead of his time.

MM: Was that Galen Weston or did Galen Weston take over Williams?

JM: Williams more or less faded out.

MM: Who set up Williams, was it H, Williams himself?

JM: I forget his name. Williams wasn't his name but he was a real go getter. I was reading there that he used to get his chauffeur to drive him out to the park and he'd get out and have a walk around the park and he'd be thinking up new ideas. As I say he was too much ahead of his time at the time.

MK: Were they the Williams's of Tullamore as well?

JM: I don't think there's any connection; I remember one of them being in with me some years back, I don't think there's any connection there, a different crowd.

MK: Tell us a little bit about the hot bread shops and how they developed in Dublin. Anne's Hot Bread Shop and various other ones, did you supply some of those?

JM: Not really, I do get the fella from Anne's Hot Bread shop coming in here now and again, the chef who does most of the confectionary, he comes in to me very often for his own stuff, it mightn't be for the shop at all. There is another fellow in the wholesale end of the business, Burkes of Rathcoole and he supplies most of those shops. I get the odd one coming in from different places but the wholesale end of the business is mostly done by Burke of Rathcoole. He's one of the survivors. He's not as long in the business as we are but he is probably the longest of the older crowd.

MM: Do you remember the hot bread shops opening up? You see one of the things I meant to mention was the Chorley Wood bread making process that came in which seemed to sort of change the whole baking industry. It was done really quickly mechanically wasn't it?

JM: I've lost track of the business but it's modernized an awful lot. I mean I remember the time when travelling ovens came in first. Before they were all brick ovens and they used to have to put the bread in with the peel heads. Then the travelling ovens came in, the ones you pulled out. I'll tell you one story about one of them, I'm not going to mention what bakery it was. This bakery had got in two or three of these travelling ovens and they were ahead of their time so they were blowing their top to everybody, 'we have travelling ovens and all that business'. One of the owners invited some of his wealthy friends to come up and see their bakery. At the time the fellas was using one of the travelling ovens and there was one of them spare, it wasn't in use, So he brought his friends up and was showing them round the place. It was a very new modern bakery at the time and he said 'I'll show you this travelling oven', so he goes over and he pulls it out and what's in it? Nothing but beer bottles all over the place! There was murder!

MM: You mentioned Louis Jammet earlier. Did you ever eat in there yourself?

JM: I didn't, it was too expensive! I'd be going into a fish and chipper.

MM: I'd a question for you because Louis Jammet had a place down here on Pearse street, around the time that you left school and started working here, called The Goodwill Restaurant. It was set up during the war years and the idea was to provide good food at a very reasonable price and Mills were involved in it.

JM: Was that near the fire station?

MM: It was.

JM: I think I remember it. Can't say I had anything to do with it. Because next to the fire station was Cervi's, fish and chip shop. They were the original fish and chip shops in Dublin. I spent most of my time as a young fella down at the fire brigade station because my school pal's father was a divisional officer and they lived in the station at that time. I used to be down at the fire station more often than anywhere else. I knew all the officers and the men in the fire station at that time. Most of the married men had married quarters in the fire station.

MM: And tell us about around here as well since as you grew up in this block. Austinelli's was round the corner.

JM: Austinelli's was round where the side of the theatre is (Theatre Royal) a four course lunch was twelve and six pence and it was one of the best restaurants in Dublin. He was an Italian and my brother came across him later, he was working for some of the bakeries afterwards. I don't know why it went out, I think it might have been bought out by the cinema. I remember my mother used to bring her friends round there. She had one or two friends lived in England and when they'd come back on holidays they'd go round there and have a meal and all that.

MM: When would you have come across spaghetti for the first time, would it have been in that sort of a place?

JM: Well I wasn't one that frequented restaurants at that time, I might go into a fish and chipper but that's about it.

MM: And Cervi's was the place for the one and one.

JM: We supplied to Cervis, we knew the Cervi very well. They faded out, the last of the Cervi's had a shop round Phoenix Park somewhere and that's the last I heard of them, I don't know what happened them after that.

MM: A friend of mine's sister is married to one of the Cervi's. He's a doctor over in England.

JM: One fella was very much interested in ships. He had a ship somewhere round Dun Laoghaire, a small little boat, something like that.

MK: It must be very exciting living here beside Trinity College, I mean last year you had Obama and you had the Queen's visit.

JM: We had a lot of famous people around. We had the Theatre Royal. Do you remember the Theatre Royal?

MM: I was going to ask you about the Theatre Royal there on Hawkins Street then beside it the Regal Rooms.

JM: The Regal Cinema.

MM: With the Regal Rooms restaurant.

JM: All the leading actors used to take part in the Royal and the orchestra conductor was a fella called Jimmy Campbell. Jimmy Campbell was very, very suave character, You could say he was a film star type. He was a very, very good looking fella and his wife was a beautiful girl, blonde girl. I remember they used to pass by here every morning about eleven o'clock going down to rehearsal. They used to have rehearsals in the morning for about an hour and then the place would open at about half two or something like that. You would see them passing by every morning. One occasion there, Jack Doyle and Movita were on in the Royal and I remember the four of them. Jimmy Campbell lived, he had an apartment over Beckers, in Georges Street. I don't know where Jack Doyle was living at the time but the two of them obviously met on the way down and then the four of them were coming down the street. If you ever saw four film stars, they were it. A lot of the English visitors at the time, during the summer, stood back and they were looking at the four film stars coming down the street. Everybody was amazed. They were all very good looking people.

MM: Was that Jack Doyle the boxer?

JM: The boxer, yes. I remember him well and I remember the taxi man that used to drive him around. He used to do the odd job for us here and he was fond of the drink himself, the taxi man. But he knew when he had a few on him to take it easy, he never done anything foolish and Doyle depended on him to bring him everywhere because Doyle would be plastered sometimes.

I remember a fireman telling me a story. It was on a Thursday night and they were paid on Friday night so this fella, he wasn't married, he was single at the time and he only had a few bob in his pocket left. He was up on Grafton Street and went into, oh what's the famous pub on Duke street? The Bailey. He went into the Bailey for a drink and who's in the Bailey only Jack Doyle and he gets into conversation with Doyle and Doyle said to him. 'Have you got any money?' He sez, 'I have a few bob but not very much'. Doyle sez 'give me a half crown'. He thought I've nothing to lose here so he gave him a half crown. So Doyle said 'come with me'. So he went down to Dawson Street, to a florist in Dawson Street and he bought a rose and stuck it in his coat. Now he sez 'come on down to the Shelbourne Hotel. They go into the bar of the Shelbourne and the next thing he said there was beautiful blondes all round him in no time. He said he got more drink that night for nothing.

MM: That was the best investment ever, the rose!

JM: The best half- crown ever spent!

MM: And tell us, round the corner as well, you had The Red Bank Restaurant and there was the bar there as well.

JM: We had the Red Bank Restaurant on D'Olier Street and that was famous for fish. For some reason it went out and it was up for sale and the priest, remember there was an order of priests who were after a place in Dublin and so was the fellow who owned the corner D'Olier House. Whoever had the sale of The Red Bank told the fellow who owned D'Olier House that there was an order of priests looking for the building and he said to himself "this is a story, I won't mind that". Your man was trying to push up the price he thought and didn't he let it go and the priests got it. The Prior at the time, he was the first Prior and a very outgoing type of fellow, grand fellow a sort of friend of mine if you like and he told me that he met your man afterwards and he said 'If I had a known that it was you that was after it, you wouldn't have got it, but I thought he was telling me a funny story'. So they got that house. Then as I say they were there for years and years until they got the offer of the place in Bachelor's Walk.

MM: The Holy Missionary Chapel.

JM: They gave the place up to whoever was developing Bachelor's Walk. They said to them we'll build you a new church and apartments here and you give us the other place. Whether they sold it or not it's a hostel now.

MM: Did you ever go in there for a bite to eat? I know they did fish and chips in there in The Red Bank. You were more Chirvi's, you were never a restaurant man.

JM: I was never in it. I didn't even know any of the staff in it but I knew about it very well. The Prior fellow, he used to come in to me in the shop now and again, he's a bit of a joker. I remember one incident, he was standing at the counter there, I was behind the counter, we were talking, having a bit of crack and there was a nun on the other counter and we had a girl at that side of the counter and she was attending to the nun. The nun was buying stuff for a wedding cake because at that time very often if a girl went to a convent school and she kept in touch with them afterwards, if the nun was anyway useful at cooking she might make her a wedding cake as a present. It was a very common thing.

So she was buying the stuff for the wedding cake ,your man Gardiner (the Prior) was his name, he looked over at the nun and he sez, ' Jumping over the wall sister'. Well, she gave him a look, she could have belted him.

Round the corner here where the bank is now, that was a gent's outfitters, the name slips me at the moment. A high class gent's outfitters that was run by Maureen O'Hara's brother and father. It was a shop I never went into because it was too expensive.

MM: Do you remember The Paradiso?

JM: The Paradiso Restaurant, I remember that.

MM: Seemingly there was a famous Maître D there.

JM: They had advertised,' World leading violinist' and he used to arrive on his bike with bicycle clips and he'd leave the bike outside. Then down further there was Harrison's Restaurant and bakery. They had a fairly big bakery down in Church Road and there were two brothers.

MM: Which Church Road?

JM: East Wall. One of the brothers had the hotel out in Howth Head.

MM: There were three hotels out there.

JM: I think it was The Waverly, I'm not too sure. They were a fairly well-to-do family.

MM: They are still on the go, Harrisons.

MK: That's right, because the Rehab group had taken it over at one stage.

MM: That's right, there was a very good philosophy there with the Rehab working in it.

MK: They were making jam as well, Harrison of Dublin Jams.

MM: In relation to media, you did a few interviews with RTE, didn't you?

JM: I did a film with them about a year ago. What happened was, you know The Dubliner Magazine? There was some girl wrote an article in that and it was very derogatory. She must have been in the shop. She certainly didn't tell me what she what she was doing, or didn't approach me. She wrote an article saying the shop was old fashioned and the stuff we had in the shop was old fashioned. So of course I saw red. A friend of mine rang up The Independent and got onto whoever was in charge, the editor, and asked them if they'd seen this article. They said no, they said you'd better have a look at it. Then another friend of mine down the country, one of your ex pupils, she saw red when she heard about it and she rang Joe Duffy. Inside of an hour I had an apology immediately from Dubliner Magazine and they said they'd print an apology in the next issue admitting they were completely over the top. So then Joe Duffy's staff came on to me saying this person had been on about it and would I go on the programme and I said OK. So Joe Duffy came along and the first thing he asked me was how long was I here; I said seventy years, MY God! He said. That started the whole thing off. I got a lovely card from him afterwards thanking me for being on the show, anyway we had a bit of an interview.

This girl Afric (inaudible?) from RTE she must have been listening to the programme. They had been planning this programme for some time and this programme was about working from nine to ninety. It was all about encouraging people to stay working as long as they possibly could. She got on to me about a week or two afterwards and she said she'd heard me on the programme and she said we have to have you on this programme, so I was roped in for that programme. There was six of us altogether on the programme and I was probably the second eldest. There was a woman eighty-nine years of age running a petrol station down in Wexford. There was another person a dry cleaner in Ranelagh and she was on it as well. She came in to me afterwards and said 'I'm disgusted over that programme'. I said, 'Why?' "Because everyone knows how old I am!" It got a terrific response. I was walking down the street and people would say 'hello, I saw you on your programme' also the taxi fellas round the corner. I was coming out of Clarendon Street at one time, a fellow comes over, 'I saw you on the programme' he said. I still get people coming into the shop saying they saw the programme. It went down very well and then they've showed it there again about six months ago.

MM: It's funny you saying that. Remember that I mentioned the Geldofs, Bob Geldof's father and uncle both have passed away in the last number of years but they were both well into their nineties. Both had continued working, they never stopped working.

JM: It's the in thing now in a way. There's another man I know, Charlie Brett down in Talbot Street, he runs a children's club, he's eighty years of age and he's still running that place. I have a cousin and he's seventy five and he's running a butcher's shop in Camden Street and he's open from nine in the morning till six in the evening. There are several others I know, all in their seventies, all working away.

MK: Your cousin in Camden Street, what is his name?

JM: The trade name is Byrne but his name is Ronnie More. You know where Goravans was, directly opposite that, corner of Long Lane if you like. He is just next to the bank on the corner.

MM : Can we take a photocopy of your list and get it back to you. We are building an archive for the College. It is part of our oral history project.

Interview ends.