

# [Oral history: my father](https://assignbuster.com/oral-history-my-father/)

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My dad grew up on a farm in Ireland with two younger brothers and his mom and dad. He was born on August 19, 1965 in Lourdes Hospital. After his 21st birthday, he moved to America with his cousin.

I wanted to interview my dad because his childhood is very different than mine and I wanted to learn more about his past. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ What is your full name and where did you grow up? Daniel Matthew and I grew up in Tullynaskeagh, Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, Ireland. This is a map of Ireland and the red arrow is pointing toward the county of Monaghan, which is where my dad grew up and it’s also where his relatives still live today. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ What hospital were you born in and what is the date of your birth? Lourdes Hospital, Drogheada, County Louth, Ireland, and I was born on August 19, 1965… A day no one will forget [laughing] \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ How long did you live in Ireland for? 21 years and 2 months. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ How was your relationship with your parents when you were a child? When I was a child it was grand.

[pauses] When I got to be a wee bit older and a teenager we were arguin’ and fightin’. I rebelled a bit [pauses] against the system, and it didn’t go over too well. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ How was your relationship with your brothers? It was good. No problems. Meself and Sean got on real well, meself and Paul fought like cats and dogs because he was the baby, he was spoiled. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you like being the oldest in your family? I did… yeah.

It was alright, but then I get blamed for everythin’. If Sean got into trouble it was all my fault, I was supposed to be watchin’ out for him and puttin’ them down the right road, and every now and again he’d get caught no matter what he’d done, he’d always get caught. Then I’d always get blamed as well. Even though I had nothing to do with it, so yeah at times it was a pain in the ass. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you have any pets growing up? I did.

Dogs, I had four dogs. Miller, Skippy, Bruno, and Toby and they were all collie sheep dogs, border collies. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you have a good relationship with them? Yes I did. Bruno [pauses] Bruno was me buddy. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ What kind of student were you? I was actually a very good student. I went to primary school, which is what you call grade school here, in a two room school house in Maraghcloon, which is in the heart of the country, in Monaghan.

One classroom went from infants to second class and the other room had third class to sixth class. And we had eleven students in my class (grade). Our neighbor was the school teacher and he would pick us up every morning and take us to school, and then drive us home in the evenin’. Then when I turned twelve, I went into secondary school, which is both your middle and high school. There were three schools in the town.

Patrician Brothers, which was an all boys school, The Tech, which was boys and girls, and The Convent, which was an all girls school. I went to the Patrician Brothers Secondary School and we had probably twenty five students in the class, so they were small classes, not like the classes out here. My primary school only had a blackboard and then my secondary school was pretty modern because it had two computers… And I was a pretty damn good student. History was me favorite subject and Irish… I hated it. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Do you remember any Irish? I remember some. The basics.

Like, sit down, shut up, and stuff like that. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you get into trouble while growing up? All sorts of trouble. We took me Uncle’s work vans the one time he left them at the house [pauses] he was gone on holidays, and we took them and we decided to go racing through the fields in them. I was fifteen at the time and we started doing a lil bit of speedin’, shooting by stacks of hay, and me brother Sean was drivin’, who was thirteen, and our buddy Jim McBride, and I decided to get out on the hood of the car and do a bit of free hand surfin’. And he ran it into a stack of bales and I went flyin’, and then he knocked a bumper off of the front of the car too, burnt the clutch out of it, and then we pushed it back to the house and took the second one and burnt the clutch out of the second one [Starts laughing] as well.

So needless to say, when me father got home he was none too happy, and then when me Uncle Martin got home… he was not happy either. So his two work trucks… we kinda burnt the clutches outta both of them and knocked the bumper off the first one. So that was the fun part about growing up on a farm. You had lots of fields, which was an open speed track for us. And then the one time our neighbor, James Mundey, who lived right beside us, he was on holidays and his two sons [Starts laughing] Peter and James invited us over to go rallying around the fields in hisFordCortina Car, and we ended up rolling that onto its side. And we had to get a tractor to pull it back over onto its proper side, but the whole side was smashed in, so we were kinda little demons for that kind of stuff. We would also chase after cows and try to jump on their backs, and run them down the field and all that good stuff. And we had a crazy donkey [pauses] and he used to be a challenge because no one could ride him, so we would try to get up on him and try to ride him… No one ever broke bones or got seriously hurt, but we all got tossed off of him. Every one of us.

We also would [starts laughing again] start fires and stuff like that. We would be up at the top of the field in a ditch, and decided to roast a few chestnuts, so we started a little fire and got in loads of trouble for that. So pretty much a normal childhood. [says with a smile] \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Why did you immigrate to America? Ehhh. Change of scenery and me cousin was coming out, selling shoes for his father’s factory, so he asked me to come with him and I said, “ Why not.” [Long pause] Then he turned around and six months later got hooked on cocaine, stole all my money, stole all my clothes.

Came home from work the one day, everythin’ was gone… suitcases, the whole lot. All I had on me was the clothes I wore to work and the few dollars I had in me pocket. And I had to go to Buck’s Army and Navy down on Bainbridge Avenue to buy socks and underwear, because he even took me socks and underwear. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Have you talked to him since or forgiven him? Yes, I do now. It took a few years, but yeah. The past is the past.

We’re all good, we’re all good now. And he’s back living in Ireland now, married with one kid. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ What did you know about America while you were still living in Ireland? Like, basic American history and all that kind of stuff, but I didn’t know a whole lot about where I was gonna be goin’ in New York and stuff like that. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ What was the reason why you chose to move to New York? Because originally I was supposed to come out and get a job bar tendin’ in one of Clancy’s Bars in New York and that’s why we were comin’ because he owned a couple bars in Manhattan. And I met with him and was supposed to get the job, but over the weekend they changed the immigration law, so when I landed in New York on a Saturday, I was supposed to start work on the Monday, and then on the Monday I couldn’t start the job because I wasn’t a legal citizen. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you have enough money to take care of yourself while you were unemployed? No I didn’t, because when I talked to Old Alan Clancy, he said,” Your just gonna need enough money to keep you going for the weekend because you’re going to be starting your job Moday mornin’.

So like a dummy I only brought four hundred bucks with me. So when I started me first job in construction, I lived on Rice Krispies for two weeks. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you have an apartment or place to stay during that time with no job? Yeah. We stayed with Clancy’s son down in Manhattan for four weeks and then moved up to the Bronx and rented a room in a Rooming house, which was eighty bucks a week for a room in the basement, the size [dog barking] the size of a small box. There were two beds in it and that was it. That’s how big it was.

There was just room for the two beds and that was it. Me and me cousin Derrick stayed in it. And then six weeks after that we got an apartment. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ What part of New York did you stay in when you first came to the U. S? I started off in Manhattan first for three weeks and then moved up into the Bronx and stayed in, uh, right off Bainbridge Avenue.

The first placed I lived in was a rooming house. It was eighty bucks a week for a room and I stayed in it for six weeks, then got an apartment. What was the biggest difference from living in Ireland and moving to America? The quiet. I grew up on a farm and it was nice and quiet. Then you move to New York and the first place I stayed was over a bar on 55th and 3rd, and the sirens, cars, taxis, and people… it was a job to sleep the first couple of nights. That was the big thing, just the amount of people that were around too.

Everyone on top of ya. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Is it hard to have your brothers and mom across the Atlantic Ocean? Yes it is, because I usually get to see them once a year and I’d rather see them more often. When I first came out, I was out five years before I even went back because I didn’t have me green card, so I was illegal, so I couldn’t go back, so I was here five years before I could go back. But they came out for a weddin’ the second year I was here, so I seen them [pauses] and then it was three years before I seen them again. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Why did you decide to wait five years to get your green card? Because they done an Amnesty Lottery, and I put in for it and was lucky enough to get it.

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And then also I worked for this one guy and because we were illegal, he done a fast one and didn’t pay us. [pauses] Owed us a month’s wages and disappeared. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ How many years did you stay in New York? Five years and then I moved to Chicago. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Was there a memory that wasn’t a fond part of your childhood? I crashed a car the one night and Sean went through the windshield, he ended up with a bunch of stitches and the whole lot, so that wasn’t a happy one. And [long pause] me grandmother and a few other people I knew… when they died. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ What was best memory from living in Ireland? Hmmmm.

That’s a tough one. [pauses] I think just growing up in Ireland. The whole thing about growing up on a farm and being outside the town and being able to, you had great freedom. You could get up in the morning and take off and come back late at night, no one worried about you. And then you also learned how to drive tractors, race tractors, and do stuff like that that you weren’t suppose to be doin’.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Dan met Gerri Murtagh in New York and moved back to Chicago with her in December 1991. Then on September 4, 1993, they got married. They now live in Park Ridge, Illinois with three kids and a dog. As a family, they try to take a trip to Ireland every other year. Dan works as an engineer in Downtown Chicago. He is still legal in America with his green card, but is planning on becoming a U. S citizen very soon.