

My name is Sean Francis Martin O'Donoghue. I was born at dawn, 4 a.m. on the 29th of March, 1958. Now twenty years later I found myself picking bananas in Israel on the Kibbutz Masada, near Tiberius. On the Kibbutz we would rise at 6 am and work for six hours straight and then we would have the rest of the day off. My team was made of seven, was made up of seven special forces troopers from the Salou Scouts of Rhodesia who were all, they were all divers on their way to the North Sea and they told me how to get on a Fas course to train as a professional commercial diver and also to do my Norwegian based Bergen qualification as a mixed saturation diver in Fort William.

I spent eight years as a professional diver and I witnessed the burning of the oil, the oil platform Piper Alpha and I spent six months on a, on a dive support vessel deck called the Seaway Condor recovering 167 bodies of deceased men who had been lost overboard.

This is a rig with 400 men on it, 400 lives with families depending on an income. But there's 167 jobs offshore, you know different, you've got divers, welders, cooks, you know, catering staff, every, the same as a city, you know. We watched, the only way we could identify people was sometimes by their Marine Corp ring or their, eh, navy, royal navy ring. They called the Bootlegs or the Jarheads. Jarheads are U.S. Marines or ex-Seals. Some of the guys had Seal Team rings which they would never take off and it was, you know, there was so much going on. Imagine only being able to identify a body by its' ring if it had a ring until they got the body onshore when they could do dental treatment and find the, who he was 'cause obviously occidental (orthodontics) were very efficient and they had names of everybody who was on board, but unfortunately they weren't efficient enough. This caused me much trauma and until I joined the Victory Christian Fellowship I suffered with dreadful nightmares for nineteen years.

Before I met the Christian Church I tried three times to be a born again Christian and I kept back-sliding into the Catholic Church. Now, every, every Church has a lot of things wrong with it, but Victory has the least things wrong with it that I can find. Victory is an honest Church where they preach you honesty, they treat, each, each other as equals. It's 75 per cent foreign nationals. We all love each other as brothers and sisters. There's loads of music, it's full of spirit, the Holy Spirit. You have to train for a year and do a Bible study and literature course before going into the choir. And they're so gentle and dress in beautiful African colours.

Ballymun Mens' Centre was set up by Len Cummins who was a real gentleman who worked for CAFTA. He could see the need for men in Ballymun and all over the country, the need for men's' groups, men to get together, because women are so bonding 'cause they've so much in, they've so much in common. For instance, if a woman has a baby and they're walking down the street and they meet each other they automatically both want to look at each other's baby and they have something to talk about. Whereas a man is left out he only gets to talk in the pub or the betting office and, the, I could see this as soon as I joined the Men's Centre and it was a totally new experience for me.

A lady from Fas in Finglas put me on this fantastic course planting, planting trees in Finglas with a group called Eco, em, now we ran short of staff and a lot of people weren't able to get on the right TE scheme for them so I came into Ballymun through Poppintree on my bike and I pulled up outside Ballymun Mens Centre and I asked for the Leader, his name was Christy Fleming at the time and Christy at the door, when I arrived I said "Can I see the Manager?" and Christy came out and he said "What is it?" and I said "We're looking for men to work planting trees in Ballymun" He said, "You, you plant trees", he said, "we make trees" and he showed me one of these and Willie Abbott came into the mens centre and showed Willie Meredith how to make one of those trees. Now Willie Abbott did a huge big, eh, tree with maybe a thousand leaves on it, it's in the centre. But, but the, the benefits of having a mens centre, is tremendous because now we have as many women in the Mens Centre as we do men. And the effect of bonding with these women, the men are there being the

lads and the women are in the next room doing their computers and they get a chance to talk about what they want to talk about and then we all mix for tea. It's fantastic. It's really, I can't say enough. There's five of us in the Mens Centre that look after each other because we've all been in Vincent's and we know the story and we've all had trauma and we've all had our different way of dealing with it.

After nine years on the waiting list I got a flat on the seventh floor of Joseph Plunkett Tower, I've now got a flat. Between myself and Christina Quinlan, the woman who works at the Council, I got a flat on the seventh floor.

My healing progress has been very efficient. Before Victory I was hospitalised 33 times in fifteen years. In Grampian, Aberdeen, Galway, Cork city and Bantry, Vergemont and 25 times in St. Vincents' Hospital in Fairview. Today I live a blessed life, last year I got the opportunity to dive again at 30 feet on scuba gear in the warm waters near the lost city of Atlantis in Tenerife. My confidence has grown from strength to strength.

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Commissioned by Breaking Ground, the Ballymun Regeneration Ltd per cent for art programme. The project focusing on people living in Ballymun, a small village on the outskirts of Dublin city. Five people with different lives and experiences tell their stories.

Their interesting and fascinating life stories cover a wide range of issues, including alcoholism, sexual and physical abuse, homelessness and self-harm, but perhaps most importantly, the interviews demonstrated each individuals capacity to love and to survive hardship. Each interview could be listened to in private on Audiophones which were available in the exhibition space.

A photograph of the person interviewed or an image suggested by what they said in their interview was specially made for the project by Cecily Brennan.

With special thanks to all of the interviewees for being so generous with their time and sharing of their experiences and to Pat Rosney at Irish Diving Contractors, Hugh Mc Elveen at exhibitastudios.ie Ray Yeates at Axis Ballymun, Louise Neiland, Geoffrey Perrin, Aisling Prior, Patricia Scanlon, Martin Murphy at Murphy's Prams and Nursery store, and Philip Whyte at EFJ Laser.