

**EI-1378**

**JOHN DOHERTY**

**BIRTHDATE: September 10, 1926**

**INTERVIEW DATE: May 24, 2005**

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**INTERVIEWER: Janet Levine Ph. D**

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**IRELAND, 1927 and 1931**

**AGE: 1 and 9½**

**SHIP:**

**PORT:**

**RESIDENCES: County Letrum, Ireland; Jackson Heights, New York City; Nassau County, Long Island; Northern Virginia,**

LEVINE: Today is May 24, 2005. I'm here in the Ellis Island Oral History Studio with John Joseph Doherty, who came here first as a 1 year old from Ireland in 1927. He was exactly 1 year of age. And then, the family returned to Ireland in 1931.

DOHERTY: My mother and I, not my father.

LEVINE: Just with his mother, he returned in 1931. And then when he was 9½ in 1936, came back to this country where you have stayed ever since, right?

DOHERTY: Right.

LEVINE: Okay. Well I'm delighted that you happened by the library. So let's start at the beginning, if you'd say your birth date and maybe if you could briefly just tell why you have more than one.

DOHERTY: Okay I was born September 20, 1926, I was baptized the next day September 21. However in Ireland in the rural areas, in those years, you had to be registered, your birth had to be registered in the nearest town. So it took my mother or my grandfather, one of them over a month to get into town to register me, so my official birthday is October 24, 1926.

LEVINE: Okay. And where in Ireland were you born that it took so long to get into town from?

DOHERTY: I was born in County Letrum, Ireland, which is among the three poorest counties. It's like the Mississippi of this country or the Appalachia. It's a poor section and it has the highest rate of immigration, from that county of any county in Ireland. And in those years all of Ireland was desperately poor, but that was the poorest country.

LEVINE: And did you live like in a village or a little city?

DOHERTY: No, not. Lived on a farm.

LEVINE: On a farm. So it wasn't really in a town.

DOHERTY: Oh no we were about three miles out of the town. I'm saying we would only go into town like once a month with my grandfather, or my mother. And that's why it took them that long to register my birth.

LEVINE: Yeah that town that was three miles away, what was the name of that?

DOHERTY: The town was Diunshanbo, D-I-U-N-S-H-A-N-B-O, which means in Gaelic "The Town on the Shannon," but it wasn't on the Shannon. "Duin" means town, and "Shanbo" was "Shan" was for the Shannon river and "Bo" was of.

LEVINE: Okay.

DOHERTY: Actually it was eight miles from the Shannon River.

LEVINE: Oh I see. (Both Laugh) Close enough right? Well when you think back like, let's see, so in other words you were in that town, from 1931- for five years.

DOHERTY: Right, I left in the fourth grade.

LEVINE: Okay. What about those five years, thinking back on them now? What are the things you remember about being there?

DOHERTY: They were my happiest growing up years.

LEVINE: Really? In what way?

DOHERTY: Well we were, I lived on a farm, about 20 acre farm, that we had no machinery; everyone worked. My mother and I were out in the field, we would, my uncle would plow with a horse would turn up the sod, and then my mother would have a bag around her with pockets and would have the eyes of potatoes. And she would be,

with a stick, putting holes in the upturned turf, and I would take the eyes and put it in the, in the fifth and then it would be turned over. Also my mother would church milk at nighttime and we would take turns doing that. I lived with my one grandfather, two uncles, my mother and myself. And what we did have was plenty of food, but no money. Because we grew enough, never had any meat, rarely had meat because you wouldn't kill a chicken unless it got too old, a hen too old to lay eggs. But then plucking the chicken, you had to soak the chicken for hours and hours and hours. And then you had to pull out the, and that was horrendous work and so it wasn't worth it, for four minutes, three minutes in the house and my mother would- and we would slaughter a pig every now and then, and you would hang it in the barn. But that's because no refrigeration. But Ireland is at the same latitude as Labrador, which means it's very cold. Except the gulf stream warms up Ireland. That's why it has more rain than any other country in all of Europe, because of the Gulf Stream. But the winters are very long. Which means it starts getting dark at three o'clock in the afternoon. And if you look at Europe, the Northern circle of Europe, all heavy drinkers. The British Isles, Scandinavians, Russians, and a lot of it had to do with the climate and also the-

LEVINE: The darkness.

DOHERTY: The darkness. And the isolation and the whole thing. Alaska has the highest rate of alcoholism, highest rate of suicide, highest rate of divorce.

LEVINE: Oh wow.

DOHERTY: Of all about fifty states. This is not, this is getting a bit, this is-

LEVINE: Well what did you do like, you were there for those five years, it got dark for long winters at three o'clock.

DOHERTY: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: What did you do after three o'clock?

DOHERTY: Well stayed in the house mostly. The only heat in the house was one small fire place in the kitchen. And we would gather around that. But there would be things to do, I mean, my grandfather, my uncle would be repairing things, you know. My mother would be sewing doing things like that. And I had my job, I would have to go out over to the hen house in the garden, and get eggs from the chickens. I hated that because the hens would hit me in the head with their wings and the whole thing. And we kept grain in an old steamer trunk, and I (inaudible) we feed the birds. And we have a dog and we have the big bags of feed and whenever I reach in I always make sure because when I opened up the steamer a rat came out when I was a kid and it scared the life out of me. So there was always work. Everybody had to do manual labor on and off. When we had a sow, giving birth, the sow was having a breach birth, and that my job was because I had the smallest hands, I went up I was told, and I pulled out the piglet.

LEVINE: Wow.

DOHERTY: It's a pig.

LEVINE: Was that something that was like considered, I mean it's an adventure in a way.

DOHERTY: I also had the job of taking the sow, we didn't have a hog, to mate her. The farm, let's say half a mile away; so here I'm eight years of age with a big stick and a sow weighing two hundred pounds, and I had to take the sow to be mated, but she didn't know that. If she knew that she'd go in a straight line (both laugh). So half a mile would be like two miles. And I took her there, and this was expected. Sex, I mean, you didn't give any thought about it, you didn't know any better. Well that was it. And then my father sent for us in 1936, and my mother would not have come back, because he was an alcoholic and he was physically abusive to her and violent in the house and all that. Except she saw no future for me in Ireland because in that area of Ireland. So she came over and from hindsight I say "Thank God," because three years later if he had waited for 1939 and World War II broke out, then that would have meant I wouldn't have, if I came out here it would have been when he would have died, he died in 1944, but we came out here then it would have been 1946, I would have had a sixth grade education. Because in this country I have a B.A., I have a Masters, and I have forty-two additional credits past the Masters; all because of this country. And I have more education than anybody else in my family, that comes from my generation, and I am the patriarch of the generation. Because I know I'm the only one out of all of them to have the immigrant experience, of being born in Ireland, living on the farm where their mothers and uncles and fathers came from.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. What was you mother like as a little boy growing up? How would you describe her?

DOHERTY: My mother, my father was the love of her life, why I don't know. So I could never, and he and I had a horrible relationship from the time I was 9, until after he died when I was 17, (when I was 9 yet) but anyhow so I could never criticize or anything else. But he had had a very tough life, I told you before, he and all my uncles worked as "sand-hogs" underneath the tunnels of New York digging with shovels- horrible, dangerous job.

LEVINE: Well why don't you say a little, just for the tape, about- this is the Holland Tunnel you're talking about?

DOHERTY: Yes, and digging the Holland Tunnel, and it was an Irish job because no one else would do it. Even the sand-hogs today are made up of Irish, and I think Columbian, or somebody from Central America, still to this day. They're digging now the third, the waterway, the water that comes- there's two aqueducts, they're digging a third one; right now, they're doing it. It's a different job now, it's still dangerous because you're still down underneath, you still have to go into a decompression chamber, you do have a little before surfacing, to equalize your blood pressure with the surface.

LEVINE: Right, did your father come here first and then he worked here before you and your mother...

DOHERTY: My father, yes, my father was over here.

LEVINE: When did he come roughly if you can remember?

DOHERTY: Oh I think 1912, 1913 something like that. And when he got hurt in the tunnel, I guess he got some money, and he went back to Ireland in 1925 on vacation, and he had known my mother when he was a little kid, when they were little kids. And now she was, she was charmed by his Yankee ways, his polished shoes, the whole thing. And so it was a whirlwind romance, and as I mentioned before. She got pregnant with me on their honeymoon and he had to come back here, which he did. And then it took him- so some months later I was born, then he took another year to send for us. So I was a year old when I came over here.

LEVINE: And were both of your, both your mother and your father from County Letrum? Originally their families?

DOHERTY: Right, right. My mother had about a third grade education, my father had about a fourth grade education. And so then my father worked as a bartender, drove a cab, during the Depression he did a lot of things. But the last thing he worked as a bartender, I think he was able to help himself enough to own his money to buy a bar in Woodside in 1941, as I told you. And the bar did well during the war, he died in 1944, then my mother took over, and the bar wasn't doing everything. And then when I worked behind the bar in 1949, now I'm 23 years of age, the bar wasn't doing much money but between the two of us, it became highly successful.

LEVINE: So your father left you something anyway.

DOHERTY: My mother with a third grade education, she kept the bar for me. Also, a Jewish landlord, his name was Mr. Buillick [ph], he owned the building and he came to my mother and he said to her in 1947, he said "I you know, I have a lot of wealth in business, why

don't you buy the building from me?" and she said "I can't (inaudible) you for it." He says "Listen Doherty, you have a son, you have a business. If you don't buy the building you'll have a landlord, and if the business ever becomes successful, the landlord's going to become your partner, because he's going to keep raising the rent." And he says "I'll arrange the mortgage for you." So my mother bought the building, okay. Now in 1947 she paid him eighteen-thousand dollars for the building, which was a lot of money. And through the years what it was, was a beauty parlor, the bar, a dentist's office, a small efficiency apartment next to it, and three apartments above. So all the affluence I have in my life really is thanks to my mother. Because with a third grade education, she had been subservient to my father, but didn't realize her own resources, once he died, and she started to run the business and discovered she had a head for business, that she was smart. And everything she did was for me, to save, to make sure that I- because I grew up with the violence of my father, I grew up a rebel. I could not take authority. And so I - in 1949, age 23, I was really unemployable; "I'm a real little man, macho," thing. But call me out at the bar, and my mother gave me really good advice she said "You can't talk to customer's like that." And then I met my wife, and then the two of them civilized me. And by the way in World War II, I went to Xavier High School here on West 16<sup>th</sup> Street which was, we had four years of ROTC training, which means we could have gone in the Service and become Second Lieutenant. I found out I was 4F, I had a punctured ear drum, I had fractured my elbow. So I went in the Merchant Marines, and I put two years in the Merchant Marines. And then went to college, and then I wasn't really interested in college, and I was playing cards, drinking, doing things like that. So I was kicked out of college. So at age 36 I went back to

college and I spent eleven years at night making up for my stupidity; seven years to get a B.A, and four years to get a Masters, eleven years all together. And in 19- I'm 47 years of age, and now I always wanted to be a teacher, and I have a B.A. and a Masters but I was making too much money. I didn't want to give up the bar just to become a teacher.

LEVINE: When you were working the bars is when you went and got your Bachelors and your Masters degrees?

DOHERTY: Yes, oh I did that all at night time, sure. And so...

LEVINE: You didn't want to give up the money so what did you do...

DOHERTY: But finally I got burned out in the bar business. The problem was the money was great, I loved being self employed, loved the money, loved dealing with customers, I enjoyed that. But I found that I had no purpose in life, I was actually a licensed drug dealer. Because while my mother made sandwiches, my main income was on selling alcohol. And alcohol is a drug and if it's abused like any other- so therefore my conscious was bothering me that I really was serving no purpose in life, and I wanted to do something. And finally in 1978 I sold the bar, took a year off, got a job in a private high school for a year and a half. But I had taken the test of the City of New York and got a notice that I was appointed to the City, and I started in 1981 and taught thirteen years in 1994, I retired. And then went back to the school substituting there two days a week till we moved down to Virginia. So it pretty much is why. But I've lived very well, I've never been rich but I've never had a shortness of money, from the day I went behind the bar I always had enough money. And we had vacation

homes and we always went on travel and everything else. I've never been that rich, but cash business very successful. But I felt that my salvation and my contribution to this country was when I became a teacher.

LEVINE: Wow, yeah.

DOHERTY: And the twenty-nine years I was a bar owner was basic training for teaching in an inner city high school with a forty percent drop out rate and a combined math and verbal SAT scores 750. Well that's all over the country in the major cities. We have an invisible wall around the inner cities of the United States. The higher, there's more teenage non-whites slaughtering each other at a higher rate than I think that's going on (disturbance) a higher rate than I think that's going on in Iraq. Slaughter is going on all over the country.

LEVINE: Really?

DOHERTY: The crime rate, the dysfunctional families, the whole thing. Now you'd think this country would declare war on that and try and do something about it. So I'm getting on my liberal soap box about that now.

LEVINE: Yeah. I hear you. Well let's go back to your early life for just a minute. Your mother and father's family, did they for generations come from this area in Ireland that you know of?

DOHERTY: The Dohertys did yeah, they were there. My mother's family came from another county, Monahan, and there was four of them, four

brothers. And somehow they had some money to buy these farms all so they were all-

LEVINE: Next to each other?

DOHERTY: In the same area. All desperately poor farms though. See the problem was that part of Ireland is, it's too wet. You couldn't really grow anything decent in there because of constant dampness, the wetness. And then the soil was clay, and everything else. So that's why they got that.

LEVINE: What was her name? Your mother.

DOHERTY: Mahon, M-A-H-O-N.

LEVINE: And her first name?

DOHERTY: Eliza Jane Doherty but she was know as Elsie for most of her life. She preferred that, she didn't like by the... and she married Tom Doherty. And when I say it was the best, the happy years of my life, it was a great relationship with my grandfather and my uncles. And there was no violence, and I- tremendous amount of work. But also interesting about it, I started first grade there and I went to the fourth grade. But in those years we had two primers. We had an English primer and a Gaelic primer because the Gaelic language was almost erased from all of Ireland by the British. And so the Irish government now was trying to, and now to this day every single service test in Ireland has to be, is in Gaelic. And because they've been trying to bring it back. And so I still have my English primer and my-

LEVINE: Really?

DOHERTY: And the sophisticated language of that that primer, I would guarantee it, fifth grade kids in this school could not read that language. Because the British had one system in all their colonies, they would train the natives up to the sixth grade, because they gave them basics, it was drill, rope learning. And Ireland was in a one room school with six grades, taught by two teachers, we wrote on slates, and if we talked up we got, like the old movies you see of the British boy schoolyard, we were getting beaten across the hands and across the legs.

LEVINE: With a what? A stick?

DOHERTY: Well they had what outside called a "sally-rod" which was a rod it was almost like a whip, a plant. And they would whip it around your legs and around your hands. And I was constantly getting beaten because I was a rebel, I was rebelling against authority even then.

LEVINE: So well the thing is you'd had some years with your father before you came back to Ireland. Right?

DOHERTY: Right, age 1 to age 5.

LEVINE: So you witnessed- right.

DOHERTY: But the only memory I have of those years is one memory of my father wrecking the house and my mother and I out in the hallway. And she has me hiding under the stairs, terrified. And I guess,

and I get emotional when I think about. I guess my fear, my crying is when she said she's going to take me back to Ireland.

LEVINE: Oh. So she really made both moves for you.

DOHERTY: Absolutely. Everything she did was for me. I know that we say- for the bar, I had a house on Long Island in Lynbrook in Nassau County, I had a vacation home in Fort Lauderdale, sold that, had a chalet built up in the Pocono's. All that from this one bar, and all because of my mother. I never make any claims for myself, because I don't like to lie and I don't like to exaggerate about myself or tell fib. I always say my mother, third grade education, buying the building, thanks to the Jewish landlord who talked her into it, and of course that was a great investment. And selling the bar, I had notes for five years. So I could afford to teach. We had four kids we put through private colleges. And the first two, was okay they had been out of college by the time I sold the bar, but we had still two to put through college. And I had to send them to a private college because the other two had gone to a private college. So the bar, supplemented my income. And then in 1983 when the notes ended, I sold the building. And I kept the mortgage. And so for ten years I had an allowance coming in so that, my wife taught in a catholic school so she was not making much money, so between the two of us, I started in the City of New York in 1981, at eighteen thousand, then they got me upgraded to twenty-three thousand, when I retired in 1994 I was making forty-four thousand. But thanks to what my mother did, I never lived, I never had to live on just a teacher's salary. That's why I could afford to put my, all my kids through private colleges because of what the bar, and then the building.

LEVINE: Right. Well do you think your father would have made a go of the bar, had he lived?

DOHERTY: No, because he was a periodic alcoholic. Which means he wouldn't drink for three months, four months, but give him one drink then you go on drunk for a month. And of course now we know that alcoholism is a disease and that you can go. And also it's a cultural thing with the Irish and the British, and the Scandinavians, the heavy drinking. Where in Ireland, every small town you go in there's a bar. And so it is- so his drinking, and he was a violent man. He fought with a lot of customers physically and that was in part the Sand-Hog bit and the whole thing. So no, he never would have made it anyway. My mother and I were a great combination because she had one of the apartments, in the building that was over the dentist, and so she would be there at nights and I would be there during the day times. I brought in a lot of business in the day time, and she brought in a lot of business in the night time. And we were a great, a great team. And where Woodside it was interesting where we had the bar, you could tell by the stores the ethnic breakup of the neighborhood. The Italians owned the vegetable stores, or the shoe repair guys. The Germans owned delicatessen, ice cream parlors. And the Jews owned most of the retail.

LEVINE: Dry goods.

DOHERTY: Dry goods, and the candy stores. And the Greeks owned the florists. And the Irish owned the bars and the funeral parlors. We not only gave them booze but we buried them. (Both laugh)

LEVINE: Were you raised a strict catholic?

DOHERTY: Well yes, not strict, my mother and father never went to church. My mother had an incident with a priest where he slapped her when she was about ten years of age and from that point on she was very bitter against the Catholic Church. But I was sent to elementary school in Jackson Heights, and then I went to Xavier which is Jesuit in West 16<sup>th</sup> Street. So I would say that was more my own choice of being...

LEVINE: Religious?

DOHERTY: Being religious. And still to this day.

LEVINE: You still practice?

DOHERTY: Oh yes, very much so.

LEVINE: So you grew up with that as part of your thinking I would imagine.

DOHERTY: But then what's interesting, again where we had our house build on Long Island, we broke the line. We had the house built in a Jewish area, so all our next door neighbors again, the Brotskies [ph], and the Brotskies became our best friends and they brought us into the whole Jewish social and cultural life. Because the only Jews we knew were store owner.

LEVINE: When was this, when did you build the house?

DOHERTY: 1959 we had the house built on an empty lot next to the Brotskies. And they had no deals with Christians, with the "Goies" [ph], and we had no dealing with Jews. And they just starting off their

family, with just two kids, and we became friends. And it was the most broadening influence in my life, because I got to know Jews in their homes and their friends became our friends, and to this day, in the last six months we've been to two- one bar mitzvah, and one bat mitzvah- I don't know if you know, because you're Jewish or not, right?

LEVINE: I wasn't raised Jewish, but yeah I have Jewish in my blood.

DOHERTY: Okay then you know about bar mitzvah that's it.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

DOHERTY: So I don't know, I'm going on a tangent.

LEVINE: No it's fine, let me just go...

END SIDE A

BEGINNING OF SIDE B

LEVINE: To the, what do you call them? Sand...

DOHERTY: "Sandhogs," yes.

LEVINE: Sandhogs. Could you just say, because we don't usually get people who can talk, I mean I know it was your father who did that work, not you- but who can really some describe what it was like for the guys to go.

DOHERTY: Okay, alright then. As I say it was mostly an Irish job. They would go down in an elevator, down a shaft, all the way down to below the river bed, because the tunnels had to be underneath the river. And their job then was when to shovel around the huge excavating machines, they would shovel the muck away and try to clear the way, and the muck that the machines would be pushed to the side and they would be shoveling that. And it was in constant dampness, wetness, because I mean, the darkness and the noise, tremendous noise from the excavating machines. And it was, they would work in shifts shoveling this. And it was a brutal, backbreaking, physically demanding job. And it was also a very dangerous job because some of them were getting hit, hurt, and some of them were getting killed I said. My father had his left hand smashed down there and had to have the middle finger amputated on the left hand. So that was not only his brothers, but my mother's brothers all worked as sandhogs. Because the money was better than they could get doing anything else, and it took no skills. And immigrants to this day take the no- the jobs that don't have any, demand any skills. And what's now is you have the Pakistanis and them driving the cabs, and you have the Asians running the "Mom and Pop" Jewish stores. So what makes New York City so exciting and invigorating is, immigrants would move in.

LEVINE: Keep coming.

DOHERTY: And three or four generations later they made it and they move away. And the cities keep getting revitalized with new immigrant groups coming in. And I love, now Jackson Heights where my wife and I grew up, the Washington Post had a story in there a

month ago about Jackson Heights and said it's the most ethnically diverse neighborhood of the five boroughs.

LEVINE: I've heard that yeah.

DOHERTY: And we were back there, we went to our old parish, we gave money to our old elementary school. And they threw a luncheon for those of us who gave money, and we went around Jackson Heights, and I loved it. And it was fascinating to see the- what I don't like about Northern Virginia is, even though there is kids from fifty-two different countries, they don't live where- so all the people we associate with, they're all WASP, they're all go back, there's no ethnic identity, they all have names like Garrison, and Adams and Smith and all these, Protestant English...

LEVINE: WASP-y names.

DOHERTY: And I miss the ethnic diversity of New York City. The whole thing.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

DOHERTY: And I think it's great, I think it's great that they immigrants can come in and they take the worst jobs and then they raise themselves better by the- and that's what this country is all about. And the foundation of this country is also- the British Empire used to get the best and brightest from all the colonies to go to London and England. And we're getting the best and brightest. We're not only getting the ones with no skills, but we're getting the Engineers, we're getting the doctors, we're getting the scientists.

LEVINE: Well can you say anything about those sandhogs, the effects it had on them, I mean short of an accident on the job.

DOHERTY: Well first of all nearly everyone is a hard drinker.

LEVINE: Oh.

DOHERTY: Alcohol was part of the their...and naturally their home life was horrible. First of all, the clothes would be filled, soaked and filthy and covered with mud and the shoes and the whole bit. And then they'd have to take that home and the wife would have to, there was no washing machines, they would scrub the whole thing; and the kids. And if they weren't working in the tunnels they were drinking in the bars and they were staggering home. The whole bad scene, dysfunctional- that's which is going on in a lot of the Latino families, the dysfunctional families and the man is missing or something like that.

LEVINE: Well how about you? Can you say anything about like, you spent five years back in Ireland, you spent some years here, then you spent some years back in Ireland, then you came back here. Can you say the things that stuck you, you know as being different- um in other words, just changing from one place to another, can you think of this as a child the things that.

DOHERTY: All I remember is when I came here I had quite a brogue. I had the Irish brogue.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah.

DOHERTY: And I should have, in those years they had January classes in all the schools, public and private schools. So because I was 9½, they couldn't put me in the previous September forth grade class, because the term was, you know, the term was almost over. So they put me starting in April of 1936, in the forth grade class, the January class. So I was almost a year older than all the other kids in there, but I was being picked on, my brogue, and I was in a fight with the kids and all the other- but if you come to a country before the age of 12, you pretty much will lose your accent. After that you might never, my mother of course never lost her accent, my father never did. But I did. And so, I look at myself- Everything in life is an accident of birth, we don't chose who we're born to where we're born, when we're born. We don't chose our physical characteristics, we don't chose our IQ. So I see so much good luck in my life. And here I am. I'll be 79 in September, my wife will be 76; and we're in good health. Our kids are all healthy, all very bright, all making a lot of money, a lot more money than I ever made, actually I never made a lot of money but all of them are highly successful, and our grandchildren, all healthy. Now that's luck. Because when I was in Special-Ed, and I still substitute three or four days in the local high school, the local high school in Northern Virginia, they have kids who are horribly handicapped, mentally and physically. That, for example, Teresa Dalton, 21 years of age, doesn't recognize her father who's assistant principal, has never spoken, wears a diaper, a bib, and must be fed just like a baby. And no, 21 years of age. That's when I talk about luck. So if you have a healthy family that's strictly luck.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. What are you most proud of that you've done in your life, when you look back.

DOHERTY: Being a teacher.

LEVINE: A teacher, yeah.

DOHERTY: And also, my mother has three friends who are thoroughly obnoxious, and I learned early that it's easy to like people who are likeable and it's easy to be kind to people who are kind and all that. To love somebody, be kind to somebody who is rotten really obnoxious. (Both laugh) I have made friends of-

LEVINE: Obnoxious people?

DOHERTY: Of obnoxious people.

LEVINE: Oh good for you.

DOHERTY: I'm throwing the name out but it's unfair because it's an ethnic slur. But Izzy Cohen in the school I was in, thirty years in that school, never made a friend. When I came in, because we lived near each other we car pooled. And when Izzy was 70 and I went around with a card I was having a party for the teachers, no one wanted to sign it for him. And Izzy was the kind of a guy, he never was at fault for anything. He had no relationship with his wife, his son, his brothers or sisters, he had no relationship with- but it was never his fault, he always blamed everybody else. And so, thanks to my mother, I put up with Izzy; (lots of background disturbance) and really it put a strain on me many times but-

LEVINE: Did he know it? Did he know that...

DOHERTY: He knew that I was his only friend, yeah. (inaudible)

LEVINE: Did he ever? Did he ever act like a friend?

DOHERTY: Izzy didn't know how. He was, well when I moved down to Northern Virginia, he died a couple of years- I made a point, when I came up I'd meet him and I'd take him out for lunch, my wife would go and meet other friends, and take them out. And Izzy had so much money that it was (inaudible) that he would ever offer...

LEVINE: To take anybody.

DOHERTY: And when we were carpooling, when I was, it was the year when I was substituting back at my high school, I drove, he would never offer to buy- but I don't, what makes somebody a taker, what makes somebody a giver? Are you born that way?

LEVINE: You think it's luck?

DOHERTY: I don't know/ I'm a giver. I love to spend money, my wife parts with a dollar bill, it's tear street. She's very German in her ways, very organized, very efficient. We're all products. So I am proud about the choices I've made, I'm proud, I'm very proud of my education, going back at age 36 and doing that. And now I have two pictures of the City of New York and I have a lot of benefits and all that, so I'm proud of that. But really I'm proud of the fact that I gave up being a licensed drug dealer. Because I was making money off people's who spend across the bar, what they should have taken home. It's what my father had done.

LEVINE: Right. Good for you.

DOHERTY: How successful was I as a teacher? I don't know. When I was retiring the students made a rap tape, and to hear all the lyrics and I just say about Mr. D and other things, "He's mean as spit and he takes shit no." You know, "You had to pass his class or he'd bust your-" you know. And then the rest of it. And I thought that was a greatest document I ever got.

LEVINE: (Laughs) That's wonderful, that is yeah. That's wonderful. Let's see, what about the effects of having immigrated? Do you think your personality is affected by the fact that, you know, you started out in this small rural poor place?

DOHERTY: Oh I can I can identify with, with all the immigrants now. And when I see them, you know, we now in an upscale community and the one's who are mowing the lawns and seeding and doing everything else. And I love saying to my wife "Do you ever see any of them that are fat?" Because these, now these are the desperately poor. And we have them, we have Latinos or whatever name you want to- Hispanic, working three jobs and still absolute dirt poor. Because the winter, the winter is a killer for them, and they'll be six or seven of them. Now I was an only child that never had a bedroom to my own because when we came over hear my mother not only came over with me to join my father but then his two brothers lived with us and we shared one bedroom. And so therefore she had to cook and clean and wash and iron for the three men, getting no respect, getting verbal abuse and all of that stuff.

LEVINE: What was it she liked about your father? (Laughs) I'm just kind of curious.

DOHERTY: Who knows.

LEVINE: Who knows, yeah. Say more about what she was like. I don't have a sense of whether she was a spunky woman, a shy woman.

DOHERTY: Very, as I say, a good business woman and really tough. Very sentimental, very much a giver. And I think I'm a giver because she was a giver. But also, she did all the firing. I worked days as a bartender, she fired all the bartenders, if they were doing- she had no- and she'd fire somebody the day before Christmas (that had a family) because he was stealing and doing things like that. So she was tough in that way. But very much a giver and I figure in the twenty-nine years I was at the bar, figure a minimum of fifty-thousand, probably closer to a hundred thousand- I lost in cash and checks that were never redeemed, paying the rent for somebody, lending money, never getting it paid back. But I don't regret it, it brought me luck, but that's part of the business, if you're a giver it's going to cost you money, if you're not. But yeah I think my mother's personality and my personality is what...

LEVINE: Made the bar work.

DOHERTY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now why don't you say your wife's name and how you met her.

DOHERTY: Well Jackson Heights. We went to the same elementary school but we didn't know each other because I was a few years ahead of her. And then when she was 18 and I was 21 we were invited to, my best man, his sister, went to the same college as my wife,

the College of New Rochelle. And so she invited my wife to a party, at her brother, and we met there. And we were together four years. And there were no two people more opposite, (Levine laughs) she is so charming. She is so organized, so efficient. When we sold our house on Fire Island, we were there for thirty-six years, she had every bill, for thirty-six years, of any repairs anything we did for thirty-six years.

LEVINE: Wow, that's something.

DOHERTY: And I'm Irish, you know, if you hang something on a doorknob, this is a doorknob, if it's not...(Laughs). But actually we're compatible. I need somebody who's organized, she needs somebody who's easy going.

LEVINE: Do you have any response to 9/11? (Background noise) Yeah, it's okay. To 9/11?

DOHERTY: Oh, well that's the most, that and the-

LEVINE: Kennedy?

DOHERTY: No, no. Pearl Harbor. Are the two things that are most memorable in my life. And what's my reaction to it. The failure all around of not finding these guys out, I mean, they're going through flight training and not interested in really that except flying the plane. And there was- and no agency was-

LEVINE: Was overseeing all that, yeah.

DOHERTY: Now as far as what's happened since then, I think the War in Iraq is the worst war and I think this will cause us more long term problems in the nation, because we're not going to get out of Iraq for years. And the whole Muslim world is against us. They see us the same as crusaders, they see us as colonizers. And Bush may be promoting the idea of democracy but that isn't why we went there. The weapons of mass destruction, and all the other things that's why we supposedly went there, and since that it wasn't found he had to come up with another reason and now it's to spread democracy. The Muslim worlds have never known democracy and who knows if they ever, it will be generations from know if they ever go through with democracy. But this country is the greatest country in the world, in an imperfect world. This is an imperfect country, but it's better than any other imperfect country.

LEVINE: Well said. I think we should close on that note, that's a beautiful statement. Okay I've been speaking with John Doherty and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and thank you very much. I'm sighing off.

DOHERTY: Ah Levine.

LEVINE: (Both laugh) Levine and Doherty.