PAPER PROPHET

Conor Brady

What car do you drive and do you still have a no-claims bonus? I inherited a nice Jaguar XJ8 from the Irish Times but it was destroyed by hailstones — yes, hailstones — in France in July. Eagle Star paid up, bless them. I’m shopping around. And I still hold the no-claims bonus! What was your first job and salary? Barman at the Tam O’Shanter on Morehampton Road, now Sachs Hotel. Four shillings an hour. The pint was 1s 8d. I would have paid them. It was a “university of life”. I started in the Irish Times after UCD in 1969 as a “trainee journalist” on €600 a year.

At what times do you start and finish work? When I was a newspaper editor the day started around 7am and it never actually finished at all until one went to sleep. Now I make it a point of being at my desk by 9am. I mightn’t be looking my best. But I’m there.

Do you conduct any business online? Amazon for books. When did you last actually get to speak to a member of staff in any of the big bookstores in the city centre? It’s much easier to talk to a computer.

Who would you like to see as Minister for Finance? One has to support one’s county-man. So I’m for Brian Cowen. If there were a change of government I’d say Olwyn Enright. Up Offaly! Do you have a will? In the desk. Middle drawer, left side.

What are your favourite TV and radio programmes? [Excluding the news] I’m transfixed by The Clinic. With all that crowd huddled around the reception desk whispering about their personal lives I get an insight into why the medical services are the way they are. On radio, I’ll listen to Vincent Browne, Matt Cooper, George Hook, Eamon Dunphy, Pat Kenny and Marian Finucane. But not all together. I’d nominate Frank Sheehan... Bully for the Nobel Prize. What type of credit card do you have and do you ever borrow on it? AIB Classic. What’s the point of having it if you don’t borrow? You can’t go anywhere nowadays with money rolled up in your socks. Are you ever overdrawn or always in credit? All my wise friends say it’s pointless to keep money. But I think one should have something in cash for emergencies. My mother used to keep a pound note in a jug on the mantelpiece.

Do you know exactly how much you are worth? Not the vaguest idea. Today would you invest in property, shares, cash or other? I’ve never owned any shares. Investing in a good pension fund with fixed benefits seems to me to make sense. We’re (hopefully) living longer than earlier generations. But we can be pretty sure that our earning capability won’t continue.

What is your investment tip of the year? Find a good pensions consultant! Favourite restaurant? FXB’s in Monkstown, Kinnitty Castle or the Glenidine Bistro in Kinnitty, Co Offaly.

Where do you holiday? Usually in France. But we’ve done house-swaps in the United States — in California, Montana, Wisconsin. It’s a great way to get to know another society and make new friends.


Do you belong to any clubs? Tullamore Golf Club, since childhood. The editor of the Irish Times used to be ex officio President of the Irish Times Club. But that was more a state of mind than anything else. Otherwise I go wherever I’m let in.

Which businessman/woman do you most admire? Don’t really know any that well. Do you have a computer at your desk? Where do you think this is coming from? What’s your business ambition? Right now to sell a few books. How did you do in the Leaving Cert? Fine in languages, history — good honours. Scraped by in maths. Fr Emmanuel in Roscrea said: “There are lies, damned lies and statistics. And then there’s Conor Brady trying to do his algebra.” How long is left to pay on your mortgage? Haven’t looked. It goes on forever.

What type of SSIA do you have? Is that some sort of paramilitary outfit? (None, actually.) Which gets more of your time — work life or family life? Most of my work is from home now. They probably see too much of me at this stage.

Best moment in business? Seling the Irish Times print plant at Citywest come on stream in 2002. The company had experienced cash problems in 2001. But Citywest was bought and paid for out of our earnings in the good years. Once up and running, it anchored a strong balance-sheet. And it signalled the end of the Irish Times’s dependency on a single-product business.
CONOR BRADY: His first job was as a barman at the Tam O'Shanter (now Sachs Hotel) on Morehampton Road