

Oral History Project	Achill Oral Histories
Oral Historian	Ryan Wellman
Interviewee	Kenny Deery
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Ryan Wellman: Okay, so it is Friday, June 12th at about 5:30 p.m. My name is Ryan Wellman. I'm

joined here today with the fantastic Kenny Deery. He's graciously been willing to share his story about growing up and living in Achill. So Kenny, we'll get started with you right away. So first, just sort of tell me about growing up on Achill Island?

Kenny Deery: Growing up on Achill Island, so I was born in 1981 and Achill Island then was, I suppose, a very different place than it is now. It's a beautiful location. We're remote. With that comes challenges in terms of there's no cinema, there were no kinds of children's activities in many ways. But yes, we had what I would say very simple, very happy upbringings. A lot centered around, if you imagine that the home that we're in now here, the original house was a shop. And when my parents moved here in 1980, they turned 2 rooms into kind of the initial home. Community at that stage centered around school, the church. The church had a huge influence and we're beside the church in Bonnacurry. So automatically from the age that you were able to be, you were an altar boy, you were a server, you were involved in all those church activities. I think for me, we had a great privilege in that my grandmother had a shop in the neighboring village. So when my parents were working, my early memories or formative memories were staying with Granny and you'd be in the shop. And again, everyone got jobs no matter what age you were, but my memory was probably driving the Lions tea bags and the sugar and pretending that there were cars in the shop sitting on the floor. And for when you were able to, you were stacking shelves or you were like it was a small shop, but it was

a centre of the community. So I think one of my memories is our home and particularly Granny's home, it was one of the few houses at the time on the island that had a phone and it was an old dial-up phone. So the village would come in and do their calls from my grandmother's house. So there was always a flow of people coming in and out of the house and there was never a locked door. I think that's one of the principles that we've carried through even to here now you'll notice that. We don't really lock the door. So you are always surrounded by an abundance, I think, of conversation, engagement, kind of old style love in terms of the community nurturing the what you call a *gosser*. *Gosser* is kind of a warm convivial term for a young guy or a *Colleen* kind of would be the Irish version for a girl. And I think I went to school, started school at the age of, my birthday was in September, so you're always in that fine point of are you held back for a year until you're 4 years old? And I wasn't, so I started school at three, first few weeks into my 4th birthday. And the school at that stage was an old factory down here while the other school was being built. So very basic but very simple. You did junior, middle and high infants and then into first class through 6th class. And I think all alongside the schooling, which I really enjoyed, is the epicenter of our lives was around granny's because there was the shop, but then they also had a small farm. There was like a piggery where some pigs were kept down the bottom of the fields. You had a butcher shop. They reared animals, but then there was also a slaughterhouse. So the tradition, even though my grandmother was a real matriarch in that she was the leader of it, her husband had died before I was born. So she on a slaughter day would maybe have about 15 men working around the yard and preparing the poor animals, and I as a child thought this was horrific and but again, you got jobs, you were cleaning or you were sorting things out or you were helping her with food. So food was a centerpiece. If you imagine where we are from Castlebar at that stage, was maybe an hour and a half. So you got your basic supplies. But after that, everyone in every house had to bake or do something. So again, there'd be cakes, she'd make most beautiful breads, soups, they'd be layered with fat, everything was grease and butter. And you got to learn, we call it now circular economy in a kind of a lovely way, but they had the circular economy down to a T. The animals that would be slaughtered, the skins would be taken, you'd salt the skin straight away,

that would protect that and that would be sold for production. Every aspect of the meat and the animal was prepared and then they'd load it into the back of a van and start selling door to door. So as a child you'd be in the van you'd be at the front or in the back helping selling or whatever. And literally it was a mobile service that there was vegetables, there was some of the shop goods, but equally there was the meats. And equally if a local fisherman caught, or when I say fisherman, you might have small carracks and they may have caught a couple of fish, they'd be sold through the shop as well. And one of our family would be put off on a bike and the fish would be in a basket and literally they would sell to whoever would buy. So I think the growing up is very different than it is now. But if you imagine Achill 40 years ago, primitive, simpler, but the center of everything operated around food and for us the shop, the butcher shop. And as we grew a bit older, then the church became part of it. And you know, as living beside the church and as a young person who you'd be put readings at mass, you'd be an altar boy, funerals, weddings. It kind of became part of your center of existence as well. I can keep talking, but am I...

Ryan Wellman: No, you're doing great. Yeah. So just a big, big sense of community growing up.

Kenny Deery: Absolutely. And there was no, whether there should have been or not, but there were no risks about child protection or any of that stuff. Like if someone came along and they needed help with something or if someone came to Granny's shop and they needed help down the village, you'd be put off carrying the bags down the village with them and you go into that house and they, of course, they have sweets or they have money or they have something for you to do and just there was an ebb and flow that was very natural.

Ryan Wellman: So what are some of your more, what are some of the lessons that you learned from your youth?

Kenny Deery: Oh, work ethic, absolutely, anyways. Like they, at seven in the morning, if you were still in bed at 7 o'clock in the morning, particularly at granny's, she'll come in, oh my *a leanbh*, you need to get up. *A leanbh* is another kind of colloquial term for family member or kind of a loving term. And

you wouldn't, the lay-in wouldn't be worth it. Basically be tortured every 5 minutes. So you just had to concede and get up. So I think absolutely a work ethic, a sense of hospitality, like Granny's house was also, like she was really industrious when you think every bit of the assets that she had were used. So she only had two bedrooms. She had a sitting room, beautiful big sitting room, kind of kitchen scullery, a hall. She used to take 14, 16 people staying in that house. There's a famous Irish TV programme going back years ago called "The Riordans". The cast of "The Riordans" stayed in Granny's. They barely had beds, they were staying on floors and they were staying whatever. But again, it was that sense of hospitality. And there's always food in the fridge or in the press, just work away, eat away and you'll never want for anything type scenario. I think that's, yeah, work ethic and food, hospitality definitely were two of the things that carried into our house here as well, like the home here as my parents developed it more, was a B&B. So Aisling, my sister and I could be in bed and at 11 o'clock at night the door could open, visitors have come to the door, we need the room. And you literally knew how to turn the room around, you took all your belongings with you and nearly your duvet and your bedclothes and the bed was made-up and the room was prepared for visitors. And then that continues here because the house that we're in now, my father opened a garage. So he was a mechanic but an agricultural contractor. So there was machinery, JCB, tractors, agricultural machinery. So during the summer he would be doing project work on site and location. So you could be off like there's houses along this road. And I remember the gardens being cultivated and they were digging up the soil and you were picking stones and helping sow seeds in the garden. In the summertime, particularly around the seasons, hay was important for those with animals. So my father would cut the hay and then you'd be in a few days later baling the hay and it used to be one of our jobs as kids. You'd be feeding the front of the baler or out the back making sure the twine and the string was knitting properly. So you'd walk every field like for the summer. So at the age of 6, 7, 8, you literally, everybody who grew up in Achill, there was either 2 cohorts of *modus operandi*, those families who could afford to send their kids away to a boarding school did. But the majority of

the rest of us live locally and you just worked. And that was your fun, your sport, your banter kind of built into it because we knew no different.

Ryan Wellman: All very interesting. So I know you've mentioned the space that we're in right now, the Achill Lodge Bed and Breakfast. Can you tell me sort of about how the Achill Lodge came about?

Kenny Deery: Well, growing up, my sister and I in, again, Granny's house, our house, B&B hospitality, it's like It's a way to kind of co-fund your mortgage, but also it's lovely hosting people, right? And I think I find it interesting when sometimes I visit friends and they're in their house and they lock their door and everything is locked and like they're worried about whatever. And I think this is madness. For me, I love the notion of coming into your house and there's a buzz and an ebb and flow to the house because there's people there and that adds to it. And at the time, for me, once I went through secondary school, I started work. When my friends were going to college, I was starting work in AIB Bank as a permanent employee. So I always remember the 13th of September 1999. The 12th of September was the Sunday. I was heading to Dublin with my friends who were starting college the next morning, but I was going into AIB Bank Center in Ballsbridge as a permanent employee of AIB at the age of 17. It was really formative in terms of the training, the development that I got and subsequently I went on to do a series of third level qualifications. I got an MBA, I have a finance degree, I have an array of stuff. But you again, nearly like the work ethic from earlier years, you did it part time coexisting with your working life. And because I worked in the bank as a permanent employee, I got some good opportunities and you also got access to finance. And I had kind of, not necessarily a vision or anything like that, I wasn't, it may have been but not premeditated in that way, but hugely interested in tourism and actually I was involved in a small startup, West of Ireland Holidays, like at 20 or 21 and then I love travelling and had become a consummate traveler. And you see product across the world. And you're there thinking, oh God, some of that could be transferred here. You know, I remember thinking of accommodation. We went, my sister and I went skiing when she was 18, so I must have been 21 or 22, and the notion of warm boot rooms and that sort of stuff.

So I was thinking, how could that transfer to Achill? And there began the thought around building a guest house and putting in the likes of the facilities and the laundry where you've got the wet suits can hang over and you can dry items out over the radiators. And I kind of just thought, all right, let's apply for it. So started the process of applying for planning permission. We're very lucky in where we are here. It's the Gaeltacht area. So as you're developing knowledge, Achill splits between Irish speaking and non-Irish speaking at a government status level. And we're in the Gaeltacht. So that gave us small access to grant funding. At the time it was leader funding through an organisation called **Mahalverb and the Gaeltacht**. So 40,000 euro of a grant, which at the time was a lot less than the cost of the house. It cost a lot more here, but it was helpful. And I got a mortgage and we got planning permission and just built Achill Lodge. And it's become kind of part of the epicenter, I think, of our family life, my sister, wider relations. You know, in the summertime, over the years, it's been hugely busy. This year we've stepped back a little because of my parents. But over the years, it's always been thriving and energetic. And again, for me, no matter where I am in the world or with work, I love coming home at the weekend and the buzz of the house and there's people coming and going and it's just a retreat.

Ryan Wellman: So if you could, we can rewind a little bit back to your professional career. You said you started working for a bank at age 17. Can you kind of continue on from there where you went professionally?

Kenny Deery: I started at age, again, I always think there's luck and there's serendipity. And I was very lucky. The department that I started in the AIB headquarters was this place called Currency Services Department. It sounded very exotic. The reality, it was a large cash depot underground. So you were processing and counting big dirty lodgements and amalgamating money for the central bank to go and be destroyed. So there were cages of cash and the first week your eyes were open and thinking, oh my God, this is amazing. And by week three you're thinking, oh God, this may as well be toilet paper in terms of it's just so much processing. It was like a factory. But where we are from in County

Mayo, there's a strong Mayo association in Dublin and there are quite a number of high profile Mayo people working in the bank and in Bank Centre in particular. And through me chatting and getting to know them more, opportunities were created and I was very lucky. As programs were being developed I became chosen to do some of them and there was one in particular it was an executive mentoring program where I was aligned with a senior executive in the bank and I was like a junior whippersnapper 20 some 20 year old and that caused me to look very strategically at career and at how you develop and just repurpose my mind. I remember some of my colleagues and friends were still in college they were on their way through their degrees and for me, I was building two, three years into a career, but getting all this experience and this leadership development that was unique. And then I got an opportunity around the euro when Ireland's accession to the, or sorry, not accession to the euro, the conversion of the old Irish punt into the euro as we know it. So there was a whole project around destruction of the old currency and there was a whole beast of work in terms of integration of the new money, the notes and the coins. And the bank needed somebody, it was a very unique role, but it was a bank inspector role. So I represented 5 organizations and became a bank inspector on the Eurocoin project, which was fascinating, positioning opportunity wise and everything else. And from that then I kind of bounced onto other roles within the bank and undertook lots of leadership training, development, did my finance degree, did a qualification in public relations and marketing, then went on to become a qualified financial advisor. And there were kind of lots of steps along the way. And a lot of those the bank funded, which is brilliant as well. And if anything, you get a bonus every time you complete something. So it was a real lucky route in many ways. And then it was felt that a lot of my experience was HQ related and that I needed retail banking experience. And it was through that I was asked would I join the branch network for a year and I said fine so initially they were thinking Dublin but at that stage I had bought a house in Castlebar and with the help of my parents renovated and I had tenants staying in it and I thought well if I'm going to work in the retail network I should come west and at least base myself out of my own house and that started my retail banking west of Ireland career which I loved and again got

great opportunities so I did kind of mainstream general rules. First of all, I absolutely hated working in cash. I could never balance. It was hilarious. But I love the customer interaction and that whole engagement piece. The doors open at 10 o'clock in the morning and you don't know who or what you're getting. You know, you have every life experience. You have some people who want to make lodgements. You have some people who are angry. You have some people who are ambitious. You have some people who have just lost a loved one and they're clutching to a death cert. Like the reality of customer facing roles. But then in a banking point of view, you get to know people's personal lives, you get insights into relationships, good, bad and indifferent and everything else. And then an opportunity came up, I took an investment manager role, which was fascinating, but I was kind of a bit bored by. And then an opportunity came up at that stage in banking in 2008, maybe I was still in my 20s. It was quite traditional still. There was a hierarchical structure. The bank manager was nearly like being, you were honoured if you got an appointment with the bank manager and people were afraid of them. And the bank brought in a new retail strategy and they chose a selection of people from across the country and I was lucky to be one of them. And what they wanted to do was redefine the model of what a bank should be and make it more customer centric, welcoming etc. So there was a training program in Dublin that I got promoted into and a guy, so Arnott's is a, it would be a high end department store in Dublin, and a guy called Eddie Shanahan was the manager of Arnott's and he was all about reimagining experience. So the bank retained him to work with us as practitioners and for us to come back then into our networks and redefine how banks should operate and how customers should operate with them. So that was really formative and fascinating for me. I initially had a team of 23 across 3 units and then bit by bit, my role kind of developed. And then I became a bank manager. At the time, ironically, I was the youngest bank manager in the country from the **IB point of view**. And I think because I started early and you're always getting access to your experiences and new development pieces, that just kind of happened. And then I got bored again in that role. And this was after the financial crash and the recession in Ireland. It was a very messy time, messy time for bank staff. It was messy time for customers. Lots of people were in difficulty in

different ways. And the bank wanted to create these regional structures and they wanted six people to take on the roles of what were called regional energy champions. And it was nothing to do with energy in terms of electricity. It was more of a personal energy. And it was based on the premise of a New York think tank called the Energy Project. And it said that there's five cycles of energy, spirituality, physical, mental, etc. So they trained us. I was lucky enough to be one of the six nationally and they trained us on how to roll that out in terms of lifting the performance of teams but lifting the happiness of teams, how they interact with each other, how you build culture in a positive way. So that was a fascinating experience but equally difficult because you were going around the regions and particularly some of my territory I covered from Galway up to Donegal kind of in as far as cavern as the region was structured at the time. So you were going to managers meetings where there were stressed, loan books were under pressure, sales targets were not being met and then I was a slot of an hour with a very flowery topic in terms of how their energy is and merely trying to get them to do yoga and mindfulness and they were thinking this fella is crazier than crazy. So again develops new skills and also an understanding of how to motivate people in a way that's not just driven by KPIs in terms of sales performance etc. And then, so when I was bored as bank manager, they gave me this role as a bolt-on to the bank manager role. And that was fine, except I got bored again. And at that stage, I was motivated. Tim Ferriss in the US did the four-hour body, four-hour work week, all the kind of redefining life in many ways for people. And I was fascinated with his audiobooks and his book. And part of the stories within the Tim Ferriss methodology motivated me to take a career break for two years. So I actually was lucky enough to get a break. And during that time, I got involved in social enterprise, being the Achill Experience Aquarium and Visitor Center, which was a very interesting early stage project. We started from a zero base, brilliant board and we had a building. And part of my work was on that at the time. But I was also involved in a startup in the FinTech space. So managed to secure funding from Enterprise Ireland and working on developing that startup, kind of rewired a different part of my brain again. And at the end, and I did some traveling too, because again, I love traveling and it allowed me time to spend

here during the summers and kind of just be. Then I went to leave the bank. So I was at the end of my two year career break, I was not returning and I remember meeting the structures have changed and I met a guy who was a new executive over the west of Ireland and he refused to accept my leaving piece because he had created a role that was fascinating. It was kind of a regional market engagement manager type role. but there were four or five facets to it. One was dealing with the arts and culture community, one was dealing with the innovation hubs in as much as the bank kind of understood them at the time. The bank had a strategic relationship with one in Galway called Porter Shed. It's a co-working space for scaling tech companies and it was an early investment for them and they needed someone to kind of work with that. But equally they had an idea that there's a lot of corporates across the West landscape and the bank wasn't dealing with them in a meaningful way, so they wanted someone to triage what running a pop-up digital bank on site within companies might look like. And then in general for PR marketing comms, they wanted someone to kind of do that stuff. And the executive didn't really like any of those sides of things. He was a credit analyst, he just loved the numbers. So I was tempted by that and actually I returned to the bank in this kind of specially commissioned role. And I absolutely loved that. The variety was fascinating. And then you became an influencer at a headquarters level because you were out on the ground. You were doing all this kind of dynamic alternative stuff. And then that very much led me into the Galway ecosystem and the West of Ireland ecosystem. And an opportunity came up. I remember in December 2018, there was a suggestion that the bank was going to bring out a redundancy program for managers. And I had all, through the Tim Ferriss piece, I had agreed at that stage that I wasn't going to be a lifer in the bank. I wanted to do something different. There's a lot more variety. And my executives knew that as well. And co-aligning with the notion that a redundancy was coming out, Galway Chamber of Commerce, their CEO, or general manager at the time, with the CEO position, a lovely lady who had been very good to me, fell ill and a vacancy arose. and then they advertised looking for the Chief Executive of the Chamber of Commerce in Galway. And I was encouraged to apply for it and I kind of thought, okay, let's do this. And I came through the process, so I got the role. It took five months for the

redundancy in the bank to come through, but everyone worked with me. I stayed in the bank but started the new role, so did both for five, six months and then transitioned into the Chamber of Commerce. And that was exhilarating in terms of gravitas, you're dealing with politicians, you're dealing with business leaders, you're leading delegations. We had a couple of innovation hubs that the Chamber were involved in. Porter Shed they owned. So ironically I went from working with the relationship with Porter Shed from AIB as a corporate partner to moving into the entity that actually owned it. There's another large hub with about 700 people in it called, it was Galway Technology Center, it's now Platform 94. It's a global scaling location again. So I became chair of it and sat on a number of boards. So you're very much entrenched in the innovation ecosystem out of the west of Ireland. And the chamber role is just fascinating. Like there's three core parts to it. There's engagement and event management. There's a whole lobbying government relations piece, European relations as well. So a lot of our legislation from Ireland now comes from Brussels. So we need to get in 18 months ahead lobbying in Brussels, not at a national level, to try and influence the change that you need. And there was a lot of travel in that, which I loved. And then the third part was international trade. So we would have facilitated the export of a lot of products from Galway, from the West, but Galway particularly. So we had trade relations through the program called Certificates of Origin with 76 countries internationally. So we'd facilitate a couple 100 million straight out of the west of Ireland each year. So that was all absolutely fascinating. What I became frustrated by is, and again I'm just kind of following the career piece and stop me at any point if you feel it's relevant. What I was fascinated with was the political environment and the slow pace of change. So there were a lot of infrastructure pieces that we need in the west of Ireland and we felt that the political representation wasn't strong enough. and the chamber and the business community led a lobby looking for people to get engaged in politics. And lots of people said, yeah, we'll support that and we'll support that. But then bit by bit, they dropped back. So I decided in 2024, probably foolishly in one way, even though it's been a huge life experience, to step back from my role and run for politics. And I did that. And I think at the time we were bolstered by the idea that the business

community are fully supportive and everyone is fully supportive. And what we learned by the fact that I didn't get elected is that number one, we're in a bubble. Number 2, the people who vote typically aren't business people or they're not of the business community. And the issues that they were voting on were football pitches, nets for goalposts, childcare facilities, stuff that as far as I was concerned, were important, but not of strategic importance to the West of Ireland. And any of the bigger stuff that I talk about, people say, ah, that'll never happen. They had nearly become consigned. So I had stepped back from my role. So all of a sudden there was a total pivot in terms of what do I do? And there was kind of a coming to Jesus moment in one way in terms of, wow, I'm in my early 40s. What have I done and where do we go now? And I was very lucky. I still had some of my board positions and relationships And I did some consulting for a few months while we figured out there was a lot of work in and out of Brussels and kind of on different delegations. And then a role opened up at a government level. They recognized that there's lots of organizations all with their own strategies, but there was nobody tying that work together. So they created this role called regional enterprise plan managers. And I applied for the role for the West and got it initially in a one-year contract as the government were kind of deciding what to do next. And that's fascinating because you deal, I deal with over 100 stakeholders. So they're universities, they're kind of the main developmental organizations. There's industry partners in there as well and representative groups. but I'm employed by the four local authorities of the West. And the local authorities really are critical because they're the people who have the power to drive change at a local level, to invest in services, to make decisions about traffic lights, but equally make strategic decisions in terms of forward planning, what do we need in this town versus that town? So I took on that role and then the opportunity to become permanent in it came up. So I went through that process. I was used to processes at that stage and thankfully I come in through that as well. And that where I am at the moment. So every week is varied. At the moment, some of the projects I'm working on is a life sciences medtech campus for the West. Something modeled on a very smaller but notion around the likes of Cleveland Clinic or Texas Medical in Austin, but for Ireland based out of the West. Looking at

an aviation economy project at Knock Airport, looking at renewable onshore, offshore wind, hydrogen. There's a couple of projects there and actually we have a serious presentation to do next Wednesday on that because we know there's no shortage of wind in the west of Ireland but we don't have grid infrastructure to transfer the energy. So we're looking at kind of green energy parks and what they would look like, particularly in areas like the western coast. So you look, there's a new industrial estate where the whiskey factory is etc. They're big users of energy. If we were to coexist wind turbines on site with those factories, then you become a circular economy. They're using what's there. So it's fascinating. And in terms of where I go, I don't know. But there were a lot of, I suppose, pivots here and there. But the training ground of AIB was the real formative, you know, from a point of view of setting you up. And then the chamber role is fascinating just in terms of elevating your position.

Ryan Wellman: And now after all that very long and beautiful career, what do you think is sort of the most important thing that you wish you could have known starting off or biggest piece of advice, something of that nature.

Kenny Deery: I think that getting comfortable with what's important to you and sticking to that until you change your mind is important. I think we spend so much time worrying about what other people think and playing to the tune of what other people want. And sometimes you have to do that, particularly as you're developing through early stages of a career, you do have to do that. But equally, be very comfortable standing out because people do actually, they say there's fear, etc., but people do actually recognise and appreciate diversity and the diversity that every person can bring to a role. Like I would, and I think everybody to a point has a degree of self-awareness and you're thinking, oh God, I'm not sure now about this and will I be able to do this? But actually throwing yourself in there and communicating and just sticking to your kind of own ethical boundaries around it, making sure you stay on the right side of things, but at the same time be you. And people do react to that. And I think now as we move with AI and agentic AI and and how is EQ going to feature in terms of what

now more than ever that's important in terms of everybody's individual personality is actually the richness. And there was a time when I'd be wary about walking into a classroom environment or you'd be awkward about yourself, how you look to whatever else. I smile at, I was at an event last night. There were about 700 people at us. You walk in. You're picking up your glass of champagne, you're working the room, you're working the space, you're networking and people are gravitating and coming towards you. And I think it's having the confidence to know that if you are naturally you and you're comfortable and you're authentic, then people will gravitate to you. It takes a long time to figure that out.

Ryan Wellman: That's a good piece of advice though, definitely. So where is the Achill Lodge tying in throughout this whole?

Kenny Deery: God, this in many ways, the Achill Lodge is coming along trailing at the moment. So Achill Lodge is home. Evando has moved here. It's home for both of us. I rent in Galway because I just need a bed every now and then to sleep in there. And I have to figure out strategically, I think, what next steps career wise are or what roles I take on. And that will define does this become proper home or at least a base to travel from and wind down the Galway apartment? Achill Lodge is always, and every year we've operated it up to this year, has been very much on the basis of a B&B that's busy, that's the centre. I remember some of our busiest years, we had about 2,200 people stay throughout the year, like it was 20, 30 people every morning in this dining room, is thriving and buzzing. Some of that energy has gone out at the moment because just the dynamic of those around us, my parents have become less able and unwell. We had one or two people working with us that have just grown older. Actually, old age is a challenge. And it's one of the interesting things is as I look at kind of the strategic future of Achill Lodge, in one way, if this becomes home, then its operation as a business is less important. But if this doesn't, then we've looked at the possibility of would a young couple or a young family with the network want to take it on for a few years and I look at leasing it or subleasing it, that's an option. I think one of the bits that I would love to do, even though I've

travelled a lot, I've never lived abroad on a permanent basis and I think that would be a struggle. But I'd be open to the idea of trialling a year or at least doing a year where I'd be in Ireland or we'd be in Ireland for six months and maybe follow the sun in as much as we've sun at the moment for the summer as we are here. Like again I go back to and it's really interesting the Tim Ferriss stuff has had a huge influence in me in terms of reimagining how you live a life because part of what struck a chord with me in listening to his work is people work for 40 years and they retire and by the time they've retired in many ways they're not as vibrant and able and energized to do what it is they want to do. And I think in the bank in particular you see so many real life stories. I remember 1 customer who was a difficult customer to work with. He and his wife were quite wealthy. They'd relocated to the west of Ireland and he was negotiating over interest rates on some of his investments and we were down to 0.5 of a percent in terms of a differential between us and another competitor bank. And he threw its drop and he said, no, this wasn't good enough. And he seemed really annoyed. And he left that day and we had arranged that he was going to withdraw his money the following week. He left that day and 5 minutes out the road he was killed in a car accident. A unit fell off a truck coming in the opposing direction and landed on the car. His wife was in the passenger seat. She survived, thankfully, and he was crushed to death. And I remember thinking, if he didn't focus on the 0.5%, like if woulda, shoulda, coulda, but he was so angry and yet he was so wealthy and he was moving his money and a few minutes later he was crushed. And you've a lot of those experiences where you deal with real life stories and you kind of think, flip it, there has to be a different way to design your life. And I think that's the bit that Farris talks about in terms of lifestyle redesign. So for me, a collage is always something that we're very proud of and there's a mortgage to be paid on it and that's always a challenge. But I don't want to define my life or our life either. So I'd love to see some bits of more, not more permanent internationalization, but just feeling the feet a bit more rather than traveling somewhere for 10 days but rushing back because there's an event on or the house is full or we've something to do.

Ryan Wellman: Very interesting. All good points. And that's an amazing story too about that. About that client.

Kenny Deery: I drive that road every time and I think of when I still remember vividly just how difficult and how unhappy his money made him and the 0.5% differential and just no one can repurpose that but just there was something in the karma of what happened without a shadow of a doubt and his wife was a lovely person who I suspected a tough time with him as well so maybe there was a release I don't know but it's certainly something that sticks to my mind.

Ryan Wellman: So sort of sticking on that same theme of people and looking at the people of Achill, of course you have a business that's definitely very people oriented. What do you love most about people in Achill or just people you've met throughout working at the lodge?

Kenny Deery: I think there's a wonderful grittiness to people who grow up somewhere like Achill because you have to be tougher and more resilient to naturally to grow up somewhere like Achill, the winters are beautiful, but they're harsh. we could go, depending on what's happening or not, you could go for a couple of days without power a few times during the winter. Right. If you've no power in this house, you've no toilets, you've no running water, you've nothing because everything ceases. Right. You have, you know, in the States, if you get snow or frost, the gritters are out and you're still flying down the highway. Here, the national route veers off from Mulranney and and they salt the roads from Mulranney off down to Ballycroy. If you have a really bad winter then there's nothing, you're slipping and sliding and skidding and you end up in a drain as we've all done. So you become more tenacious, you become more resilient. There's a work ethic, particularly in the summer, people seize the opportunity, they'll take two or three part-time jobs, they'll work in a pub, a restaurant, whatever, and those skills definitely transfer for the people who did it. Now, there's a small cohort who were kind of cushy and didn't, and that's fine. That's everywhere. But I think that recognition and in particular, what I love looking at the success of people who relocate and move abroad, that resilience carries through. Like you look at the people in Ohio. We look at I was in London at an event

in the London Irish Centre 2-3 weeks ago and we had diaspora there and the West Mayo diaspora, the people who were imminently successful because they flipping had to and there is a bit of pride in that. And you look around Achill now and there's a lot of people who are located abroad but they've come back and they've invested, they've built a home, they want a seasonal home, they want a retirement piece coming back but it's also nearly a statement of their success. So I think that's something we take for granted but it's a thing that other locations don't have.

Ryan Wellman: Very amazing. And when you're kind of talking about these people that have left and came back and have made a lot of investments in Achill and just in general, do you have any people that you can identify as your main role models? I know you mentioned your granny previously. Any other people or sort of touching more on role models and who's kind of got you to where you are today?

Kenny Deery: Oh wow, that's an interesting one. I think there was, we're so lucky with the Mayo piece. And there was a guy, he's dead now, who worked in the bank, Owen **Heritage**. He was from Tourmakeady, another Gaeltacht area in Mayo. And Owen had this philosophy of, Ken, work hard, play hard, but remember, turn up the next morning. But he opened so many opportunities and doors for me. And yet he was a leader who'd nurture you in your early stages. I think he certainly did have. And he had huge value. I think his family, something went wrong and I'm not sure what the relationship within the family was like. So he saw people from Mayo nearly as being part of his community, right? And I think the likes of Steve Malloy who went to Cleveland. Steve went in the 50s. He worked the labourers union. He hosted, talking to Annie B and to TJ, they don't have the figure, but there's over 800 people that he and his wife Annie hosted for free in the house. They'd pick them up at Hopkins Airport, they'd take them there, he'd bring them down the Angle, he'd bring them to the various pubs, he'd sort work out for them, he'd sort lodgings out for them and they did it pro bono. They didn't, they wanted to just look after those around them and I think anyone who can build that sense of community or what we call meitheal, I don't know has the term meitheal come up

with you yet but it's an interesting one coming back. It's the notion of community, but it's not just as simple as that. I think anyone who builds that capacity and helps nurture people is very strong. And there's quite a few of those in from Achill who are in different locations. But definitely Owen for me was an early stage person. And then there have been many along the way who guide you and you build friendships and relationships with them. Mary Rogers in Galway is phenomenal. She runs the Porter Shed. She's in France today actually doing a deal with the mayor of Bordeaux on a partnership between innovation hubs. And her philosophy, her father was dead before she was born. She was the youngest of a family of 11. The majority of them went to New York, to Queens, etc. She was partially brought up by family in the west of Ireland and an inch more. And she's like, don't sweat this small stuff. Always when you're giving a speech or doing a radio interview, it's the notion of they're only thinking about themselves. Nobody cares. Nobody's really listening. Just get through it. It'll be fine. And I think someone who can also tell you not to take things too seriously and to just get on with it and don't overthink things is important. And certainly Mary in the last decade for me has been formative in terms of, you know, her mindset and the notion of competition in her mind. It's Europe's success is our success. So she was on stage in London 2 weeks ago and she was saying this and you could see some people in the audience kind of looking confused because the UK mentality and particularly in London, it's so competitive. It's like, oh, we need to lock down and protect our corner. Someone might steal our ideas. And Mary's there, no, there's enough ideas to go around, activate them, get on with it. And if you're going to fail, fail fast, move forward. One of the events that we're hosting in as part of the 10 year series for Porter Shed is a startup wake. So we're bringing all the people with startups in and they failed and we're going to have a wake for the startups in the traditional Irish funeral style but we want to learn from each person the three main things that they think contributed to the wake and there's going to be a Guinness bar and there's a party and the whole point is we need to fail fast, learn from those failures and how can they be applied in a different way into the future. So I think you know there's different influences at different points but

certainly Mary from a point of view of that energy is something that that changes your life and your perspective.

Ryan Wellman: That's a great idea with the business. I like the sound of that. Very fun. So we're staying on that same vein. So to what extent has Achill kind of been important in getting you to where it is today or to where you are today?

Kenny Deery: It's been huge, huge. Like in the early stages, there's the grittiness and you know, you learn lots and you become somewhat a salesperson, particularly for me and the formative stuff for my grandmother and family business and that sort of thing. You're tougher. You silly things that other people get upset about don't phase you. Distance doesn't phase me. So we've a distance to get to everything. So I have friends, you know, in Dublin, they're on about going down the country and they're going to Port Leish for the day and they're going to bed early the night before because they have this big drive. Like, holy crap. I just came from Dublin. We went up yesterday evening for an event. So your perspective changes and the stuff that upsets other people doesn't upset you. And I really think that's important. In terms of Achill and the community, I think very much if you give to the community that you're operating in, you get back. And you must give without getting back. It's not intentional. So example I would cite is I as a young, as I say, was involved and loved tourism and loved the idea of tourism. I was asked to get involved in the actual tourism committee. I said, oh gosh, do I, will I, blast, shoulda, woulda, coulda. I became chair. So I was chair of actual tourism I think at 26. We came up with some mad initiatives and stuff that was really successful. And a guy called James Cleary, who's a brilliant mind, operating out of Dublin but they have a holiday home in Achill, he developed the notion of the Achill Half Marathon. And he brought it and initially he did it as a fundraiser for a charity in Africa called Silent Masses, right? And James and I worked really well together with Terrence of the development company and others. And we bought the marathon off James and we built it into the Achill Half Marathon now and set up a separate company that contributed excess funds to charities in Achill each year. And so that was a lot of work and someone

would say, oh God, I'm not doing that. I'm not taking that on. As a result of those early days and an initial trip that Terrance and I led to Cleveland, which formed with Steve Malloy and others, part of the twinning piece, etc., all of a sudden I've been to Cleveland 20 times. I've been a lot through the States for various roles, but my promotions in the bank and the examples you cite would not have happened had I not got involved in community, had I not been a member of Achill Tourism and Chair of Achill Tourism and being able to showcase some of those early leadership development traits. Had I not got involved in the development company, I wouldn't have if I didn't volunteer originally for Achill Tourism and all of a sudden you're taking on projects. And again, someone says, and some of my friends would be very closeted and say, God, I'm not doing it for nothing. But yet they're giving out and saying, oh, God, I saw you on another freebie or a junket. And I'm there. No, number one, it's not a freebie or a junket. Number 2, it's like it's like a ball rolling and it gains momentum. And the Achill stuff in particular, going for CEO of Chamber of Commerce. I would have been a very boxed off banker with no broader experience had I not got involved in the extra community work and just got involved on a pro bono basis. And all of a sudden I had these rich examples about taking a career break and talking about the early stages of trying to fund the Achill experience, building a social enterprise, lagging your way. We had no initial funding. I remember the early concepts, the actual experience, and I'd taken the career break and it's like, right, what are we going to do? And I rang each of the visitor attractions in Northern Ireland who had all got new European funding because of the Troubles in the North. So these were hot investments and consultants have been paid loads of money to design them for best outcomes. I rang each of them pretending that Failte Ireland was sponsoring our trip and got slots with the operations director in each of those locations. and off we travelled and we were a trade delegation, etc. Nobody checked out, but we got all this information for free and that helped us build the initial case. When it came to going for interview for CEO of Galway Chamber of Commerce, I was able to build out all these examples where you had led a trade delegation, you had led a tourism delegation, you had done all this stuff, you weren't being paid for it, but it makes you more rounded as a person and your examples stand out as opposed to being, if I

went for that role as a straight-laced banker, I'd still be left as a straight-laced banker. So when you ask about Achill and what I think the community that you grow up in has a significant influence on you, but you need to get back to it and not expect anything in return, but just know that good will come from it.

Ryan Wellman: That's amazing. So yeah, such a great place to help fuel your professional career and make you really who you are just through the magic of Achill. So kind of just to wrap up, what do you sort of hope for the future of Achill Island and the lodge? I know you touched on that a little bit already, but.

Kenny Deery: I think the separates of the lodge depends on what personal decisions we make and how just the family life roles and all that jazz. I think for Achill Island, there's a real opportunity and there are some good people all doing their best to try and move this forward. But I think there's a real opportunity for a fresh approach. And let me give an example. In Galway, we had a lot of structures working in silos. And we created this forum a few years ago called the Greater Galway Forum. And it brought the leadership of about 15 organizations together. And the point was we needed a unified voice. We needed clear messaging. We needed strategic relationships with government and with ministers and with funders. And we needed to be in sync. And at the moment, Achill isn't in sync. You've got some split development companies and you've got people with varying roles, all well intended. So like this is the important bit, all well intended, but not operating as a unified structure. And I'd love to see the island come together and the parish, because remember, there's Tonragee, Courran is part of Achill as well, and that's a really important part. I'd love to see this parish coming together, putting all sorts of individual personalities aside, and this person looked at me the wrong way five years ago and their dog ate my sheep and all that sort of stuff. I think put all that aside and try and build a strategic vision for the community for the next 50 years. In a world that transformation is going to be mad, but in a world that the likes of Achill could really stand out. It's the only place in Europe that has, with this year 4 but typically 5 blue flag beaches. Our quality of

water, the environment, the landscape, all of that is phenomenal. I think it's a real opportunity to strategically develop Achill and if we operate it in a unified way to secure funding and to build out that policy, that would be exciting. Without that, we run a risk of stepping a bit further backwards to other locations who are organised. And this is not just within Ireland, it's across the globe. So Achill has a real potential, but it's going to need that leadership strategic structure.

Ryan Wellman: Very insightful. Thank you very much. That's all that I had personally prepared. Do you have any other stuff you'd like to add in at all?

Kenny Deery: Not at all. Only well done. I wish you the very best of luck with yourself and Angela. People like Angela who contribute so much to even charting this dialogue, having these conversations are important. Looking back to help inform the future. All that's really important. And we've an abundance of history But we can't continue to live on the fumes of the history. We need to strategically prepare for success in the future. And I think that's the gap. That's the opportunity.

Ryan Wellman: Very good insight. Well, thank you so much, Kenny, for your time. And we are stopping now. Thank you so much.