

# Michael Mahon

Born 1945.

Autobiographical life story.

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*This life story of Mike Mahon is transcribed, with acknowledgement, from the Life Histories Archive website of Trinity College Dublin. The Life Histories Archive is an open-access resource for the study of narrative life experiences. It is part of a research project in the School of Linguistic, Language and Communication Sciences and the School of Histories and Humanities, which is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.*

# 1. Childhood & Early Life



Mike Mahon's parents at their wedding.

J'member the days we played ball on the streets,  
Not a care in the world as we munched on our sweets.  
No cars to disrupt us 'cept cops on the beat  
Plodding their way on oversized feet.

J'member the days when the milk was delivered,  
The coalman came too in case we were shivered.  
A horse pulled the bread van and lots of cake too.  
Oh, the smell was divine as we joined in the queue.

J'member the summers when the days were so hot,  
It melted the tar as we stood on the spot.  
J'member the winters all buried in snow,  
When of to the pictures we would all go.

J'member the school where we went to be learning,  
T'was a bit of a joke till exam time came bearing.

We chewed on our pencils and splattered the ink  
As we scratched our gray matter to help us to think.

J'member the mother so kind and so dear  
As she slaved in the kitchen to bring us good cheer.  
And dad as he worked in the factory by day  
Arriving back home with plenty of pay.

J'member the days when the feel of a breast  
Would send us off scurrying quick to confess  
To the men in black boxes that lurked in their lair  
And left us in tears and utter despair.



Mike Mahon with his mother and younger sister.

One of my abiding memories of childhood was the long summer days we spent in Brittas Bay. My Dad was in the building business and the traditional builders holidays was the first two weeks of August. We were a family of five children, but had many aunts and uncles and myriads of cousins. As there was not enough room in the cars to transport us all to Brittas, my father got a long low loader truck on which he built a frame and covered it over in canvas, it was like a large tent on wheels.



Brittas Bay.

The adults travelled by car but all us kids were bundled into this contraption . We were delighted. We fitted it out with cushions, rugs, old car seats and beach towels and set off in convoy for Brittas Bay. Sometimes there might have been ten or twelve of us plus a few dogs, but we thought the ‘craic was mighty’ . The roads were not very good in those days so there were frequent stops to repair punctures or overheating engines. We were like a small army on the move, the amount of paraphernalia we carried for the picnic. There were kettles, pots and pans, primus stoves, rugs, wind- breakers, table cloths, dishes , cutlery, billy cans, sun umbrellas, li-lows, deck chairs and even a green plastic blow up crocodile .

Of course the weather was not always favorable and I can remember well Uncle Dick and Dad hunching out in the lashings of rain furiously pumping the primus stoves trying to boil water for tea, while we kids sat in our dry mobile tent munching sandwiches. Any time now I eat a tomato and cheese sandwich I can still get the taste of sand in my mouth.

One old aunt, Aunt Dolly, would bring a mountain of sandwiches of dubious ingredients and when we inquired what was in them, she would dismiss us with a wave of her hand, ‘ They’re et cetera sandwiches, whatever came to hand. Eat up and don’t be cheeky’ . I munched on what tasted like a cheese sandwich only to find it had bones in it Regardless of the weather us kids always managed to get into our togs for a swim, build sand castles or just muck about.

Looking back on it now as an adult it reminds me of some sort of medieval punishment. We were always blue, shivering with the cold trying to dry ourselves with a wet towel or sheltering from the rain under a plastic mac. Days later we would still be brushing sand from our cracks and crevices. The journey back to Dublin was another adventure. It was usually late in the day and we usually stopped at one of the many pubs. Now in those days children were not allowed into pubs so as the adults went in for ‘a few jars’ us kids were left to our own devices in our four wheeled tent .

We were happy being kept well supplied with drinks of red lemonade and glasses of raspberry cordial. We would have already stocked up well with such goodies as gob stoppers, bulls eyes, liquorish-all- sorts, fizz bags, dolly mixtures, marietta biscuits

and slabs of gur cake ,which was like dead flies between two pieces of pastry. Exhausted but happy we would eventually get home to Dublin and our proper beds

Brittas Bay has changed a lot in the intervening years. Many of the beautiful beaches have been fenced off by land owners, old country houses have been converted into luxury hotels and spas and a spate of luxury holiday homes were built during the boom years.



Aunt Dee with Lisa and Peter and German Mauser rifle.

To say my grandparents were religious would be an understatement. My grandfather hailed from County Longford and was a builder. He was a member of the old IRA and had taken part in the Howth gun running and had been jailed in Frongoch Camp in Wales. The family somehow managed to keep his rifle, a single shot German Mauser, but in latter years unfortunately it disappeared from the house. The grandfather being so religious had gone on a pilgrimage to Rome, when the only way to travel was by ship. He was a member of some sort of confraternity in Rathgar Church.

These men met regularly, dressed in brown Franciscan like habits, lit candles, burned incense and took it in turns to prostrate themselves in a coffin in practice for their funeral. These were called the 'Bona Mores' which sounded to me like the Latin for good morals.

My Grandmother had a very sad life. She had two sons, the youngest Michael died of leukemia in his teens. The elder Tom, or as the family called him 'Bud' was a motor cycle enthusiast. Himself and my own father joined the LSF (Local Security Force ) as dispatch riders during the war as it was the only way for them to get petrol for their motor bikes.



Unfortunately, Bud was killed in a road race in Cork. Granny never got over this and insisted on keeping his bike, a large BSA model in her living room for many years afterwards with many of the trophies he had won. When my parents were first married they lived in the basement flat of the grand parents house in Rathmines and that was my first home.

I remember well Holy Week in that house, the curtains were never opened so the house was dark and gloomy, all spoke in whispers when not on their knees praying and the radio was totally banned. Everyone was supposed to give up something for the period of Lent and for us kids it was usually sweets and comics. On Good Friday my mother declared that she had to visit seven churches to gain 'indulgences'. She dragged me by the hand and pushed my younger sister Brenda in a pram all around the local churches. It was scary, the statues were all draped in dark purple shrouds and everyone shuffled around doing the 'stations' I was compelled to wear a brown scapular around my neck and cross my hands over my chest going to bed so if I died during the night I was assured I would go straight to heaven . Is it any wonder that religion scared the shit out of me?



Mike Mahon and his football team won the league in 1955.



Mike Mahon at Scout Camp.

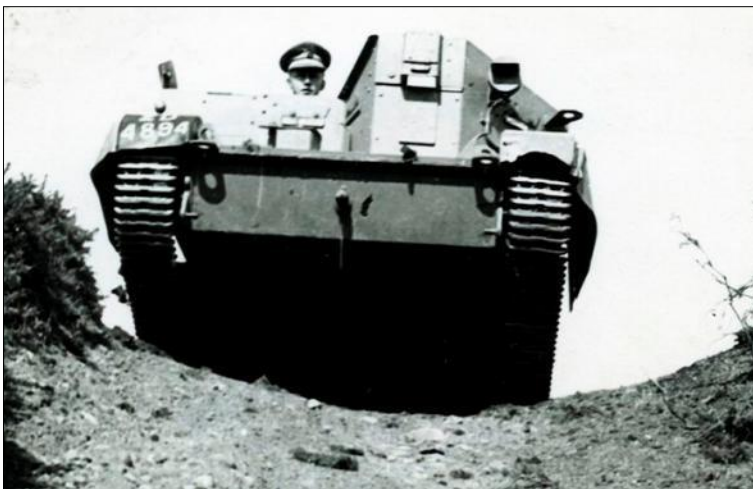
## 2. Adolescence & Early Adulthood

That summer we were due to spend a few weeks in the Waterford Gaeltacht under canvass to improve our knowledge of Irish. The tents and all other equipment were transported by trucks, but it was decided it would be good exercise for the Cadets to cycle from the Curragh to the campsite near Dungarvan.

Given the condition of the bikes it was considered prudent to allocated one truck to follow the cyclists in the highly likely event of breakdowns or punctures. We set off in groups of ten so not to clog up the traffic. As luck would have it was a scorching hot day and our heavy woollen uniforms and boots did not help the situation nor did the bikes have any gears.

Breakdowns were frequent and the lucky few were picked up by the follow up truck to be driven in style to our destination. I got exhausted with the heat, car fumes and thirst. I'd had enough. I waited till the others were out of view, pulled into the side of the road and proceeded to demolish the chain with a large rock. It worked, the chain eventually snapped and I was picked up and driven in style to Dungarvan.

Had I been found out I would have been charged with willful damage to State property, but the sergeant remarked to me, 'Well now Cadet, wasn't that a lucky break you had.' We were once taken out to sea by the Navy in one of their ageing corvettes. The purpose of the exercise was to demonstrate to potential officers the anti submarine capability of the Irish Navy. The grand finale entailed dropping depth charges on imaginary enemy submarines. These devices were launched of the stern of the ship and set to explode under water. Unfortunately our guys neglected to set them correctly and when discharged they explode on the surface and blew the arse of L.E. Aoife.



Mike Mahon in tank at Curragh Camp.

We had to be towed back ignominiously to Haulbowlin by a tugboat much to the amusement of the local yokels. The story goes that during World War 11 or 'The Emergency' as Dev called it we relied mainly on Britain to supply what arms they could spare for our Army. We ordered a few hundred Bren guns, and when asked by the British MOD did we want carriers with them the gobshite in our Department of

Defence replied in the affirmative. He had assumed that ‘carriers’ were some kind of strap or carrying device for the guns and was duly shocked when a consignment of armored and tracked vehicles were delivered to the Army at many times the cost..

Rather than admit to the Brits we had made a mistake, these mini tanks were used the transport turf from the Bog of Allen to a fuel depot in the Phoenix Park. This is what we were called by the local wags who should have known better. It was the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis and I, in a fit of patriotism, decided to join the FCA (which was the Army reserves ) and defend the country to the last drop of my blood.

To this end we were issued with uniforms consisting of a snot green tunic, matching baggy trousers, reddish brown boots and gaiters and to complete the ensemble beret style headgear..Now while most armies had camouflage uniforms, the Irish Army was different, our tunics were festooned with rows of brightly shining brass buttons, presumably to ensure that the enemy could see us clearly. We paraded every Sunday mornings and Tuesday nights for training. Initially this was marching around the parade and performing various drills, what is usually called ‘square bashing’.



Cadet Mahon at Curragh Military College.



After some months we were issued with rifles, These were .303 Lee Enfields and we practiced to load , aim and fire with dummy rounds. Finally, the great day arrived, we were to be allowed to fire live bullets on the target range. We were brought up to Ticnock, in the Dublin Mountains, and took up firing positions. Just as the officer in charge , Lt. Duffy, gave the order to fire, a lone sheep hove into view. 'Fire' , he yelled, and we all let fly. The unlucky sheep disintegrated in a hail of bullets. Duffy let loose a string of Army invectives, threw his hands in the air, ' Cease fire, Cease firing.....Stop ,I say stop. We were all put on a charge of destroying Government property and fined 2/3d old money.



Blending in with the landscape.

Annual training camp was in Kilkenny barracks and there were units from all over the country. We were issued with steel helmets, webbing equipment and haversacks. Our exercise we had was what the Army called 'field craft'. This entailed crawling around the countryside trying to remain as inconspicuous as possible and to this end we were instructed to cover ourselves in leaves, branches and other shrubbery, the idea being to blend in as far as possibly with the local foliage But one genius, of doubtful sexuality, decorated himself in brightly colored wild flowers.. When the platoon sergeant saw this multi colored apparition he went apoplexy and roared at the poor unfortunate individual, 'Private, where do you think you're going, to a fucking wedding?' 'Right, full pack drill and rifles, see that hill with the gorse bushes. I want the lot of you up there and back , ' Captain Ryan roared, and back before tea time.' Sir do you mean that big mountain on the horizon?' 'Don't try to be smart with me Private Malone, now move it'.

We headed off at a brisk pace, all one hundred and twenty of us. But soon many of us started to lag behind and we got the idea to drop into a ditch or hollow in the ground out of sight and join the rest on the way back. Unfortunately for us Ryan had positioned an NCO at the summit under orders to take the names of those who made it to the top. The rest of us who had skived off were stuck with guard duty and fatigues for the remainder of the camp. To this day any time I see that TV programme 'Dad's Army' I am reminded of my time in An Forsa Cosanta Aitiul.

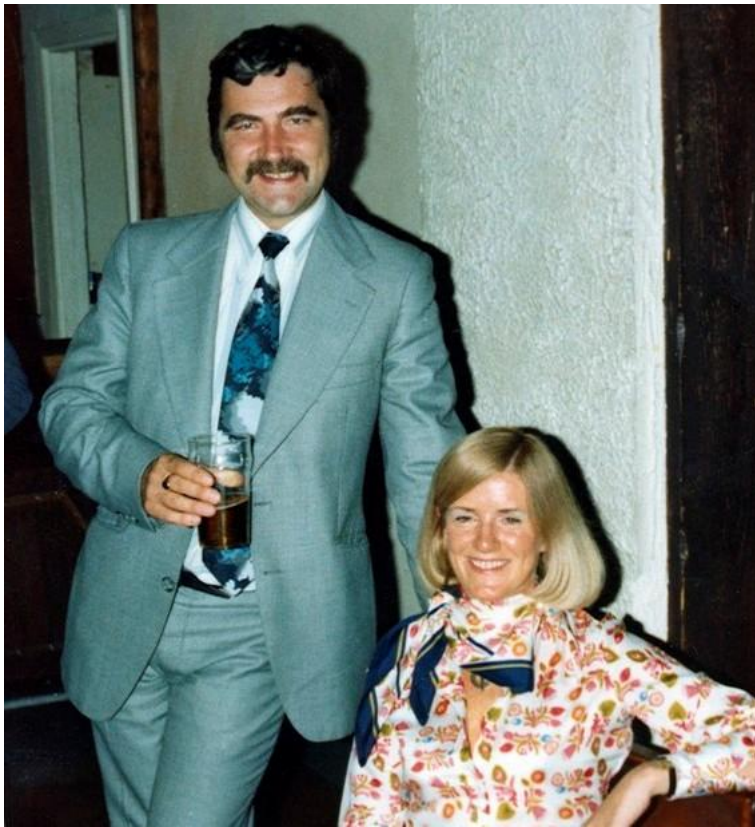
Ask anybody and they will remember where they were on that tragic day, 22nd Nov.1963. For on that day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, and was particularly poignant for me. Earlier that summer JFK had visited Ireland and had seen a contingent of Irish Cadets perform their unique and precision funeral arms drill. So impressed was he that he commissioned a video to be produced of this Drill. I had only been in the Cadets a few short months on that faithful Saturday when an urgent order went out for all cadets to assemble in the drill hall, Halla an Pharisaig. Some were on passes that night and calls were made to all the local cinemas and dancehalls ordering all cadets to return to barracks immediately.

We thought World War 111 had broken out. The CO. Col Mattimeo appeared in civvies, which in itself was most unusual, and informed us of the tragic news. Furthermore , a request had been made by JFK's widow, Jackie, for a contingent of Irish Cadets to be flown to Washington to act as honour guard at Kennedy's graveside. At this announcement there was a flurry of activity in the Cadet lines. Firstly we had to draw out from the armory the old Lee Enfield .303 rifles specially for this 'Queen Anne's Drill,' then all uniforms had to be inspected and immaculate.

Twenty six Cadets were duly selected and flown to Washington the next day. This was a huge honour for the Military College, the Irish Army and to Country as a whole. Historically this was the only time that a group of armed foreign soldiers were allowed on American soil. Normally protocol called for such honour duties to be the preserve of the 3rd Inf. Regiment, the US Presidential Ceremonial Corps.. Many onlookers at the graveside were astonished at the strange uniforms and even more so as the orders were given 'As Gaelige'.

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### 3. Marriage and Family



Mike Mahon, aged 30, and his wife in 1975.



Mike Mahon and his daughter Lisa after her first communion.



## 4. Work & Employment



Training with Aer Lingus in 1965.

### Air race to Australia

**It's the Telegraph 'Ulster Pride'**



**All set to win big air race to Australia**

**IN FIVE weeks' time, a tiny single-engine plane will soar into the skies above London — destination Australia.**

**Her name—"Ulster Pride."**

But she will be no ordinary aircraft.

For "Ulster Pride" is YOUR entry in what promises to be one of the most exciting air races of all time—the BP England-Australia air race.

The Belfast Telegraph-sponsored plane, a Piper Cherokee Arrow, will carry the hopes of all Ulster with it as it wings its way over four days and 11,500 miles of tortuous day and night travel.

So far it is the only Irish entry in the race.

Its goal is Sydney, Australia, and a £12,500 first prize.

Today the exciting news from the carefully selected crew of three experienced fliers is: "We think we can win."

The men who will race your plane have a wealth of flying experience.

The captain is Sqdn.-Ldr. Terry Nash, RAF.

At 31 years of age, Sqdn.-Ldr. Nash has already logged over 5,700 flying hours. A native of Bisley in Surrey, he has been an RAF instructor since 1962. In 1963 he won the Wright Jubilee Aerobatic Trophy and

two years later took the Fighter Command Day Fighter Leader Trophy.

For the past four years he has flown the England-Singapore route — and that's one of the compulsory stops along the route.

His intimate knowledge of air traffic control procedures, and likely race-winning pilot navigation techniques give "Ulster Pride" a fantastic head start before the race has even begun.

Belfastman John Murray (23) is crewman No. 2 and another ex-RAF officer.

John, of 63 Orby Road, Belfast, was in Air Traffic Control before he left the service. He has continued flying as a member of the Ulster Flying Club at Newtownards.

Completing the crew is former Aer Lingus pilot Mike Mahon (25).

Born in Dublin, Mike has lived for the past two years at 5 Bangor Road, Hollywood.

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Crew members (from left), Mr. John Murray, Mr. Mike Mahon and Squadron Leader T. J. Nash.

We had all being maintaining radio silence to disguise our position from our competitors' We spent a few days relaxing in Sydney and then it was time to fly home. Our route back was much the same but with more refueling stops and at a



more relaxed pace. We experienced an alternator failure going into Alice Springs, but got it fixed ok and time to explore the town. We met a local cop who explained to us that one of their duties was to patrol the roads on the outskirts of town and check all vehicles that they had extra tanks of petrol and water and warn them not to venture of the main roads. Apparently some out-of-towners had driven off into the bush to picnic and were never heard of again.



*The Irish - Air Race 100. L to R Mike Mahon Aer Lingus F/O, Sqd Ldr Terry Nash RAF, John Murray Journalist Belfast Telegraph*

We stopped at the RAF Base, Akrotiri, Cyprus and got a great welcome thanks to Terry. We were quizzed in detail by an officer, presumably intelligence, about what we had observed in Luxor. Terry left us in Heathrow and John and myself flew on to Belfast. The Heathrow controller gave us a SID (Standard Instrument Departure) and was nonplussed when we admitted we did not have the appropriate charts and steered us on radar clear of his zone remarking, 'If you guys found Australia, I guess you can find Belfast without a chart'.

Initially there were 77 entries in the Race, but only 60 managed to complete the course. There were 3 classes: A, single piston-engined; B. unsupercharged twin piston-engined up to 12,500 lbs and C supercharged or twin turboprop up to 12,500lbs AWW. The overall winner was an Islander, G-AXUD,, flown by Capt. W J Bright and F L Buxton in 80.17 mins. Most of the entrants were Australian, British and American, but for a small country there were two other entries of Irish interest; Tim Phillips in a Twin Commanche, EI-AUN, and Capt Arthur Wignall of Aer Lingus in another Twin Commanche. Unfortunately Arthur was killed some years later giving an aerobatic display at Sligo Airport. I was encouraged to write this account of The Air Race having seen a similar article by our old Aussie rival John Colwell. I contacted him after all these years by email and was sorry to learn that his own co-pilot John Daley had been killed in an air accident shortly after the race.

## Flying with a cargo airline

I started my flying career with an airline cargo company who were regarded in aviation circles as the 'F Troop' of the flying world. They operated, when I joined, a couple of WW Two aircraft, DC 4's and 6's, which had four piston engines long

past their sell by date.. The crews were a motley bunch with some very strange flying habits. One, I can recall always brought a little pink furry rabbit with him on flights which he hung on the flying column for good luck. Our paths divided, as was the norm in the airline business, but I was to meet him many years later on the ramp at Luton airport. This tall blond female figure sashayed towards me resplendent in Captains uniform except he was wearing a skirt, bright red lipstick and pouting into a hand held mirror. 'Morning Michael,' she greeted, waving a limp wrist in my general direction 'don't you recognize me. I'm working now for ' Equal Opportunities Airlines.'

Our engineers were ex- mechanics from a car factory that had closed down in Santry and as such their expertise was pretty limited. The chief pilot was heard to comment , 'That lot know as much about aircraft as my arse knows about duck shooting' They attempted once to do an engine change on the DC 4, and as the job was complete proceeded to do a ground test on the new engine. They went through the complicated start up procedure on the No 1 engine, and were duly amazed when the No 2 engine fired up and the propeller started to rotate. Not for the first time had they got their wires crossed.

We flew general cargo but also livestock, horses between Ireland, the UK and France for race meetings and horse sales at Newmarket and Deauville. The horses were carried in individual stalls and accompanied by grooms and handlers. On one flight a stallion started to go berserk and was violently kicking the stall to bits. The Captain was afraid he would get loose and kick a hole in the side of the aircraft. He carried a gun for such emergencies and was threatening to shoot the stallion. 'You will like hell', roared the groom, 'that horse is worth more than your bloody aeroplane'.

Luckily for both the horse was calmed down or the captain might have shot the groom also. A major part of the business was flying young calves to Italy for veal production. For these flights we put in a bed of peat moss on the floor of the aircraft to soak up any droppings. We carried three to four hundred cattle and the stink was appalling . In the high season we operated round the clock flights to Milan from Dublin, Cork and Shannon airports.

On occasions we went into an airport in the Swiss Alps. It was always a night time flight and the approach was dangerous and exacting. We had to follow a radio beam (VOR) from the airport from about fifty miles out and check the distance and heights very carefully to avoid the mountains. On one occasion the flight was delayed and we arrived in daylight following the same procedure. We were aghast and shocked to see how close the gray cliffs were on both sides of our aircraft, our perception was that they were scraping the wings. Eventually we landed, nobody spoke a word for several minutes as we all realized how close we had been to crashing into the towering mountains on the many night arrivals. Finally the flight engineer broke the silence with the immortal words, 'I didn't realize this aircraft was so wide.'

'There was really no such thing as weather forecasting as none of the airports had communication with each other ' 'Where else could you take off from a remote airport and fly at low level over the countryside dodging hillocks and trees in a

Boeing 737 at 300 knots! ' 'We mostly used the HF radio in the aircraft to call Berna Radio in Switzerland and they could patch a phone call to anywhere in the world' 'It was many months later when the new timetable was eventually printed that we realized that we were supposed to operate the other way around - and no one had noticed ' 'We could hear some explosions and gunfire from the direction of the town, so needed no persuasion to stay put' 'Even safely on the ground it was chaos and eventually the air traffic controller gave up and declared the airport closed '

## Flying to Nigeria

One of the most interesting and amusing periods of my life were the years I spent flying in Nigeria. I was employed by Guinness Peat Aviation in Shannon and they had a contract with Nigeria Airways. This was a 'wet' lease i.e. supplied aircraft and crews, both pilots and engineers. The deal was good, we spent 15 days in Nigeria and then got home on leave for the next 15, best summed up by a colleague of mine who said 'Going back to Nigeria I take my brain out and leave it in the freezer'. So every month we were required to commute between Heathrow and Lagos.

The check in area for Nigeria Airways at Heathrow was a good example of what was in store for us. It was utter chaos, airport staff had to erect security barriers to contain the mob. A valid ticket meant nothing, you had to be ready to 'dash' the check in staff to get on board and fights frequently broke out as the word 'queue' was not in the Nigerians dictionary. For some reason GPA never bothered to get us visas or work permits in Nigeria, so we traveled in our pilots uniforms to get through emigration, security and customs.

We were accommodated in the Ikeja Arms Hotel in down town Lagos. The hotel was frequently without water or electricity, but we all had our own permanent rooms which we equipped with a fridge/ freezer and small cooker. The food in the hotel was basically inedible , I once saw a rat running up the curtains in the dinning room. We travelled down with enough dried food to last two weeks; vacuum packed meat, tins and pot noodles and did our own cooking as it was considered to dangerous to go out at night in Lagos.

When I arrived first I was shocked when occasionally we came across a dead body on the road as we drove to the Airport in the crew car. The city was filthy, open sewers, stink of uncollected garbage, decrepit buildings, mud , rotting vegetation , mobs of jostling people and constant traffic jams which the locals called ' de go slow' A favourite African method of dealing with a petty thief was for the mob to chase him through the market shouting 'thief man, thief man, stop him.' If the poor unfortunate was caught a rubber tire was thrown over his head he was dowsed in petrol and set alight .

We used nicknames a lot between ourselves to avoid being politically incorrect. The locals we referred to as ' men from Mullingar', and the hookers who infested the hotel bar we called 'nightfighters.' One of our engineers was 'bungallow' as we reckoned he had nothing upstairs. We had one French pilot whom we christened 'Kermit.' 'Why do you keep calling me Kermit,' he indignantly enquired. 'Because

you're a frog,' we told him One night in Kano we were meeting up in the bar to go for dinner. I was down early, the bar was crowded and I was immediately accosted by a 'night fighter.' I was persuaded to buy her a drink. 'Ah, she gasped, 'de Guinness, it gives you much strength' When I asked her what she worked at, she replied, 'I am an expert at erection and demolition. Do you want to come with me.' When I told her I was meeting some friends for dinner, she replied, Ah, I will do group reduction and you can be de fust.

## Flying with Gulf Air

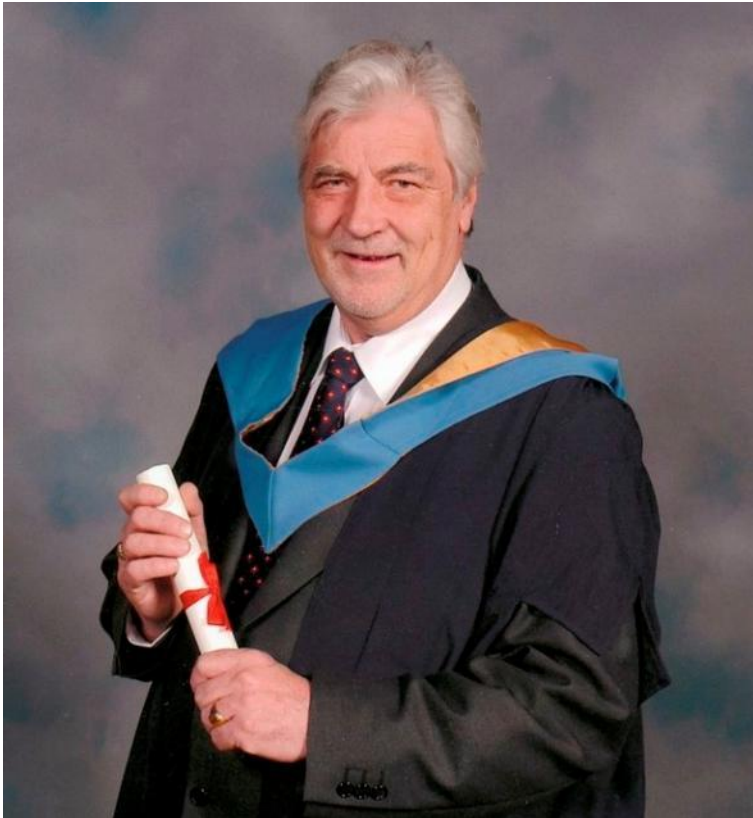
I spent many happy and fruitful years working for Gulf Air, based in Bahrain. Bahrain is a small desert island just off the coast of Saudi Arabia to which it is now joined by a causeway. Bahrain was ruled absolutely by Sheik Bin Al Khalifa, known to all affectionally as 'Jack'. His rule was law but benign. He had his own private beach with one of his palaces located there and yacht anchored off shore. For some reason no local Bahrainis were allowed on the beach and it was guarded by his own armed bodyguard who were mostly Pakistanis or Baluchis. However Jack welcomed all ex-pats to his beach and even supplied soft drinks free to children and families. He would sometimes sit out having afternoon tea and if he took a fancy to you would invite you over for a tea and chat. He had a great sense of humour and enjoyed in particular Irish jokes.

Gulf Air pilots were very strict and operated strictly by the book. Observing this a friend of mine decided to have a bit of fun at their expense.' 'Surely they could identify a civilian aircraft from a military threat' '...some of the other captains assured me that pilots were exempt from their religious duties when flying in the interests of safety' '...regardless of world disasters the first item had to be concerning the Sheik even if it was as mundane as his meeting the French ambassador' 'Once on landing in Dhahran Saudi customs found a girlie magazine left behind by one of the passengers. They went berserk threatened to jail the whole crew and impound the aircraft' 'Well mate, it's like this, if you see a vehicle coming towards you, whichever side of the road he's on, it's better to get on the other side'.

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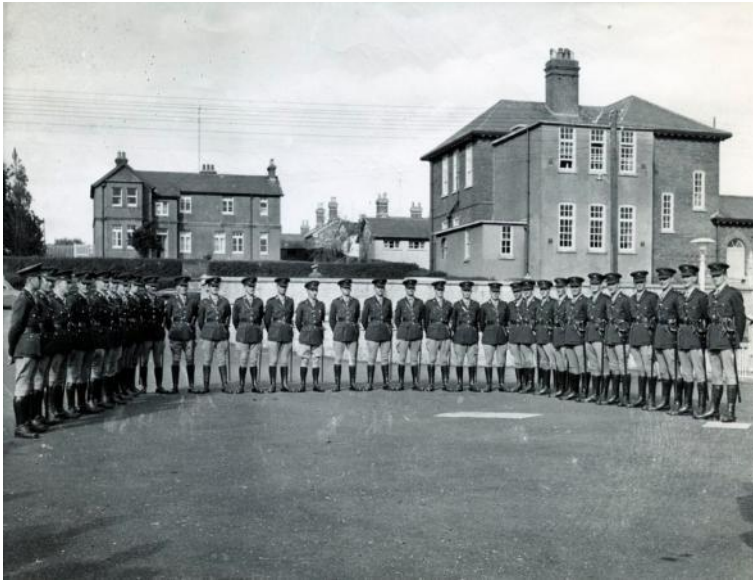
## 5. Retirement



In retirement, Mike Mahon obtained a BA from the Open University.

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## 6. Reflections



The Irish cadets who took part in President Kennedy's funeral.

The most memorable thing that occurred during my time in the Cadet School was the assassination of President Kennedy. His widow, Jackie requested that the Irish Government send a consignment of Irish Cadets to do honour guard at his funeral in Arlington Cemetery. This was a huge honour for Ireland and the Irish Army. Fortunately things have improved greatly for the Defence Forces since my time, they now have modern equipment and decent uniforms. They have proved themselves many times over and over in United Nations peace keeping operations in many countries...We have a small standing Army of only about 12,000, but I believe that there are more civil servants in the Department of Defence 'administering' the Army. One is tempted to ask the obvious question what do all these people actually do?

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