

Vere finds Limerick what "you make of it"

By CAITRIONA COLLINS

HE DESCRIBES himself as being five foot nine inches tall, two stone overweight with mousey hair and he wears size nine shoes. Despite this detailed picture he is more likely to be recognised as the Limerick man who reads the news on RTE radio and television. Though Vere Wynn Jones was not actually born in Co. Limerick and no longer lives there he still regards himself as a Limerick man.

Vere now lives around the corner from the RTE studios in Donnybrook. He is married to a Dublin girl, Jenny, and they have two children, Ruth aged six and Stephen aged eight, and he appears extremely contented with life. However, this was not always so, his earlier years were often wracked by frustration and indecisiveness particularly when it came to deciding a career for himself. He has worked in a variety of jobs as salesman, bouncer, night porter, teacher before eventually joining the RTE team.

Born

He was born in Derry as "It was the nearest maternity hospital to my parents' home in Raphoe, Co. Donegal," he explained. Vere's father, the Reverend Wynn Jones, was a Church of Ireland minister and headmaster at the Royal School in Raphoe. The family also lived for some time in Drogheda before finally moving to Ballyorgan near Kilfinane in Co. Limerick.

"From the moment I began to notice my environment I lived in Limerick," said Vere. "All my memories and childhood friends are from Limerick," he added. As it happened Limerick was quite a familiar county for the family as Vere's mother Joan was related to the De Vere family who owned Curragh Chase. It was from this branch of the family that Vere inherited his name as did his brother Aubrey.

Vere attended primary school in Kilmallock as it was the nearest Church of Ireland school and afterwards when the family moved to Knockainey near Hospital, Vere continued to attend this school along with his four brothers and one sister. "This was a very enjoyable time," said Vere. "I indulged in all the usual country pursuits, playing in rivers, fishing, walking, horseback riding and I also did some shooting," he added. Despite this rather active childhood Vere admitted to often feeling lonely "through nobody's fault but my own," he said. "When you are part of a Church of Ireland community in a small country area and you go to a different school to other children, you have very little chance of meeting any school friends during the summer holidays," he explained. "But people were extremely friendly and I never had any sense of being an outcast," he added.

Villiers

When the time came for Vere to attend school, he became a boarder at Villiers on the North Circular Road. "I took a while to adjust to being with people of my own age, having spent so much time of my youth on my own," he said. He was a year younger than most of his class and this combined with his tendency to be a loner caused some problems during his first year at boarding school. "My first couple of years at Villiers weren't the happiest, because of my own need to sort myself out, I was very naive and it took a



Vere Wynn Jones.

while to develop the social cop-on needed to survive in boarding school," he remembers.

However, Vere soon overcame these minor obstacles and with a sly smile he remembers several discos and parties and of course the all important visits to Durty Nellys. He captained the hockey, table tennis and debating teams and though "I was never as good as I would like to have been at sport, I was always very interested," he said. Thomond Park became a focal point at the weekends. "Recently when I heard Thomond Park was under threat, I was very concerned. I have very happy memories of Thomond Park and the Gaelic Grounds," he emphasised. His allegiance to Limerick is still evident though Vere only occasionally visits the city now. "I still identify with Limerick sports, I'd still go and watch Limerick City if they happened to be in town and I still shout for Munster and when Limerick do win I'm very likely to lose my reason."

In 1968 Vere came to Dublin to study history and politics in Trinity College. "Church of Ireland clergymen don't have a lot of money and in my parents' case they often denied themselves many of life's little pleasures to save money to put us through college," he emphasised. When he first moved to Dublin he stayed in the cheapest accommodation available which was the Harding Boys Hostel on Dame Street. This was still very much a boarding school environment which was restrictive in some ways, "but without that facility I wouldn't have been able to go to college so I am grateful," he said.

Prompted

Vere's decision to study history and politics wasn't prompted by personal interest. Like many teenagers, the 17-year-old Vere was still unsure as to where his future lay. As two of his brothers had followed this course it seemed the logical thing for him to do. "I went to university without thinking why I was going there. It took me a while afterwards to work out what I really wanted from my qualifications. I'm not so sure if I was in there again that I would do the same subjects."

Still unsure of the career he wanted, Vere spent a year in the North of England as a salesman for Vaseline petroleum jelly. "I needed money and

I needed it quickly, I didn't really think out my career prospects," he said. "I was very unhappy, it had nothing to do with the company I was working for, it was me, I was suddenly faced with the reality of life after university," he emphasised.

Eventually he decided to return to college and do the Diploma in Education. He had now found something he enjoyed and after completing his diploma he got a job teaching in Newpark school in Blackrock. During this time he became very involved with the transition year project and though he was thoroughly enjoying his work he was still not completely satisfied. "After five years I realised that what I had was the most interesting jobs in teaching and I was unlikely to get a more interesting one, and at the age of 28 that's not a particularly nice prospect," he maintained. As a result he began looking for something different.

Teaching

Vere gave up teaching and joined RTE as a production assistant. The job actually resulted in a demotion as "I was coming into a situation whereby before I had access to a secretary and I was working on my own, I was now secretary to somebody else," he said. This did not bother Vere as it was just another challenge and he knew that promotion was possible. Within a year he got a job in the sports news department and "Things have gone great since," he said.

It is clear that Vere has great initiative and motivation, he thrives on challenges and despite earlier upsets he has now a clear view of his life. He often returns to Limerick - "I was delighted to be asked to go back a couple of years ago to open the Villiers Summer Fete and I was down a while ago working with Limerick Community Radio," he said. Vere is very positive about Limerick and about Limerick people. "A lot of people have a negative attitude to Limerick people but I don't have that, I find Limerick is what you make it. Sometimes it's harder to get to know people there than in other places but when you do they can be very friendly," he maintained.

Cinemas

The Royal George, the Glentworth and the Dunraven Arms are often stop-off points for Vere when he is passing through. His greatest disappointment with Limerick was the closure of its cinemas. As the gleam returns to his eye he said, "On a Saturday you would take the girlfriend out and go for a court in the back of the cinema." According to Vere the Lyric always had good seating at the back, and he should know.

Limerick is less conservative now than it was and Vere considers this to be a positive change. "A lot of discos used to close early because several people found late night cavorting upsetting but they had their reasons I suppose. A lot of this is now changing though Ireland itself is liberalising and Limerick is just part of that trend," he said.

Vere's parents have now retired to Cork. His brother David is teaching in Oman, Patrick is an energy consultant in England while Aubrey is working in South Africa. His sister Grace has travelled widely and is now working as a freelance journalist in RTE. "I'm the only one who has lived to a very large extent all my life in Ireland," he said, and he has no intention of leaving now. As Vere heads back to the studio, it is obvious that there is a lot more to the Limerick man with the smiling face and articulate voice who reads the news on RTE radio and television.



Tomas Egan and Dan Sullivan at work at the Dromcollogher creamery this week.

PICTURE QUEST AT CENTENARY CREAMERY

By LEADER REPORTER

THE SEARCH has begun to create a unique pictorial display at Dromcollogher's century-old creamery.

The building, is currently being restored to its original condition for use as a museum and cultural centre. Dromcollogher was the first community in Ireland to have a dairy co-operative.

People who may have old photographs, documents, posters or other memorabilia, which have any relevance to the creamery are asked to loan them to the organising committee. Documents will be copied and the originals then returned to the owners if required. Items may be handed in at the

community college after the Easter holidays.

Work on the building is proceeding apace, to be ready by June 5th, the centennial day of the registration of the co-op. Many modern additions have been removed, and the original doors and fittings are being replaced.

The work is being undertaken with the help of FAS teamworkers.

Tops for Askeaton

Three Limerick youth clubs will participate in this Sunday's Top of the Clubs at the Community Hall, Askeaton.

The light entertainment format will be presented by St Munchin's, Abbeyfeale and Askeaton. The show will commence at 8pm.

