

A lot a things have been happening with me over the past few years, I could write a book as they say.

So here is my book.

I'm definitely going to start my book with a quote I seen recently from a German philosopher of the late 18<sup>th</sup>, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Arthur Schopenhauer:-

"All truth passes through three stages:

First, it is ridiculed;

Second, it is violently opposed;

Third, it is accepted as self-evident."

Now the main reason that came about for me wanting to write about my experiences happened by chance really. The other Wednesday night as usual I attended the local pub quiz. The usual faces were there, like any other local I suppose, but this time my sister Louise had popped in. She was with Father Des. They had been out for a meal and called in on the way home. Nothing unusual about that but for me seeing them together brought me right back to the night my mother passed away. Louise, I and Father Des were with her the night she died.

Generally like any reader who is a male (and I will hear all the wife's moaning and nodding – and take note girls) the most important woman in a man's life is his mother. I am speaking here for us men, but for those readers out there who may disagree and indeed for those woman and girls out there, you imagine your special someone who when you think of them you instantly feel love, protection, warmth, and trust.

Mine was my mum. She was everything to me, everything! Now that doesn't mean for one second that we agreed on everything; far from it. I could say that we actually fought about most things, all things even, but her underlying values were always there. You could always feel her arms either open for you or around you, which wasn't easy with nine kids to look after.

Many would say that my mum was opinionated, and I will hear the family laughing at that, and she was. And this was born out of her deep sense of morality, her ability to see good in any situation and her want to be able to weed out a wrong and fix it. I could write a book just on her.

The reader should get my drift anyway. My special person was my mum; yours will be whoever you have chosen, that person who made a deep impact in your life. I missed her dearly everyday from she left.

She had been ill for quite sometime, a cruel fate really, having neither smoked nor drank in her entire life she died from liver failure. From my perspective it was hard to watch, this lady who was everything to me and ultimately shaped my entire life, deteriorate.

When I received a phone call from our Louise at the hospital that Sunday night, I went straight there, even though I loathe hospitals. And as I drove on the motorway I knew why I was going.

I entered the ward and there was Louise and Father Des. (My mum had asked for Father Des to come and give her the Last Rites.) I could see the fear, in fact it was past fear, they both had a look of complete helplessness behind their watered eyes, and I hadn't even seen my mum yet.

Louise went to leave Father Des down from the ward, and this left me alone with mum.

Her first words were "I'm dying".

"Would you wise up" was all I could come up with. But a few more times she muttered it. Then it dawned on me why I was there.

She knew she was dying, but the fear was killing her, now there's a paradox and a half (I like that word – I'll have to remember it.) It's a weird feeling looking back at it; I was actually there to help my mum die.

I absolutely knew this at the time. So I had a few words with her and then took Louise for a walk to try and explain to her what was happening; Louise was 36 (I'd better check this – I'm terrible for birthdays) but she is still my "wee" sister. I left her to think for a while, went back into mum, sat beside her bed, took her hand and began chatting. Needless to say what was said is very, very private and I'll not be divulging that, but she did keep asking me "Was I a good mother? Did I do well be you all?" I couldn't believe she was asking such a thing. Then she fell back into unconsciousness. Woke up and would ask again, then fall back, wake up and ask again.

So after my initial responses made mostly from annoyance at being asked, I calmed down and with the help of Louise we sat about our task. Mum was drifting in and out of consciousness. That night time was, well time was long.

Then all of a sudden, mum sat up in the bed, smiled and ordered us to go and get a pen and some paper. She then set about telling us what to do. The fear had left her completely and there was strength in her voice that filled the room. Lennie was back. She demanded that this one do this, and that one do that. We were actually writing down her funeral mass. She was demanding that this prayer be said here by this one, then argued about which hymn was better, Lennie was definitely with us.

That was the most surreal thing I have ever experienced. There was this battered and bruised body in front of me, yet in spite of everything Lennie found the strength to shine through. All my own notions disappeared.

I felt safe and I felt strong and strangely I even felt happy. It was astonishing. It was the most beautiful thing; I can't find words to describe it. Let's best say it was pure emotion and until that time I had never experienced that before. Then she lay down and got comfortable, made me promise her something which I did, turned her head to me and winked, turned her head back, closed her eyes and as they say, that was that.

I'll have to add something here for my family; my brothers Tony, Ebby and Gavin, and besides Louise, my other four sisters, Sheila, Caroline, Joannah and Danielle, because even though I knew what was happening when I arrived at the hospital, I made a call not to contact them all that night. I have no explanation why. Maybe I didn't want them all to see our mum like this! Maybe that's just an

excuse, I honestly don't know why and I am truly saddened that they didn't get to have that last experience and a chance to say goodbye. I will want them to know that, above everything else, once the fear had gone our mum actually passed happily and with a smile in her heart. Lennie was a smart woman, and she knew that someday I could call on that night's experience.

When I saw Father Des and Louise at the quiz in the Cellar Bar, that's what happened. I never thought about it, instantaneously the weight of the stresses, the lies, the condescension, all those things that had been weighting me down over the past few years, disappeared, and my mum reminded me how to be strong again. I could see everything in a different light. The unimportant things were shown to be that. Everything started to fit into where it should properly go. My eyes were opened, are you with me?

"Are you wi' me?"

That's a wonderful story and leads in nicely.

I am the very proud father of an extremely incredible, beautiful young daughter. Her name is Sophia – Sophia Ella to be exact. Ella after her granny Lennie, you can work that one out for yourself. Sadly Sophia and Lennie never got to meet, 35 days to be exact. She is 5 ½ years old, or coming six as she says, although she told be she was coming six after she blow out the candles on her fifth birthday.

I don't know why, maybe she spied the bucket of balls in the garage, but she wanted to "Come and play golf daddy". So we were in the garden, and you can imagine the sight, she is only about an inch or two taller than the club. So you can see how awkwardly she was holding the club in order to swing and try and hit the ball. Then she demanded the stand-ups and after 30 seconds of head scratching I figured this out to be the golf tees. And sure enough every ball had to be set on the stand-ups. Till this day I have no idea where she had seen this from.

We played about for a while and surprisingly with her inept way of holding the club, she managed to adapt and was striking the ball great. Then she wanted juice, so "Daddy, we'll have a wee break" nodding her head, I think she was getting tired. When we came back, could she even hit a single ball? The garden was getting dug up, she was falling over, swinging around, falling again, indeed getting quite frustrated. Then she decided to get all the balls (14 to be exact because she kept getting us to count them) and put them in a single pile. With one swing they went all over the place, she was able to hit them again. You could see the excitement in her face. After five minutes of this, I decided to try to get her to hit the single ball again.

Only two divets from the garden this time, but she was hitting the edge of the single ball. Not happy, she wanted the pile again but I wouldn't let her. Then she looked at me and said, "Right Daddy I know what we'll have to do"

She went to where her last strike took the ball, lifted it and brought it back to the stand-up. Then with the ball in her hand, she traced the route mimicking the bounce of the ball, and "miraculously" landing it where all her shots had been going, describing it all the while as she went. Then she piped up "That's what we have to do Daddy! Are you wi'me?" "Are you wi'me daddy?" she repeated as I couldn't answer. I was in stitches as we say at the "are you wi'me" bit, but I was also mesmerized at the way her wee mind worked. It's simply beautiful to see things through the eyes of a child.

There is a wonderful simplicity about it, if something doesn't work for you, just change it. Don't let it hold you back, just change it.

As parents I'm sure that you have your own "growing up" scenarios for yourself to ponder over, indeed last night Sophia was putting on her "jammies" after getting out of the bath. They had just been washed and ironed. I looked at her and asked or probably scolded if I'm honest "What are you doing?" She was putting her leg through the neck of the top and down the arms of it. "What are you doing you idiot? That's your top!"

"I know daddy but I have to do this to get it to....."

What she was actually doing was putting her leg down the arms of the jammie top, and then pulling it off again. The top was originally inside out and this was the only way she knew how to reverse it.

As stated, parents out there will have a multitude of stories about their child or children growing up; the sad thing for me is that I am only beginning to notice them now. Sophia is even beginning to try and negotiate things with me; I'll go to bed if I can watch my DVD, etc. I even noticed her huffing with me. You know that standing and bouncing on her toes with her arms shrugged down by her side. She is growing up fast.

I'll take this one step further. The other Sunday, Mothers Day to be exact, I thought I had done the needful, had got enough brownie points and was looking to go out and see the Utd and Chelsea FA Cup match. I was coming downstairs with my coat when I heard this laughing; the infectious laughter type and naturally I wanted to investigate but was stopped dead in my tracks. That pure emotion feeling had returned. There was Sophia and her mummy rolling about the sun room floor, laughing and giggling. They could hardly move with "fun", you know that playful pup type of thing, and the sight just stopped me dead. Suddenly I didn't want to go anywhere; the picture was just perfect. The sad thing for me I realise, is that all these things have been happening and occurring all the time, I simply just didn't notice, I wasn't in the frame of mind to notice, and I'm sad about that.

Family life is very important to me, and growing up in a large family in Wellington Street, sadness was never on the agenda. The big family is an experience and a half, and it's strange that despite all the chaos that one would expect, people actually wanted to hang out at our house. Personal space didn't exist, and if you wanted to use the bathroom, well you better be prepared to wait. Yet everyday was a play day, and we had one of everything in our house: we had a sporty one, we had an artist, we had a "fixer", we had a wrecker, we had one in the clouds, we had a studious one, and we had a wee granny.....,

Everyday was wash day, well probably twice a day at least, and as for dinnertimes, that definitely was madness and no more so than Christmas – three tables across two rooms, we couldn't even find the cat to swing it. Nevertheless if you want to experience the beauty of a large family, Christmas is that time.

I recall the time when I thought I was a big boy, I was proud and I stood tall. I knew the secret about Santa Claus. So Christmas Eve I was allowed to stay up and help my parents with the setting up. Setting up actually meant putting the toys and presents out for everyone; we always had Santa's

stuff put out in what we called the Parlour. Everyone one of us had our own spot which always remained the same. On the left hand side of the couch was Tony's items; Ebby's was in the middle and mine on the right; the girls stuff around the fireplace and so on. And that never changed right up until my late 30's when I returned home at Christmas, my presents would be in that exact same spot. And its not that we had that much; My parents strove to give us everything they possibly could, but remember there are nine of us, but still it was an Aladdin's Cave lit by a huge Christmas tree and we all loved everything we got. Besides you secretly knew you could get playing with the others toys anyway. But I was a big boy that night. I waited until after everyone was bathed and had their new Jammies on (We always got new jammies at Christmas.) Then the we'ens were put to bed and I waited impatiently until I could hear they were asleep. Then I tip-toed up the stairs and removed the clothes pegs from the socks that where at the bottom of everyone's bed, put a couple of oranges and a packet of sweets and maybe a deck of cards or a small toy (I wonder what other people got?) and then put the sock back up with the peg – quietly. I then went downstairs and set up alongside my mum and the other big ones who had come to visit. I set up tall; I was a big boy now. I was brilliant.

There are many things to be said about large families. Names being mixed up, hand me downs etc., and all true, but there are certain characteristics that get built into you irrespective of your individuality; self reliance, compromise, creativity, sense of responsibility, supportiveness to name a few. And you needed them. Everyone needed to chip in.

I heard it said recently that a mother of a large family was asked how she managed to cope with them all and her reply was "One by one". That wasn't actually what I remember happened in our home. Everyone helped out. We have said amongst ourselves that Sheila helped bring up Joannah and that I helped bring up Danielle, but everyone assisted in whatever way they could or was needed – someone changed the nappies of the babies, and in them days there was no such things as "Huggies". A nappy was made of something that resembled a small towel, and was held together with a massive pin and then a pair of rubber pants pulled over this. What would Health and Safety say about that? Then these had to be washed, hung out to dry and be ready ASAP as the we'ens had just been feed. Someone else maybe bathed or helped to bathe the babies in the sink.

And that is one of my earliest memories. I can actually remember being bathed in the sink myself. I can remember everything about it. I have a friend who tells me that he can remember being bathed in the twin tub! The twin tub as I remember it, I had to use these wooden tongs to lift all the nappies out of one side that had this funny shaped twisted thing in it and put them in the other side for them to be spun. But that's what he tells me. I keep him going saying that he was never towelled down but spun dry. What did other people do in them days?

And that's it really, you did what needed to be done, it didn't matter how you went about it, you got it done, and maybe that's how the resilience and creativity came about. You just got it done. For example, we had this car, a Peugeot 504 estate, the one that had the three rows of seats, and it was getting a bit tattered and bruised looking. So we painted it. And when I say painted it, I mean we painted it. We used ordinary paint and ordinary paint brushes – you could see the paint brush strokes everywhere, but that's what we did.

And you know what, it was all fun. We always had fun in our own way. Our Danielle, the youngest, used to wait until my mum and me were in the scullery (working kitchen or whatever you call it, but

we called it the scullery) then she would yap and say “Mummy, our Stewart’s hitting me” Lennie would give me a good slap around the ear and Danielle would wonder off laughing.

And now that’s strange. Danielle is Sophia’s godmother. Something must have rubbed off there: Sophia will be sitting in the room with her mummy and me and she will ask me something and I’ll say “No”. Now Sophia has got that she will not even wait until I’m out of the way, and will go over to her mum and ask her. Having maybe not heard the earlier request, her mum might say “Yes” to which Sophia turns her head sideways so as her mum can’t see her face, puts her hand alongside her nose and mouth and sticks her tongue out at me. Oh now!

Supportive. Well that’s worth a mention. The night before my mum was to go into hospital, from which she didn’t return, I received a phone call from her. I was expecting a general chat, however it turned out that Danielle had been in a serious road accident on the M1 motorway just after the Moira on-slip. I knew the motorway was closed from listening to the radio, but I never expected that it would have been so close to home – you never do. But anyway, Lennie organised everything and everybody pulled together, in terms of hospital, making contacts, dealing with the Police etc. The next morning I went to the Breakdown Recovery centre to remove personal items from the car. You want to see the photos I have, how our Danielle got out of that car crash I will never know. My point is firstly the strength once again of my mum, but then of how everyone pulled together in a crisis.

That support is always there. And it can be very helpful too; if I needed something I could always rely on one of the family. Say for example, it was my sister Caroline. No matter what it was, because she trusts me, she would try and assist. Now if she couldn’t help she would go to someone she knows and because they trust her they would listen. If they couldn’t help then they would ask their friends and so on and so on. You know what it is like. And having a larger base to begin with would greatly enhance my chances of getting a result. With today’s technology and all these social networks etc., what could be quickly achieved with getting it out there?

And I am sort of mad with myself that I had forgotten all this. But with this support and the clarity that only a child’s mind can give you, you have the freedom of thought that allows you to see things differently and to see through all the prejudices and tricks that are used on you on a daily basis in order to try and make you think whatever they want you to think.

Let me elaborate on that a little. Let’s take a football match for instance, and I suppose for extra effect back home, we will take a match between Celtic and Rangers. Wait until I toss this coin. Right. Rangers win 2-1. Now that is the honesty of our situation. It never changes. It will always be the same. But because of the result half of our people will be jumping about over the moon and the other half will be head down and moping about. But why is that? The honesty never changes; it will always be the same result. So how is it that not everybody is happy?

Well, we perceive the world around us according to the emotions we feel. If you feel annoyed then the world around you will be annoying. Equally, if you are happy, you will see everything through rose tinted glasses. And these emotions can be directly related to your environment. And people know this and exploit this. And indeed nobody should have more experience of this than those back home in Northern Ireland. We were segregated from each other, which allowed for these different sides to be switched on and off for whatever purposes required so by those that purported to represent us. By parting us, we could easily be controlled and be fed whatever that side wanted us

to think or do. And our politicians done and used this on a daily basis, and many still do. They used prejudices and false logic in order to get what they wanted. We all deserve better than that, wouldn't you agree!

So I can see this all now quite easily.

And I do accept these techniques that are being used can be used for good also. For example, and keeping it as current as possible, let me use those events of the Boston Marathon bombings.

Shortly after the event President Obama went on TV to release a statement to his citizens. In that speech he said "we do not yet have all the answers". Now that in itself is a true statement and it was used to reassure the people that the Government was on the ball etc. That is the good aspect of it. But the statement, whilst in itself is true, hides the honesty of the situation and the fact that at that precise time they neither had a clue nor have any answers at all about what had happened.

So when you can see that bad things can be manipulated with words for good, it stands to reason that the reverse is also true.

And this is the why I personally like the likes of Stephen Nolan and Frank Mitchell on the radio back home. They strive to uncloak the false logics being used to promote whatever happens to be being pushed at that time. They don't just accept what they are being told and question it with great skill and logic, and indeed try to show the other possibilities and sometimes whilst taking personal abuse for doing so. But a lot of time I have for them.

I especially like Frank because no matter what the event is, if you happen to be from Northern Ireland, he supports you without question. It could be Gaelic football, soccer, rugby, singing competitions, etc., it doesn't matter what. You get the full support. I think that's brilliant, and still unfortunately quiet rare.

I was watching TV the other week when I saw someone I knew and I felt proud that here was someone from our wee country, who took their chance and worked hard to get where they are and do what they do and achieve the success they have. I think most of us would go along with that. But if I said that this person couldn't have laced my boots, and his name was Neil Lennon, then I would have lost half my audience back home. Sad but true.

And prejudices are everywhere, around every corner. Take my school days for example.

The few years I spent at St. Michaels Lurgan were the best four years of my life. There is no doubt about that. The craic was just out of this world.

Now St. Michaels was a grammar school and for someone like me to get there was unusual in itself. It was run by the nuns, and I should also add that boys had only begun to be admitted a few years previous, and I got on well with the nuns in general; every Thursday afternoon of my last year, the last two periods when I was free from classes and when I was supposed to be in the "studies", I was actually up in the nun's house. I was sitting down and having tea and cake with the nuns and chatting away. And when I was leaving they always gave me a large Swiss roll that they had made for me, every Thursday afternoon. The lads couldn't believe it and in fact many didn't until they seen



with their own eyes the things that me and the nuns shared: I played football for the school and most of our matches were on a Saturday morning. Therefore we had to make our way to the school for a certain time to get the bus and go to the match. So this particular day my mate Sparkey and I were walking to school – I had usually walked it alone but this Saturday morning Sparkey was with me. As we walked up the St. Michaels Hill towards the chapel at the top, we could see all the other players hanging about, waiting and shouting and what have you. I told Sparkey to hang back. He questioned me but I told him “Just hang back”. And as we were reaching the top of the hill, the nuns appeared at the window giving me the thumbs up and I gave a nod back to them. Sparkey was wondering what was going on and all I said was “follow me”.

So we climbed over the railings and as we were doing so the nuns opened the window of the house and we climbed through. And there waiting for me on the table was my breakfast. Eggs, toast, bacon, sausages, beans, tea, the lot. The lads had come down to investigate what we were at, and the giggles of them, with their faces of disbelief, and indeed the two teachers who had also been in the nuns house just sat there with their jaws dropped. I just continued as if everything was normal. Those years were brilliant. And don’t get me wrong because I certainly wasn’t a model student, in fact I was probably quite the reverse. I got expelled three times.

The first of those happened when I was cornered in the boy’s toilets by a School Prefect. Now I was just into the school, a first year and this prefect was a fourth year, and at that age at school a year is a lot. He kept pushing me and pushing me until I had enough. To cut short, I gave him a good slap.

But I was the one who got expelled for bullying a Prefect, whilst it was actually me who was being bullied. That stuck in my throat, because here was someone who twisted the event to suit themselves, and then was abusing their authority by trying to get me to do whatever they wanted – “I’m the prefect, you do what I say”.

Sorry. No. Lennie made me better than that.

I have no problem with authority when that authority is properly administered, but I can’t abide when prejudices are put upon you, situations are twisted or means of disguising the honesty of the situation are used, and then this is all forced upon you by those authorities and then “We are that authority – how dare you question us!” Nah, Sorry, I can see through that.

However, back to St. Michaels. I got away with a lot of things because I was a footballer. As I have said, boys were only recently allowed into the School and they had attempted to run football teams in the past, with no success. Indeed I actually played in a few matches, but I threw the head up after the second one: we were playing in and against a team from Belfast. The match itself eventually ended in a draw, but they had one player sent off and we had three. It was difficult enough with 12 chasing after 14, but then I looked up and one of our players, Stevie “Bull” Mallon was just wandering about the pitch. Pumped up from the action I angrily approached him, to get his act together. And what was he doing? He was going about the pitch picking the “magic mushrooms” that he had noticed growing on the field. That was enough for me that year.

However the following year the School brought in a new teacher. His name was Seamus Heffron. He was a former pupil of St. Pats Maghera, a big name in local schools Gaelic football, and he was brought in to assist Michael Russell and improve the sporting culture of the school. And indeed he



turned out to be the ingredient that was needed. He trained us and motivated us. He gave us self belief and a wonderful feeling of togetherness: we took a guitar with us to the away matches and strummed away the whole journey home on the bus, everybody sang, everybody had to make up their own verse – everyone joined in – everybody wanted to join in.

To cut it short, that year against all the odds we went on to first win the Ulster Final and then on to win the All-Ireland, albeit the Europa league as opposed to the Champions league. It was the B final. Nevertheless it was a major achievement for an unknown “girls” school. Across the four years there were a total of about 150 boys at the school. We managed to get a squad of 23 from that, and if truth be told, not all 23 were what you would class as footballers, but we needed a squad. It was great. We were paraded about the town on an open top bus in Lurgan for this, although not all people joined in our celebrations unfortunately. It was a sign of the times. Craigavon District Council refused to send us congratulations as we played sport on a Sunday.

The following year we moved up to the “Champions league” of the MacRory Cup, and we continued to excel. We went all the way to the final demolishing St. Coleman’s Newry by 11 points in the quarter final and then St. Michaels of Enniskillen by the same margin in the semi final. However we were well beaten in the final by St. Pats of Maghera. That St. Pats team included the likes of Damien McCusker and the Downey Brothers, Seamus and Henry, who went on to lift the Sam Maguire with the Derry team that beat Cork in the 93 final. So we couldn’t take it that badly. Although there is one thing about that MacRory cup final that I will never forget.

I played full forward and behind me at centre half forward was Lawrence Ward. Lawrence was the one that made our team tick. Everything went through him at that position. Those were the days when you took the field at a certain position and played there. I can’t stand this 13 men behind the ball game that Gaelic Football has gotten itself lost within. When the Anthem had just played and the referee was about to throw the ball in, from my position I could see Henry Downey punch Lawrence Ward in the face. Lawrence never kicked the ball the whole game, and if he didn’t tick, we didn’t tick.

Now after the match Henry made a point of coming over to Lawrence and apologising , stating he was only doing what he was told, but it showed me how easily one’s strings can be pulled by someone else in order to get what they want.

Nevertheless our success brought more and more to the school and they won the All-Ireland again a few years later with a team that included the aforementioned Neil Lennon. Other players to come through the school included Pat McGibbon (ex-Man Utd, Wigan, Northern Ireland and next door neighbour).

Just a quick side step, we recently had a reunion, which was attended by Joe Brolly and Neil had come across from Glasgow, and all the students who had attended the school from that time. It was a brilliant night. I enjoyed meeting everyone again. Indeed I have met so many people recently from those School days. Its wonderful to see them all out and about and enjoying themselves and when I do talk with them, even though I know they have all grown up and had their own lives, they are just exactly the same people as I knew before and we chat away as if we were in the classroom again. That is absolutely brilliant. I love it.

Now getting back to the prejudices at school; as I was a footballer, I didn't bother too much about homework. We had this class that required you to do an essay each week, nothing too long, a page and a half or so. You were told what the essay was to be about, then you had to complete this and leave it in the "homework" tray, where it would be taken and marked and then this would be put in the "completed" tray for you to collect.

Not being too bothered about homework, too busy doing other things, what I used to do was get in the classroom first, go over to the completed tray, search about for the one with the highest grade, take this away with me and then copy this word for word, before putting it back in the completed tray. Then I would wait a day or so and hand my copy in to be marked. Guess what?

The girl whose essay I copied got an A+ (hence my copying of it), I got a C-. I kid you not. This happened a couple of times, so I decided I would confess to this girl and let her know what it was that I had been doing, and told her the results. She laughed but I could see the disbelief in her face.

To my surprise, the next day this same girl approached me and told me what she was going to do – for a laugh – just to see. Here is what she did.

Her next essay, she wrote out two copies, word for word, in her hand writing, same pen and everything, but signed one copy with her own name and the other with mine, and then handed them in.

She got an A+ . I got a B-.

What that said to me was that the teacher never even bothered to check anything, they just seen my name and, well, .....

Herself indoors here, actually agrees with me on this one. Her father is a local businessman and she was able to see this prejudice from the other side. She accepts that she was afforded different treatment. It did happen. She hates me bringing it up, but it did happen.

And anyway who is she to talk about bringing things up. Oh now! Mrs C.

I don't understand you woman at all. I definitely think you all go to this special girl's class when you're young. You know that class that teaches you how to have this place in your head kept especially for items marked "things to keep and bring up later" (again and again and again)

And as for the "nothing" answer you get when you ask if something's wrong?

Experience has taught me that it doesn't matter what it is, it is my fault and I'm just going to have to accept that, find out for myself and atone for it.

And as for Shopping! No. I'm lost with that one and it definitely must be a girl's thing for even Sophia is at it too. You daren't go near a shop with her. You just daren't. I would look over it but then Mrs. C might be clearing out her wardrobe and she will pipe up. "Oh, I forgot I had bought that". You buy things, hide them from us men just in case we say anything and then forget about them.

And as for the "Bargain" thing. That really takes the biscuit as far as I'm concerned.

Mrs C will come home with this grin on her face, and naturally I will ask how she got on that day.

“What do you thing of this? What price do you think it was?”

I just shrug my shoulders and even before they have returned to their original position, it is

“It was originally £100, down to 50. Then in the sale it was reduced by 50% down to 25 and with my club card, I doubled up and got a further £10 off and then the lady on the counter made a mistake and I got a further £10 off. What you think about that? Good wasn’t it?”

And I can see the pleasure and happiness that this bargain hunting has given her and all I can really say is “yes”, but really I want to be saying “that’s great dear, but what the hell do we want with an electric pitch fork?”

And the odd time, when she realises she as no defence you get “It was a good bargain, I just had to get it anyway.”

Ah, you are wonderful creatures really. Beautiful, adorable, a bit weird and not a chance for us men to be able to understand you but we couldn’t do without you.

(Please stop putting my stuff away - I expect to find it where I left it)

Nevertheless those prejudices are real, and everywhere. And what really gets up my nose is when they are used in a way that holds one back, and it’s daft really as Innovation is vital for economic growth.

But trained minds are the most inflexible and blind to creative solutions, and it ends up as “innovation is what we say it is”, “it’s not innovative unless you do X, Y and Z”. I think they miss the point really and the true nature of what innovation is. You see, once you put ANY “you must...” on anything, in a bid to try and control it, you stifle it from being what it really can be.

One of the greatest minds of recent times was Albert Einstein. Now if he done things the way people say he should have done them, we wouldn’t have got anywhere near where we are today. For example, his theory of gravity, space time etc, stemmed from him imagining balls in a bowl of jelly. What was he on? I’d like to get a smoke of that.

Or let’s take an example closer to home. One of our greatest talents of recent times is undoubtedly Rory McIlroy (and congratulations to Graeme McDowell on his PGA Tour win the other week, his first in some time and indeed his recent success in the Volvo World Match play. In fact all our golfers have done us proud and no doubt we will someday have a Ryder Cup captain in Darren Clarke). He has a talent and natural ability that is second to none. He didn’t become World Number 1 for nothing. His skill and exploits at the end of last year were truly amazing. But then over the off season he got this big massive deal. Great for him financially, but unfortunately that deal came with provisions etc. He had to change what he did to suit the provisions of that deal.

And what happened him at the start of this season? He was useless, and he knew that himself. The pressures of living up to what other people wanted and told him to do got to him. And so much so that he actually walked off the course one day in total frustration. Even the greatest get held back when doing things the way others say they should.

And thankfully I see enough strength in Rory that he will soon understand that it is not all those other things but himself and his own talents that make him what he is and the talent he is, and he will soon be back to his natural best again.

(Rory is probably one of our best ambassadors on a global stage. I think it's high time we stopped playing petty local politics with him. We are forever scoring own goals. What do you think the rest of the world is thinking about us? I personally have worked all over the world from America to China and I am absolutely sick of what I get in these places when they hear I am from Northern Ireland. Questions, Questions, what's it like there? Etc, etc. And you would love to see their faces when they find out that I am a Catholic and my business partner is a Protestant. They are totally baffled. They can't understand it. That's not possible.

And we created that image or allowed that image to be created ourselves. Whether we like it or not, we are all in this together and it is now a global stage we operate in.

It's weird, you can take people from either side and put them anywhere in the world and they will be the best of friends. On holidays or whatever, and I'm sure we all have experience of that. But on our own patch! Can anyone explain that?)

We all have heard, I'm sure, of the little girl who came up with a solution of getting the lorry which was too big, to fit under the bridge. If all the laws from the powers that be were followed in terms of you have to have this and that, and your tyres must legally have this amount of pressure in them etc. then the lorry wouldn't have gotten past. But the Childs clarity by-passed that and got the job done.

And what if I was to use my skills that I have learned in the computer industry to assist in the health world? Naturally the two don't meet. But what I want to do is, well firstly let me paraphrase from the eternal Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, he of the "this is my rifle, this is my gun, this is for fighting, this is for ....." And I'd bet those men out there who know who I'm referring to who haven't already reached for their crotch, have at least thought about! However, I'd like to paraphrase from the prayer – This is mine. "There are many like it, but this one is mine."

What I want to do is to monitor the process in charge of how cells live and survive. (Always monitor those in charge.) Specifically, I want to monitor the point in which the respiration of oxygen in the cells is being replaced by the fermentation of sugars. We have all heard about DNA and so on and that certain switches and genes are used to do certain things, but what I'll do is relate the DNA sequence to a computer program. Therefore there is a line in my program that monitors this change in the respiration of oxygen and this then tells another line of code to activate the fermentation of sugars in order for the cell to survive. So when this process has robbed the respiration of oxygen in the cell by 37 – 38%, I will set a flag. I will then monitor this flag, and if it has been set for over a period of 48 hours, I will activate another piece of code within my code (DNA), which will express genes and cause apoptosis. Now wouldn't that be good!

And what if this approach worked? Does that mean that I hold the patent on it? And does that then mean that my approach can not be used to assist the cure of other diseases unless I say so?

Patents! The world has gone a bit mad over patents recently. The companies are even arguing over how you actually swipe your hand over a smart phone. The world has gone a bit mad altogether. I

even have seen recently that 3 Cork Council workers were sacked because they stopped to fix a pot hole (their job) on their way home to base. Nuts!

And 73% of 153 women agree!

Don't get me wrong, I am all for the inventor being the one who gets the most from it. Some of my heroic icons are the likes of Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Google. But it's not because they are all super rich, rather that they have brought untold value to people all over the globe. If they have gotten rich doing so, well so be it. And would any of them got where they are if they had done things the "normal" standardised way? I think not.

And what about the man who has probably done more than anyone for the advancements in and how we use modern technology today, the late Steve Jobs. IGenius indeed and here was a man who was actually forced out of his own company by those who didn't like the way he did things. He didn't do things the way they said they should be done. In my mind Steve Jobs was the epitome of innovation. He had this incredible ability to see the hidden value in things, PIXAR for example and look at the films that have been created since with that. He didn't actually invent anything himself, but he was able to see the hidden value of something, take it and make it into something special. It would be fantastic if the world had more people like him. I wish I had that ability.

It's those concepts that bring me onto the main focus of my story.

Although, I will probably write a prequel which may help to assist those who may read my book to understand how my life experiences have shaped my thought patterns: how I view the recent reports into the Inquiries of the murder of a local solicitor, my sister-in-law, and that of the assassination in prison of the man who was responsible for attempting to murder me, in exactly the same light; the continued incarceration of my cousin, Martin. And that's why it must be a prequel because unfortunately this wonderful, beautiful country that I reside in, loved throughout the world by anyone who has had the pleasure to come here and meet our people, is still a bit messed up and such comments would be twisted in the wrong light and so detract from the real story, for it is the actual underlying principles as I see them that I am referring to and not the cases themselves; of how the media can be used to highlight items that hide the true nature behind things and then when the normal laws that should apply to everyone, and remember they are the ones the make the laws, don't suit their agenda, then they take their ball and go home so to speak; And how I can directly relate those principles to the main story; the influence of the work ethic of my father on me and the days I spend with him at his work; how my brother who had been in the second lowest class throughout the entirety of his secondary education went on to educate himself firstly via Lurgan Tech, which in itself wasn't the easiest at the time as Lurgan Tech was the only college that I am aware of that had a Catholic corridor and a Protestant corridor and indeed the stabbings that happened in the school, then 4 years later left University with a degree (and his work can be viewed at [www.tonycorey.com](http://www.tonycorey.com)); how I survived that murder bid; the influence of the street I grew up in; the people who lived and live in that area, the late Harold McCusker, Len Ganley (the snooker referee) and Norman Uprichard, the man who with a broken hand and injured ankle kept the Czechoslovakia attack at bay to allow Northern Ireland to reach the quarter final of the World Cup in 1958, Indeed I could use Norman as a perfect example of "my community" of Wellington Street as

here was a protestant who played Gaelic football for the local St Peters club and even how the GAA finally awarded Norman his winning minor medal in 2004, after he had been banned and told he wouldn't receive it because he played foreign sports (having signed for Glenavon); how I used to love to hear the Lambeg drums being battered up at Lurgan Castle which is directly behind the street, up until bedtime when they kept me awake – they didn't half go on; the sounds of the peacocks from the enclosure beside the boat house n Lurgan lake; how I pleasure now about Strictly, as everybody now wants to dance, but how I hide the fact that I was a Latin American dancer having been trained at Clarkes School of dancing – if anybody had have known that back then my life just wouldn't have been worth living; how the death of young Eamonn O'Connor who was tragically killed in a work compound when they were building Church Walk Surgery changed the whole ambience of the area – and there isn't even a plaque in his memory there; how in my early work days I seen corruption both within the workforce and with Government Agencies at that time; how I faced condescension at an International level when myself and two of my club teammates, Marty Sloan and Dessie McCann were in Scotland playing Scotland U18 Youth International team, and how he SFA gave their team £15,000 to prepare for the match and we got £75 from the IFA, and how we were 50 to 1 in the local bookies over there to win the match having watched us train and the way we were kitted out, but I should add we won 2-1 and I scored the winner; how I love to listen to the older generation and the stories they tell and things that happened with them such as how people used to move from house to house and play music, tell stories and recite poems, and how I would love to capture these stories, poetry and songs that will soon be lost forever and how I just can't quite grasp that a lot of these were only one generation away but seem to be from a different world altogether; how an administrative cock-up before emergency surgery could have cost Mrs. C her life, don't start me on that one; thank God I overheard the anesthetist as they were throwing me out of the room. But I will leave all this for the prequel.

Now back to the real story. It surrounds my recent life as a local SME business owner in Northern Ireland.

Firstly, and to get it out of the way, is that our politicians will have to do more to deal with the banks and how they are treating the local small businesses. I'm sure I speak for all of them, it's a nightmare. I wrote to my bank seven times to ask for their help in moving on an asset that we had developed. The last time was on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Now they replied eventually on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. But that was the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, not three weeks later but a full year and three weeks later, and all they wanted to do was remove all the facilities of my account. They never even mentioned the asset which itself would have given rise to me not requiring the facilities. And then they kept lowering and lowering the overdraft, and without warning. How was anyone supposed to run a business with that going on? And all the while they lowered the facility they still kept all the security that covered the higher limits. And my take on that was that they could then say to the powers that govern them, look we have this amount of loans but this amount of security to cover that. They would use the access of my security to cover others loans etc.

Every business could give a multitude of stories about their banking, but I truly believe that if our politicians don't put more pressure on the banks, our economy will be a long time before it gets back on its feet again.

But anyway, as a local business the biggest market available to me is Government Business and it is this government procurement and other legislation that the focus will be about. I work within the computer industry.

And everything that I present, which you can verify as being 100%, is true.

Ouch! Whilst Sophia is laughing, I can feel Lennie giving me that cross stare and a slap on the back of the head. You see that statement as I have said it is one of the methods that are commonly used to misrepresent things. Read it again.

And again just to make sure.

Whilst it gives you the impression that everything I present is 100% accurate and that this can be verified, what it actually states is that everything that YOU can verify as 100% as true, is true. Those that you can't may not be true at all. So whilst the statement in itself is true it actually may hide the honesty of the situation. And I will refer you back to the Boston Marathon I mentioned earlier.

So for the sake of honesty, and the principles I was brought up on, I will re-phrase that.

Everything that I present can be independently verified with the evidence that I have collected as being 100% accurate.

Stop trying to compare the two, they are totally different.

It's only fair to describe my experiences of late and over the previous few years prior to the tender of the main focus to give some indication into my mindset when it comes to procurement in government circles.

Firstly there was a large tender, and to be specific it was for the delivery and installation of computers, laptops and printers for all the MLA's coming into our new Government setup. It was a tight schedule, and I truthfully accept I wouldn't have won this tender given the resources required at that time to fulfil the contract in the given timescales; the products wasn't an issue but these needed to be installed all over the country. However, it's the reasons given why we were thrown out of the tender which I wish to highlight.

One of the products requested was a 12.1" laptop with a discrete graphics card i.e. it had to have its own video board as opposed to having integrated graphics. Now those acting for the Northern Ireland Assembly already had in their possession a 12.1" laptop of ours without the discrete graphics.

As their requirement was quite new to the industry we had to have this specially made by ASUS. This had been completed and it was on its way to us from Hong Kong. However it was soon evident that because of transit difficulties this product would be arriving late by 2 days to us. We wrote to the authority and told them of this.



We didn't win the tender but as always we attended a debrief so as to find out where we went wrong and so better our tender responses in the future. In this debrief we were told we didn't get through because we failed to provide a 12.1" model in time. I asked one question "how did the other suppliers do this, given that discrete graphics in a 12.1" model was not an industry standard?"

They couldn't answer but said they would look into it and get back to us. Two weeks later we received a communiqué from them stating "we changed the specification so as integrated graphics would suffice but we forgot to tell you".

Next there were two tenders that came out from the same authority at "year end spend", one for laptops and one for PC's. These tender documents were identical, indeed they initially had the exact same wording, but was then changed to highlight the product offerings accordingly. All other aspects of the tender were identical.

We didn't win, but again attended debriefs. These were held 15 minutes apart at the same location. In the first de-brief we were told we came first for After Sales Support, second for staff experience and third for quality standards. It should be noted that there was an independent monitor in attendance, from Eircom if I recall correctly. At the start of the second debrief, this person was asked to leave. We were then told that we came third for after sales support, fourth for staff experience and fourth for quality standards, and this was for the exact same requirements, word for word, as the first one.

Then we have the Probation Board. This was a client we had been trying to get into having previously failed. We done our homework and eventually we thought we had won a tender with them.

They had rang us and told us we had gone through and they started to integrate their systems with ours in terms of ordering and invoicing and warranty support. When I asked them for an official letter of award, they said they had to wait until this certain person returned from holiday so he could sign it. Everything went quiet so eventually I contacted them, to be told that this person awarded it to another bidder. I pushed this person for some answers to questions I quite obviously had, and whilst he confirmed that ours was the best tender and at the best price, he gave it elsewhere because our parts "may not be interchangeable with the older PC's they already had."

Then there was a large tender we actually won – but the client reported back to us that a member of the tendering authority questioned "Would you want to work with them?"

And to top it all off, in came the advent of Shared Services. Whilst I will not comment on the pros and cons of Shared Services, I will state what that meant to me in our market. Previously each of the various departments was in charge of its own IT budget and tendered separately for their IT requirements. But now there is a single entity with one budget to cover all NICS bodies, and therefore there is a single large tender to supply all these departments. Consequently this had narrowed our opportunities as a local SME in this market to a bare minimum, and given the

Governments methodology of being “risk adverse” those opportunities that do arise can be difficult to approach. Indeed this also had the affect of excluding two other local companies from bidding for these contracts because the Multi-Nationals wouldn’t support them – they wanted to bid directly themselves.

The only other opportunities that arose was for the Higher Education Colleges, which we were successful in on two occasions, but they have now changed their tendering authority to an English based consortium which prohibited us from bidding.

Therefore given our previous experiences and the removal of opportunities from our market sector in terms of Government spend, it is only fair to say that our mentality is to ensure that whenever an opportunity does arise for a tender, that we are going to ensure that we get a fair and equal opportunity in bidding for it, what conditions apply to us, should apply to everyone else.

And I’d better state at this stage that I can only relate the events and those whom are mentioned below in relation with the following tender. I make no inference whether implied or not to anything else outside of this tender. If anyone else has similar stories then it will be up to them to tell them in their own way. (Maybe we should setup a website or forum for this.)

Now In early January 2009 we were contacted by Microsoft Ireland who wanted to see us. It was during that meeting that they made us aware of the upcoming tender for the HSC, stating that it had been due to come out previously but that a supplier complained about it because it was to include both product and installation of that product and that this particular bidder wouldn’t have been able to access the installation services of a third party as another bidder would have had preferential access to this. Therefore the project was to be split into two, one for the products and one for the installation.

Microsoft Ireland was fully aware of the impending tender, and detailed that they wanted to join forces with us on our tender submission, and stated that it would be a difficult one to win as if either of two large multinationals tendering were to win then they could say that they were the number one supplier, so they both would be going all out to win it. (This was also told to us by Toshiba when they came on board and indeed later by the Tendering Authority itself who said they were aware of a “turf war” here in Northern Ireland)

Needless to say we said yes, but were totally unaware officially of any such tender/tenders. But on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009 we received a tender invitation from the CPD for the supply of between 6000 – 8500 products, split 85% for desktops, 12% for laptops and 3% for Ultra Mobile devices on behalf of the HSC. It clearly stated that installation services were not included in this tender. The tender response had to be completed and returned by the 24<sup>th</sup> Feb, which was later extended to 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. My immediate thought here was that the people “down south” know more about what’s going on up here than we do.

Six companies were invited to tender, but as two of the locals couldn’t bid as explained above, that left us and three multinational companies.

We read through the tender and set about getting together the resources etc that would be needed. We joined forces with Microsoft Ireland in order to provide the required licenses and with Toshiba Ireland to provide the requested laptops and ultra mobiles. We ourselves would look after the PC's.

We quickly found that there was an issue with the specification requirements; the tender stipulated that the International benchmarking software SysMark 2007 Preview was to be used to evaluate the performance of the supplied products and detailed what each product offering had to achieve using the MS Vista operating system as a base. However we found that at that time, this was an impossibility to achieve.

When we contacted the "Industry" for help on this, it was stated that all bidders were in the same boat. (And indeed the industry then came back to us and asked us how we managed to eventually do this when the multi-nationals were still having difficulty.)

We, along with another bidder (s) pushed the authority on this requirement as can be seen from the clarifications going back and forth pre-submission. Each time we were all told that they had done the tests and were happy that the score could be "delivered using mid-range corporate PC's" which they claimed they had done testing on.

Again the authority was pressed on this, a total of 4 times, and not just by ourselves but others also, and eventually on the 19<sup>th</sup> February a clarification went out to all bidders saying that the testing done internally on the mid-range machines was done using MS XP SP2 and not MS Vista as the base operating system, as they had previously been stating.

I found this extraordinary, as if they had done the tests as they claimed in preparing the tender, they would have known this instead of promoting to us on at least three occasions that it was Vista. Furthermore, that same clarification stated "in this environment (XP SP2) it is still our belief that the office productivity scores can be delivered using typical mid-range corporate PC's."

Again I found this strange as if you had done the tests as claimed, it wouldn't be your belief, you would know.

Pre-submission we also asked about the costing mechanism to be used and a clarification was sent out to all highlighting, with a full page example, how this would be done using the 85%, 12% 3% split method. This was the final information given.

Here is that exact response:-

22. In relation to costs, can you clarify that 85% of the available score will be assigned to desktops, 12% to standard laptops and 3% to Ultra Portables?

How do you equate the lowest cost tendered?

**Yes in relation to the costs the split will be as follows**

**85% desktops,**

**12% standard laptops**

### 3% Ultra Portables

The lowest cost tendered will be taken as a total for supplying all of the above.

For example based on 8500 machines

The following would apply

7225 Desktops at £400 = £2,890,000

1020 Laptops at £500 = £510,000

255 Ultra Portables at £600 = £153,000

Total Price £3,553,000 (This would be the price tendered)

Scores in respect of costs will be calculated as follows

☐ Lowest cost tendered will be awarded the maximum score available (800 marks)

☐ A relative score for all other tenders will be determined by dividing each cost tendered into the lowest cost tendered multiplied

by the weight as follows:

Lowest cost

Cost \_\_\_\_\_ x maximum score available for this criteria

This is nothing less than what was expected, how else could one have done it? Any financial person or any person with any common sense can see that.

But is this what they used? Oh no.

They changed how this was marked after all tenders had been submitted.

And from the evidence I have gathered, what this meant to me was that I went from the second cheapest to the most expensive. And I will be more precise, I went from being cheaper than one Multi-national company by £560,320 (Five hundred and Sixty thousand three hundred and twenty pounds), and another by £940,780 (Nine hundred and forty thousand seven hundred and eighty pounds) to being the dearest overall when entering the E-Auction - by £51.

And it was during this E-Auction, a reverse auction mechanism that Government use to refine the prices that it became abundantly clear to me that the correct method of calculating the cost for the tender wasn't being used, so I questioned it. What they had done was take the individual costs of each of the three required items, add these three individual items together and used this cost of 1+1+1 to give the total cost tendered. Oh Yes! And to make this worse I have at least 2 letters from

the CPD at that time trying to tell me that everything that they had done was OK. It was the same for everybody was what I was being told.

What!!!!

How in Gods' name could they suggest this? How would they ever get this past an Auditor? So I went back to them again complaining that this had 'disadvantaged' us. This must have been a trigger word for they agreed to meet us. And it's from that meeting back in March 2009 everything ensued.

It may be difficult to explain this saga, as there will to be a lot of back and forth, going from one time to another to explain it correctly so I will try to break the whole thing down as simple as possible.

The basis of the tender is as follows:-

You had to supply the items requested i.e. Desktop Computer, Standard Laptop and Ultra Mobile Laptop and a price for the quantities stated;

85% of 8500 = 7225 Desktop Computers, 12% of 8500 = 1020 Standard Laptops, and 3% of 8500 = 255 Ultra Mobile Laptops. The total of these items was to be the cost element of the tender and equated to 80% of the marks.

A further 10% of marks were to be allocated for your storage arrangements, and another 10% for your delivery arrangements. I'll describe the Storage and Delivery as being subjective elements and what I mean by that is these items are down to opinions; they will be scored on what someone thinks of what you have written.

But before any of that, you have to pass a set of Mandatory Requirements. Mandatory being the give away there, these have to be passed even before your tender is marked. Indeed in the tender Terms of Reference, the rules if you like, it is stated a total of 5 times in the first 13 pages alone:-

**"Failure to meet any of the Mandatory Requirements will result in your bid being eliminated"**

So these Mandatory requirements I refer to as the objective criteria. You either pass them or you don't. Yes or no, black or white – there is no grey area. These Mandatory Requirements related to the items being requested; each item had to meet the minimum specification as laid out in the tender and then you had to provide proof of this. This proof had to be provided by means of the reports generated by the SysMark 2007 Preview benchmarking software and must be for the EXACT model that you were offering. And it was further clarified that the proof had to be provided in the form of the two electronic files that are generated by the SysMark 2007 Preview program, it is these two files together that actually validate the proof. You then had to provide a machine in each of the categories that directly relate to your offerings and the proof that you provided. These machines would then be tested by the Authority to ensure that all was in order.

And furthermore it was an absolute requirement that all your items be in your storage location by March 27<sup>th</sup> 2009 so as they could be Audited to ensure of their completeness, and so as payment could be made from within that fiscal year.

So to summarise, you had to provide a quantity of items to a particular specification and have these in storage by the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009 so as they could be audited and paid for.

Now at this first meeting, the CPD at last put their hands up and stated that they were wrong – the last piece of information given was the legal means by which the tender should have been calculated in terms of price. They then advised us that we would be within our rights to ask to have the tender scuppered altogether. This is important, as since the CPD have tried to twist this and say that they offered to scupper the tender, but they didn't; they only advised us that we could ask to have this done. They didn't even state what would happen if we asked, and besides they spent the rest of the meeting telling us that we wouldn't have won anyway. So what we agreed was that we wouldn't stand in the way, as long as they provided us with the proof that the winning bidder passed the Mandatory requirements as per the tender.

Now if truth be told, I asked for this for a very specific reason. If the reader will recall, the industry come to us and asked us how we achieved the specification as none of the other Multi-National companies could do it, and this was pre-submission of the tender closing date, and it was rumoured throughout the computer industry both North and South that there was difficulty with the winning bidder achieving the pass mark as required in the tests being carried out post submission. But once again the industry had come to us and asked us how we did it, and this was post submission, after the closing date. And this struck me somewhat in that if they were still having difficulty now, how the hell were they able to supply the results with their tender submission in the first place?

But I should point out that all I knew at this stage was that there had been a major 'cock up' in how the tender was scored in relation to the costing, and that they had originally tried to say that they had done nothing wrong.

However, we attended a debriefing meeting with those that had marked the tender, as we normally would. These are important to us, as they normally surround the subjective matters of a tender. We need to know how the person marking the tender is thinking, because a loss of marks here could mean you would have to try and make this up with your costing element; a loss of two marks say may mean that you have to be £50 cheaper per item with your pricing in order to win the tender. So it's very important to try and understand their mentality. It's the old hand ball scenario. When it is objective a hand ball is a hand ball, no matter what. But when it's subjective, it's a case of, it was kicked up him, it wasn't deliberate, he couldn't get out of the way, in other words it is open to interpretation or persuasion even. It's like them trying to tell you that Bobby didn't mean to hit Lucy, nonetheless! (Although it may be a few years before anyone understands that.)

But there were a few things that I specifically wanted to question. Firstly, I wanted to know why we had received such a low mark for 'Storage', (the marks for these subjective items range from 0 to 5, three being that you had satisfied the requirement). We got 1. The reason that had been given to me was that we hadn't supplied our Police Response times to the security systems of our facilities. That's fair enough, we didn't. But we had everything else. So I wanted to know if I had everything, but just not supplied the Police response times, then what would have scored three. What were the criteria just to satisfy the requirement? The other two bidders scored 4.

Oh, I should point out at this stage, and it's important to remember, that one of the multi-nationals had been thrown out of the tender because they didn't meet a Mandatory Requirement, MR3 to be exact, so that left me, FMS, and the other two multi-nationals.

And I was being told that the others had this and had that. But that's not good enough, as bidders should be marked against a set of criteria and not each other. I'll return to this storage later.

Secondly I wanted to question the authority about why they had questioned me so much for clarifications before the e-Auction in respect to having completed machines in storage by the 27<sup>th</sup> March. You see they wanted an absolute commitment that all machines would be completed and in the store for Audit by this date. But I couldn't do that for it's like this. I could supply all the machines and quantities without any issue whatsoever, but to have them 'completed' required the authority to actually supply us with clones of their software needs and in the absence of any commitment from the Authority that they would do this, then how could I realistically make such a commitment.

I'd better explain what a clone is. I'll use an example to help.

Say the reader bought 100 new PCs (never mind the quantities of this tender) for their staff. Now these PCs will come with an operating system on it (Windows 7 or Windows 8 for example) configured specifically for the make and model of that PC. That is it will have all the drivers installed for the various components that are inside that PC, such as the video card being used etc... But then the reader has to install all the line of business applications like Word, Excel, etc., accounts packages etc., so as it becomes usable for the staff. The installation of these packages and configuration of them could take a full day.

Now if you were to do this for every PC, then it would take forever really. So what you do is to take this first completed machine and make a "clone" (also called an image) of it. This clone is then just copied onto the other 99 machines, and as the machines is identical in terms of components such as the video card etc, and all the drivers for these are installed already, then they will work straight away.

But what should be noted, is that if the reader takes this clone and tries to put it onto a different make and model of PC it won't work. This is because the components being used in this new model will be different than those in the original machine, and therefore the drivers the reader had installed in their clone won't work on this new machine. In other words a clone is specific to the make and model of the PC being used.

When I questioned them originally about this commitment of supplying these clones to us, we were told that the department already had some of these clones and were working on others.

How could this possibly be? How the hell could you have clones ready if you didn't already have a specific machine from whoever was going to win the tender to actually make them on? And this was what was being told to me before the E-Auction was being held.

So at the debriefing we questioned this. For around 20 minutes we drilled them. You could see that something wasn't right. The sweat was pouring down from the guys head. And body language speaks more than anything. I may not have been exact with my questioning but you could easily tell something wasn't quite right.



And this body language is quite prevalent throughout this saga. Never mind what they are saying, watch the body language, it'll tell you more. The reader would probably have to ask the likes of David Meade, a local mentalist, to explain this properly, but watching the body language tells you more, and indeed it's more fun. (For example, a false smile is easy to detect; when a person truly smiles their eyebrows will raise.)

The next time the reader sees a man and woman together, watch how they react to each other, how they are walking together etc., and see if you can guess which of the three books the wife is reading. Has the man just got a big grin on his face? Does he just look knackered but with a big grin anyway? Or is he completely at peace with the world and all around him? Is he grey, darker or freed?

But anyway, after 20 minutes of questioning, it was still being proffered to us that they had some clones already but didn't have any machine to build them on, and we were talking rubbish as they didn't need a machine to do this, and really as the whole line of questioning was going nowhere, we let it drop.

Now isn't it somewhat strange that I am in possession of an email from a man in the Belfast trust stating:-

"XXXX had asked me to contact you with regard to an image for the BFT to give to the suppliers. In order to do this we would need a physical machine of the make and model that is being supplied in order to build the image, how do we go about getting this?"

And here was I thinking that the department had some new way of doing things that I didn't know about, at least that was what they were telling me. Did all the trusts not know about this new way?!!

What was also interesting about this email was that it was dated 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009. I also have emails that they were in correspondence, not just placing orders but amending orders with the eventual winning bidder on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

The contract was awarded on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

And all these irregularities made me question things more and more.

Now at this time, the issue of the Probation Board tender and the man coming off his holidays popped up. This really got up my partners nose. "What the hell is the point in us being here? Enough is enough!" So he drafted an email and sent it out to every MLA.

Low and behold the very next day, all over the local radio and TV, was this statement released from the Government, congratulating us, this local company, on winning a major contract against all the multi-national competition.

Firstly, this indeed shows that we can compete against the multi-nationals on a level playing field, In fact the contract referenced was for a higher College institute, who no longer purchase through these authorities as I mentioned earlier, they buy through elsewhere, and we have since found out they are actually paying £100 more per machine of the same specification, than what they did buying from us.

But also, this was released out to the media to try and cover anything that may have arisen from our email to the MLAs, a pre-emptive release if you like. I couldn't help but laugh because we had won this tender some three months earlier and not a word about it, but it showed me how things operate.

But anyway, we got a reply from every single party on this, except one for some reason. And to further this we even had meetings with local MLAs of our area, such as Stephen Moutray, and even David Simpson MP.

At the same time I continued to question about the tender of focus. The more I questioned the bigger the hole became.

And we still hadn't been given the results as asked for originally after the "disadvantaged" meeting. When I questioned this, what I got back was "we didn't think you required anything from us" and this was in June now, 3 months later. But I'm not surprised with this now, and indeed I'm in the possession of an email dated the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009 between departments which says:-

"Attached are the Sysmark outputs but I am not sure that you will want to pass these on to FMS"

Indeed the things that I found out at this early stage were worrying:-

You know the way the Authority was supposed to do the tests on the supplied equipment to authenticate the specifications of the machines and confirm what was supplied with the tender, well guess who actually done them -----the winning bidder.

Then it became apparent that the winning bidder supplied an Ultra Portable Laptop that wasn't to specification as far as I'm concerned. The specification for this was to be a 12.1" screen size, but they supplied a 13.3" screen size. The authority is arguing with me that this is OK, because the 12.1" screen was a minimum specification. Yes it was, but the item was to be an Ultra Portable Laptop. A larger screen makes it less Ultra Portable. And indeed in a meeting I had with the authority, it was told to me that they were stupid for arguing with me, but legally they believed they would get away with this.

But what this meant to me was very important, because of the price difference between the two. In my case, a 12.1" screen size Ultra Portable laptop to specification was a full £600 more expensive than the same 13.3" screen laptop with the same spec. That's a difference of £153,000 in my bid. So in my mind the winning bidder had been given an advantage of £153,000 in their tender bid. To make this worse, I have evidence now that shows the winning bidder actually stated in their tender document that 'we know you want a 12.1" screen but because of the other items you require with it, we can't give you it, so we recommend this 13.3" instead.' But having given them that opportunity why wasn't I given the same opportunity to quote for a 13.3" screen? Are they not obliged to give fair, reasonable and objective consideration to a tenderer's submission? Besides you are always told that in a tender you must give them what they want.

I also found out that despite being an absolute requirement for having to have all machines in storage by the date of March 27<sup>th</sup> 2009, the winning bidder's machines never even left Poland until April 6<sup>th</sup> 2009. How did they manage to Audit that?

And all these irregularities started to build up and up, but I had to be careful in what I was asking about. You see Public Procurement is a mine field of legislation and probably that is why there are whole departments to look after it, to ensure that Public money is being spent legally. And some of the things I was pushing are quite serious.

There is an EU directive – Article 45 that deals with corruption etc. and as it is an EU Directive it has to be applied in all member states, and when you tender you have to declare that you have not been convicted on any of its counts. This includes falsifying or misrepresenting your tender submission. And indeed how serious this is viewed can be judged when you see that this is stated alongside being a member of a prescribed organisation. In other words falsifying your tender is viewed the same as being a terrorist, and if having any convictions you may not be allowed to tender. And this is right across the EU member states. It is also an offence for an individual or organisation to give or receive an advantage of any kind, in the line of their duty. And because of what I was pushing, I had to be careful.

Nonetheless, I was getting nowhere with my questioning; all I kept getting was that everything was in order, all mandatory's were checked, and indeed they claimed that by doing the things the way they did, they were able to purchase around a 1000 extra items.

So I used another local MLA, George Savage this time, and he got me a meeting with the Finance Minister, which was also attended by the head of the CPD. And that body language thing arose again, as the head of the CPD appeared as if he was panicking as the meeting went on. But it was accepted that the issues I was raising were indeed very serious and that they would deal with the matter directly themselves. I should add that the Minister was a perfect host and it was a cordial meeting, although George Savage told me off afterwards as I kept calling the Minister, Sammy.

But still I got nowhere. So I had a second meeting with the Minister, attended by myself, my secretary Fiona and Counsellor Stephen Warke, but this time it couldn't have been any different. It was, 'you can't come here and suggest that without solid evidence'. He also had an advisor in with him at the meeting.

So as requested, I provided all the evidence, my own, independent, the whole lot. And all I go back from the Minister was a letter saying he was happy that the CPD had answered all my questions.

Nah. Sorry.

So I went to another local MLA who introduced me to the Northern Ireland Audit Office. So once again I laid out my case, and they said they would investigate. Now it was interesting for me to note at this very first meeting, it was stated by those present that they were aware of this tender and had been watching it. What that meant, I don't know.

However it took around nine months, the NIAO stating that it was a complicated case and was taking longer than expected.

A few items popped up during that. I have evidence now that the Audit Office asked the Authority about the late delivery of the required items. The reply was that 'We confirm that not all items were in store by the required date'

Now I will refer the reader back to those misstatements. Yes the answer as above in itself is true, but the honesty of the situation was that NONE of the items were in store by the required date.

Another item was around the 13.3" screen. It was said that the specification was changed before Lot 2 and Lot 3 bidding. But I said to myself, What Lot 2 and Lot 3 bidding?

It turns out that there was a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> part to this tender process, and when pushed on this by the NIAO, the reply was that we were not invited. Shock! Horror! What!

But it was in that same reply that it was stated that the second and third parts were "primed" by 'Company H'. What does primed mean? It must mean something, they have a term for it, and it must mean something. I would like to know. And I would like to know because having primed the tender, Lot 2 and Lot 3 bidding was won by 'Company H'. Having primed it, they won it. (And why wasn't this questioned?)

Was my tender primed?

Anyway I got a reply following the investigation from the Comptroller and Auditor General. It stated how it would recommend how things should be done in the future and good for that, but there was one item I didn't agree with, so I wrote back to the NIAO. And about three months later I got a reply. In that reply it stated that:-

"I note your interpretation that "it doesn't matter what the tendering process says". Nothing could be further from the truth; indeed the inappropriate process applied in this case was one of the key reasons why we carried out our investigation into this matter"

What was that inappropriate process?

And that was that. That's the last I heard from them.

And after all this, how did I feel? Well basically I felt alone. Totally alone.

I couldn't even speak with those closest to me (and if the reader had my evidence they would understand that). I had no one to turn to.

Here was I with all this evidence, that a blind man could see that there was something seriously amiss concerning this tender, and all the people who are supposed to be there to assist you, indeed whose duty it is to assist you, are just white-washing you.

And you're not that stupid. People mightn't know you or even like you, but you're not stupid and your abilities can not be denied. You could highlight public figures, like Johnny Hero, on the local U105 radio station, who had a completely shattered hard disk, and it was you who managed to retrieve all 120GB of his data, or even Connor the Travel man on that same radio station; or that large new shopping centre with the big glass dome overlooking Belfast, it was you who designed, installed and implemented the whole system that runs the place, 28 different systems including data, telephony, security cameras, alarm systems, electricity metering, footfall etc., all running on one physical network, it was you who did that, (and besides you were invited in as a member of MENSA, you know that Carol Vorderman club for want of a better term, as far back as 1990, and if the industry respects you enough to come and ask your opinion, well). And whilst those are

everyday projects if you like, well at least people can relate to them. So they can twist the subjective material as much as they like, but when it comes to the objective stuff, the black and white items, well, they'd be fighting a losing battle.

But as I say, I was alone. Every aspect of my life was affected. Here were the very people, who should be assisting you as a citizen of Northern Ireland, and you were even giving them the very data to do that, but all you got was, well it felt like a spit in the face, from every one of them. Then I realised that I have loved ones who are not to be taken for granted, and to walk away now would be to hand them another victory. Like any parent I will strive to give the best that I possibly can for my child, any parent. And indeed I have a selfish wish that in many years to come, my child, my daughter will not look at me as "daddy singing at the party" or "daddy on the dance floor" type of thing, but rather with warmth, love and pride, the exact same things that I see in her deep blue eyes when she looks up at me now. And whilst everyone was telling me to let it go so I could get back to normal living, what they didn't realise was the "me" factor in that. For if I did, I would be in turmoil with myself everyday for the rest of my life over this, I would have no self respect whatsoever. And in that frame of mind, what good would I be to anyone, never mind Sophia.

So I began chasing after more evidence via Freedom of Information. A nice ploy was to ask for the same information from the different people associated with the tender. And the reader wouldn't believe the differences in the information I received back for the exact same question.

One of those organisations, the BSO, took 49 working days to reply. That mightn't mean anything to the reader, but you are supposed to receive a reply to a Freedom of Information Request within 20 days, or within that period, the agency could ask for an extension. But that didn't happen. 49 working days it took.

And not all the information was given to me. So I had to Appeal their decision not to give me certain information, but this was also turned down. Therefore I had to go to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) in the UK and request the information via them.

After some time they came back to me wanting some further info, because they said that they didn't believe a word that they were being told by this department, and if I could give them some more info it would help in the matter.

Then eventually I got a call from my solicitors who were dealing with this FOI and with the ICO for me, and they said that the ICO have managed to get the department to release the info I requested, and sure enough the following Monday the department was in contact with us to tell us that they were releasing the info.

A day or two later we had an email from the department giving us one piece of information and stating the usual trained response of "Is that the end of it?"

Well, No. Where is the rest of it?

So we got a further email giving two further pieces of info and it also stated that was all they had and they now considered the matter closed.

Sorry boys, where is the electronic files that I requested and that were supposed to have been supplied with the tender when it was being submitted as per the Mandatory Requirements?

They wrote back saying they didn't have them. What!!! So I wrote back:-

'What do you mean you don't have them? It was a Mandatory Requirement to supply these with your tender bid. Are you trying to tell me that you awarded a contract to someone who didn't fulfil a Mandatory Requirement, especially as you had already thrown someone out of the process because they hadn't met a Mandatory Requirement? Are you trying to tell me that you don't have the information (that you are supposed to keep) in order to make the tender award legal?'

A week later I got a reply and I have to say it was a brilliant answer. I admire whoever it was came up with that. Mrs. C could tell you, whilst applauding the answer, I was deflated entirely. "Bastards" I thought. "We'll take a slap on the wrist for not retaining the information and that'll be the end of it."

What they said was that they did receive the files, and that they were on the test machine that had been supplied by the winning bidder as per the Mandatory Requirement, but that they wiped them off this machine in order to re-run the tests from scratch. However, their staff witnessed these tests results and that they correlated directly with the .pdf file that the winning bidder had in their tender documentation. This machine was re-tested and everything was ok.

I sat there thinking 'what could I do now? That's that'

A few days passed and I decided to review all the evidence that I had collected over the past four years, and in fact rather than having to walk away, I actually now had the definitive piece of evidence I needed to prove exactly what I was saying. It's undefendable and they had this information in their possession all along.

So armed with all "my" new information I requested a meeting with the Authority which took place in Clare House, Belfast in December past. They tried to change the Agenda but I wouldn't let them.

The first thing I brought up was the storage element of the tender. If the reader recalls, the winning bidder received 4 marks out of 5 for their storage element of their tender. According to their tender this was located 1 mile south of Sprucefield and had all the standards etc that you could think of. (The other bidders storage, who also got 4, isn't even in this country, how could they audit that?)

Well guess what? It doesn't exist. It never did. And when I asked about this, there was lots of paper shuffling and head twitching, but there was no answer. Instead we got, we'll look into that and get back to you, we must have agreed something with them but we don't have an answer as to what and when this was decided.

I have seen all that before. I wonder what they will conjure up for that.

Then we brought up the 13.3" screen again. And having been ridiculed for almost 4 years over everything, the minute I brought this up, there was a full frontal attack on me; 2, 3, and even 4 of them at a time coming at me, with all sorts of things. It was obvious they had done loads of homework on this, but to tell you the truth I no longer cared about the 13.3" screen size issue, I had a bigger weapon I was just about to unleash. So we agreed to disagree on this issue if you like, but I took the opportunity to remind some of those present of what they had told me previously in that I

was correct on this issue (and must have been also, sure didn't they change the specification for LOT2 and LOT3 bidding) but they thought that legally they would be ok, and I was taken right back. I was told, "Yes, but good luck, I hope you can prove that."

I'm serious, that's what I was told.

But next was the real point of the meeting. I brought up about the missing test results, and clearly stated that this was were my biggest issue lay.

On at least five occasions I was told, "I'm telling you the truth, we seen these files and the EXACT same machine, not one of the same model, but the EXACT same machine was used to re-run the tests."

By saying "I'm telling you the truth" I got the impression that he was trying to convince others at the meeting besides me. But this was all I needed to hear, and when I then hit them with the data and asked them to explain it, what I got was "we can't".

That's the height of four years work and evidence gathering. "We can't". That's it. That's all I got, "we can't". I've even tried to make contact with them since, but no reply. They have taken their ball and gone home. Not another word. And without any attempt even at an explanation what is one left to think.

No kidding, you can't.

Now I'll have to explain to the reader what all this was and means. Never mind what I got from the Finance Minister and my own solicitors in that you need independent evidence etc., because you see the test results I have were actually done by the winning bidder themselves, if the reader recalls it was the authority who were supposed to have done the tests but in fact it was the winning bidder, therefore I don't need anything independent.

Believe it or not these test results done by the winning bidder, and not by the authority, and on their own equipment, actually prove that the information as supplied in their tender is false.

The winning bidder, a multi-national computer company, actually proved by their own hand that the information in their own tender was falsified. And when you know that, then you realise that it was an impossibility to have received the electronic files that were supposed to have been delivered with their tender as a Mandatory Requirement. And then it obviously follows that the department telling me that they did, but don't have them anymore, is a load of bull.

And then everything that they have been trying to tell you, that everything was above board and correct, for the last four years, falls down in a heap around them.

The evidence even shows that we, this local company, were the only bidder who actually fulfilled all the Mandatory requirements and therefore should have been awarded this contract.

And yes, I am mad, for I even told the Finance Minister and the Audit office exactly how to go and check this all out. I told them exactly how to do it, follow these steps, 1, 2, 3 and 4. That's all it took, 4 items to check. And this was the objective stuff too, the black and white stuff. You didn't even have to make a judgement on other people's judgements as you would with the subjective matters.



And this was the very first thing on the list. Mandatory Requirement One, MR1, the one giving that away, the first requirement. And how did this even get past the authority in the first place. Surely they have checks in place for this; “Did they pass MR1? Yes and here is the proof”. (As Sam always says, his we’ens would know to do that). But how did this get past? Yes they passed MR1 but actually we don’t have the proof. Did that not flag something up?

And indeed how did all the subsequent “investigations” miss this. I mean it is first on the list. Two seconds and you’ll know something’s not right. And did it not flag up that we actually were the only company to supply all as was requested. Did they never ask themselves why the others didn’t do as they were asked to do? Or is that when the prejudices and presumptions kicked in?

But did they? No.

Or maybe they did, and there is something else hiding in the background that I am not aware of.

Maybe the how needs to be changed to why.

But I will now refer the reader back to the letter I first received from the Audit Office. In that letter it stated that:

“BSO has since confirmed that there are no performance issues with the computers purchased which are used for routine office activities”

Sorry, that’s not acceptable to me, and that’s what I questioned. There is a legal framework to be followed in procurement and to tell me that the goods were ok isn’t acceptable.

I will give the reader an Analogy here.

A few weeks back if they recall, it was all over the local news that 100 police officers were involved in an operation both sides of the border against fuel laundering. Now there isn’t anything wrong with the fuel itself, however!

And so the same with me. The goods may be ok but as for the legalities of the contract award as I have shown! Effectively the goods are illegal in my mind.

That’s what I’ll call my book, Contraband. Our Government are using contraband goods.

And the reader might be asking themselves, well now you have all this data, what about the courts?

Well that’s another story altogether. Firstly, and it shows how bad my mind set had got, as I didn’t even have faith in the solicitors at this point; having played one of the oldest tricks in the book, in that meeting in Clare House in December something was mentioned that only me and my solicitors should have known about, but yet it was mentioned. How was that? An accident? Well possibly, but I became somewhat curious. But it shows how far my mentality had got. And besides all the solicitors were really promoting to me was that this wouldn’t get anywhere as the time limit had passed. That was their job.

You see I am being told that the law actually states that I can't contest this fraudulent behaviour because I should have brought it to court within 30 days of having knowledge of or ought to have known something was up. So I had to bring this to court within 30 days of suspecting something was wrong, that is bring the Government to court within 30 days. What justice is that! It has taken me four years to collect the evidence that was denied me, and constantly and consistently denied to me. How in Gods' name could you bring a Government to court within 30 days without any evidence, just suspicions?

Really what will my story be about?

Will it be about corruption?

Will it be about gross incompetence?

Will it be about big business and Government?

Will it be a David and Goliath story?

Will it be a story about the wise old warrior waiting for the enemy to show their hand?

Who is Goliath?

How many Goliaths are there?

Or maybe I'm just stoned. Maybe that's it. I'm stoned and all this evidence doesn't exist. I dreamt all this. Maybe that's it alright, why not; all the Government bodies don't seem to have seen it.

Will it be a story of hope for those in despair?

Will those local politicians fight your corner and demand the injustices perpetrated on you and your colleagues be rectified? Will they "do the right thing"?

Will some solicitor read it and see how this could be taken through the courts? After all it is in the public's interest.

What will the Government bodies involved say if they see it? It only takes one to ask.

I really don't know. Maybe I'll win a prize for the worst book ever. Maybe somebody will write a book about my book. Maybe they'll make a film. We could get Uncle Andy to play Sam but who would you get to play Fiona? Maybe I'll get a spin around Clarkson's track, before he's sacked!

I could even go further a bit to make a story.

If the reader recalls some months back, Feb 12<sup>th</sup> 2013 in fact, a story was released to the press by the Audit Office about a man who had continually complained about procurement issues over a period of four years to the DRD. The Audit office said that these complaints weren't being taken

seriously or being investigated seriously, and indeed recommended that a “centralised and service-wide resource should be made available to lead or assist departments in complex investigations such as this”

Normal story maybe, but not to me. To me this story was released in order to pre-empt anything that may arise from my story because at that time I had issued writs in the high court, get into the media first and cover anything that may arise. And rightly so because as far as I’m concerned they themselves would have questions to answer; how did they miss this? It doesn’t get any more black or white. And they were told exactly what to do.

Maybe’ I’ll take this further; David Connolly, a County Down Contractor. That’s a bit vague. Usually they’d tell you how tall you are etc.. But not even the company name. Is this just a cover story? Does this David Connolly actually exist?

Ouch! Just got another slap there.

I would like to talk to David Connolly.

But wait a minute, what happened here is that a Multi-National company falsified their document and this has been covered up by the department, either with or without their knowledge of such. And what I mean by that is that the evidence clearly shows that a “crime” for want of a better term has been committed by a bidder. But in claiming that they did get the results as per the tender Mandatory Requirement and as they were required to have done (and to make the award legal), but don’t have them anymore, the department in my mind have become party to that crime. And there are 5 of them involved in this, including the involvement of the Finance Minister and the Audit Office; they couldn’t all have coincidentally messed up, could they? God, these are the people that run our country. You wouldn’t like to think it.

Nah, there are other things that need answering:-

What did they mean in an inter-department email when they said “I am aware of the general concerns raised by CPD about FMS”?

Every tender ever awarded by CPD appeared on their web-site – except this one.

Has anyone ever seen the report that the Audit Office did into the inappropriate process used?

Oh, and why all this misreporting. The Official Evaluation Report into this tender, actually claims that the method of scoring that was used in relation to cost, was the one in which they were supposed to use, and not that of which they actually did.

And why is everybody walking away from this. I even tried to contact the other bidders. The response I got was, “XXXX make no comment” from one and “I think we will pass on this one” from another. So I went back and had a look at my evidence and how would it look for our Government and local politicians if the evidence were to show that out of the four bidders, three multi-nationals and a local company, that all the multi-nationals misrepresented their data. That would look good wouldn’t it? G8 summit, don’t make me laugh.

Nah, there’s definitely something else going on here.

"Fuck them; their arrogant ignorance will catch up on them someday. Fuck them"

"Daddy. Daadddy. .Daddy!"

*"What? What do you want? Sorry love, what's wrong?"*

"I'm telling mummy you said bad words"

*"Don't be doing that"*

"But it was by a wee accident daddy, wasn't it"

*"Yes Dear"*

"What's wrong Daddy?"

*"Nothing love. C'mon up here. What's that you're wearing?"*

"Tut, Daddy"

*"Oh, right. Well how did you get on today?"*

"Good."

*"Good? Well tell me!"*

"Agh, Daddy. I've already told you."

*"Tell me"*

"Agh, Daddy. Good. I eat my dinner. Chips and chicken nuggets"

*"Is that it? Right, ok. What's that you're doing?"*

"I'm making a book. See all the pictures. And they're all coloured in"

*"All of them?"*

"No. I need a green for my tree"

*"Here"*

"No. A darker green."

*"What about this?"*

"No, a darker pencil green."

*"Never mind. C'mon love, it's time for bed."*

"No Dad, I haven't finished yet. I'll finish and read it to you."

*"You can read it for me in the morning. C'mon bedtime."*

"No Daddy"

*"Yes, missy moo's, bedtime."*

"Agh, dad. Let's have some fun. Do the flying bird thing"

*"No"*

"Yeeees,,, Pleeese. Do the flying bird thing and I'll go to bed."

*"C'mon misses. We'll play and have some fun in the morning. And you can read me your book."*

"And then can we do sumfing after that."

*"Yes. What ever you like."*

"Can I watch a DVD?"

*"OK. Lets go and get your jammies on and teeth brushed and then you can watch a bit of DVD"*

---

*"Right! Into bed. What do you want to see?"*

"Actually, dad, I just want to go to sleep. Can I go to sleep?"

*"Certainly dear."*

"Dad"

*"What"*

"Huggies. Kissies."

*"Love you pet."*

"Love you daddy"

*"See you in the morning"*

"See you in the morning"

---

*"That's your daughter alright"*

"What's she at now?"

*"Oh the usual. Playing about, and won't go to bed. She made a wee book and is going to read it in the morning for me. Then she wants to do 'sumfing'. I can't wait to find out what she comes up with. Oh, I asked her what she was wearing and you want to see the look I got. Ye know, the Agh daddy you're stupid do you not know? Thankfully she didn't want a DVD there. I'm sick of seeing Cinderella at the minute. Thankfully Brave is on Sky. Cinderella – that's what she was wearing."*

"Is Brave on? You'll have to record it."

*"Definitely. I like it too. We've brought her to see many films but Brave is the first one which she actually involved herself in. The others she just watched and that was that. But Brave, she came out talking and was all excited and never stopped chattering about it, the whole way home and for weeks after. It makes a pleasant change from Spongebob and the like."*

"She's definitely Daddy's girl lately"

*"She has been, yes. We're having fun as she says. She has me shattered, but yes its class. God, love, the other night she took a fit of laughing and she didn't even know what she was laughing about. I was watching the champions league quarter final, Dortmund were playing Malaga and I was sort of giggling into myself, I was a wee school boy. The Malaga goalkeeper had just caught the ball and the camera was on him. I had a second look to make sure. His name was Willy."*

"Willy?"

*"Yes, but wait. I swear love; you can check this out yourself. The keeper was called Willy, but then he threw the ball to his left midfielder, his name was Duda. I swear. But then this Dortmund player tackled him, knocked him to the ground and wouldn't let him up. But when he did, his name was Bender. And then to top it all off, the camera went to the Dortmund manager and his name was Klopp. I said "you got to be kidding me" but like a wee school boy I started giggling. She seen me giggling and asked me what was funny. I mean I couldn't explain it to her but she kept asking, and then started giggling herself. This turned into laughter and then she just couldn't stop. The tears were tripping her. She just couldn't stop. It really was so funny."*

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"Dad"

"Yes"

"What you doing"

*"Love, I was sleeping. Anyway, how are you?"*

"Good. Can I go down and get my story book and read it up here."

*"If you like. I put it into your school bag."*

"Oh, I remembered. Actually I want to watch TV"

*"Want Daddy to turn it on?"*

"Yeah. Dad I have no blankies"

*"Do you want more blankies? Here"*

*"Have you brushed your teeth?"*

"No"

*"I think its time you did then. Brush your teeth and Daddy and Sophia will go downstairs and let mummy sleep."*

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*"Right now. Read your book for me."*

"But I read it last night"

*"No you didn't. Anyway I haven't heard it – sit up there and I'll get your breakfast - read it out for daddy – that's a good girl"*

"One day – the little princess was too bored. She crept into her mummy and daddy's room, she didn't hear a sound – now hear a toilet flushing, the windows opening, not her mummy and daddy woken up. She crept down. She tried to be careful with the doors so she didn't waken her mummy and daddy. She jumped. When she got out she jumped and laughed and giggled, when she jumped and laughed and giggled, a big noise and she jumped, was all creepy. Not creepy. Her mum called her because she heard her. Then she quickly, then and pretended she was, em, still in the castle. "What mum?" "Come down for your breakfast". She had her breakfast. The breakfast tray were, ah, was warm enough so she had it. When she, and now in the other worlds, and she found the Panda Bear. Thee End.

And Dad, wait. And the author was - Sophia. And the illustrator was – Sophia."

*"Very good Princess. Now what do you want for your breaky?"*

"Dad, there's boys in our school and they come to school and play all day. They run about and they're not tired. They even do bold things. I don't be bold or anything. I'm not bold, aren't I not? They play all day and run about and they don't eat anything to dinner time and em they're not tired or anything, so they're not."



*"I'll take it you're trying to tell me you don't want breakfast?"*

"Yes, Daddy."

*"Well c'mon, we have to do sumfing don't we?"*

"Not yet. Can you not see I'm doing sumfing?"

*"Hey, don't be cheeky. Did you not want us to do something?"*

"Tut, ok dad."

*"C'mon. Get down of there and we'll do sumfing?"*

"Wait dad, give me a minute"

*"No, c'mon now. I'll help you down."*

"Aw, ooooooh. You hurt me."

*"Now don't be daft. I was only lifting you down."*

"It's sore"

*"No it's not. Wise up?"*

"It is sore. And anyway you don't know. You're not me."

*"Take it you're still tired. Do you want to go back to bed?"*

"I'm not tired. I only get crabby when I'm tired. And I'm not tired"

*"Your ma's daughter alright - Well come on and we'll do whatever you want. Do you want to make something?"*

"Yes Daddy. OK"

*"Well go and get all your markers and some paper and get the sparkles and sprinkles"*

"And glue Daddy"

*"OK. The glue if you want, love. Daddy's making a cup of tea, do you want one?"*

In a minute daddy - Can I help you?

*"OK."*

"Wait dad and I'll get all the stuff. I'll get it all, the stuff prepared and then we can make tea. OK?"

*"OK love"*

*“Let’s take the tea and all this stuff and take it outside! Would that be OK love, it’s sunny outside and looks like a lovely morning. Would that be OK?”*

“Yeah, and we won’t waken mummy then.”

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*“Right now, what do you want to make?”*

“Sumfing?”

*“What sumfing?”*

“Sumfing. Just sumfing daddy –wait, I know- can we do one of them pictures like what, em, uncle Tony does, or I mean like Uncle Tony drawed and showed us and you kepted them for me?”

*“What?”*

“Uncle Tony’s pictures”

*“What pictures?”*

“Tut, Daddy. Ye know them’ens that look like what they look like only they are not what they are looked like?”

*“Wha?”*

“Agh Dad. Them things you look at but they aren’t what you are looking at. And they have a funny name.”

*“What funny name?”*

“I know - I member - Hoptical Conclusions. Ye see Dad, aren’t I good? I membered, I didn’t forget, sure didn’t I not?”

*“Yes dear you’re right. Ye mean Optical Illusions?”*

“Yes dad that’s it. Dopey me”

*“Yes love they were called Optical Illusions. Optical Illusions, say that!”*

“Optical Illusions”

*“Good girl. That’s it love, optical illusions. But I tell you what dear, you’re no dozer, you’re description tells it just as much as the real one. “*

“Wha”

*“Hoptical conclusions”*

“What”

*"Hop till a conclusion – hop to a conclusion. And I think I've seen enough of them recently"*

"What"

*"Doesn't matter. You're no dozer. Right what'll we do?"*

"Sumfing?"

*"Sumfing. I tell you what; will daddy teach you how to make something? I'll tell you how it's made and then we will do it OK. You can do it all down on the paper. So sit there and drink your tea and daddy will tell you how it's done for real life, ok?"*

"Ok dad"

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"No Daddy, I don't want to do it like that way, em, I mean that real life way cause mummy says that's what, em, actually, but it made you sad and we're having fun now daddy"

*"Is that right now, I'll have to have a wee word with her about that, and anyway love if there's one thing daddy can assure you of is that they won't be coming between us ever again. Ok love."*

"Emmmm. Huggies, Kissies"

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"What are you two at?"

*"Oh. Mummy. We are making sumfing? I was trying to teach her how things are made but she won't have it, oh and I'll have a word with you later about that. We have to make sumfing, but not do it the real life way, but her way. We have to do everything NOT as how it should be done, but her fun way"*

"I wonder where she gets that from. She's her da's daughter alright"

*"A, Ha. But we have to make a product and sell it, with no 'catipal', she can't say capital, but don't be asking her, she'll take it thick. Then we have to doll it all up with only two colours she says, market and advertise it by getting everybody to come to us to see it, we aren't allowed to do it, and we have to sell it by people coming to us to get it, oh and she wants the Addams Family in it, she must have been having a bad dream last night because she was asking me were they real, because there were monsters in it and they took away Clodagh, Caragh, Evie and Erin in her dream and she wasn't scared, but just a wee bit scared sometimes. Anything else love? Oh and yes, Scooby Doo. Anything else love?"*

“What Daddy? Oh yes, price of a phone call. And colour of my eyes. Oh and, em, invitation, and we’ll show them, are ye wi’ me?””

“Invitation?”

*“I think she means Innovation mummy. She’s lost in it already. Simple she says”*

“Best of luck. I’ll not be long. Bye Daddy, bye Sophia”

*“Mummy we don’t need luck. She gave it her magic, wait to you see. Sophia, it needs more magic, do your stuff!”*

“Salagadoola mechicka boola bibbidi-bobbidi-boo Put 'em together and what have you got bibbidi-bobbidi-boo”

*“See mummy “*

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“Dad can you push me on the swings?”

*“But we haven’t finished yet”*

“I know Dad, but it’ll do like that, almost finished. Actually can we play the Wii?”

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And you see, maybe I’m looking through rose coloured glasses as they say but my daughter is an absolute genius. Her fun ways and her mentality are brilliant.

We have managed to create a product that defies all the “should haves and needs this” etc, every one of them.

The only question remains, will anyone want our product?

But we have to be honest with any perspective buyer. It's not finished yet.

However, the fact that it is not finished yet actually makes it more valuable. It is more valuable because the buyer can take it as it is and finish it in whatever way they want it finished. They can take our piece of the product and use their own skills to make it whatever they want it to be.

But we have made our part that it actually even creates its own market. And as we weren't allowed to market it and people even have to come to us to see it, we have built everything into it that allows our part to sell market and advertise itself. And yet it is as plain as can be. Good that, what?

Indeed we believe we have even made our bit so as whoever sees it, and if they are being honest with themselves, will get at some point that inner happiness feeling, and that's of more value to anyone than even the things that my heroes such as Gates, Zuckerberg, and Google, and their products could do.

Will anyone want it?

Well we're going to tell you what it is.

By the way, Now is a good time or absolutely worth reminding the reader and millions of people may be witness to this:-

By entering this site, whilst being free to discuss it, you have agreed not to copy, reproduce, redistribute or exhibit any of it, either in part nor full, without the express written permission of the author. So when you close this file be sure not to accidentally save it. If you want to use any of it, permission can be obtained by sending an email to [requests@stucorey.co.uk](mailto:requests@stucorey.co.uk), and telling us how much.

Indeed if you actually want it and in keeping with everything Sophia wants, you'll have to come and get it.

Now just a quick reminder,

Our product is not even finished. We are going to market it without marketing it. You have to come to us to see it, yet we will have nothing to do with you actually seeing it. It's going to be as plain as can be. And all for the price of a phone call. And indeed it doesn't matter what happens next it will still add value to it. And we will start it all of for you.

Do you think anyone will want Sophia's product?

And just before we tell you, I would like to thank Sophia for her visions. And for me personally, I would like to say to my special person, my mum,

"Lennie, I no longer miss you everyday, I enjoy your company everyday."

This has been fun.

And a last invitation, we invite you to ask yourself if everything Sophia wanted is in her product.

We are going to write a book about a man who is sitting down to write a book and the thoughts and turmoil that go through his head as he tries to make sense of happenings around him.

And it will start with a quote from a German philosopher of the late 18<sup>th</sup>, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Arthur Schopenhauer.

And how much will all this cost us, well I'm about to ring my sister.

Oh, and at least there is one thing of which we are sure, we'll have made you raise an eyebrow.

And all with a smile.

Bye.