



### **A Nosey gentleman**

He showed up to cut down some trees for firewood. He wasn't really a tree surgeon but was masquerading as one. He pulled an ancient looking contraption that looked like a hoist behind his four wheel drive vehicle

I approached and, out of curiosity, wanted to discover if he was up to the task of felling trees. He approached me and began a conversation. In Ireland, such conversations begin with a discussion or comment on the weather and may lead into a discussion on the local economy.

Following such pleasantries, he said, "You're not from Killawalla?" Killawalla happened to be my birthplace and now home village. I told him that I was from Killawalla but he retorted that I didn't have the right accent. Then I realized that spending forty years in Mississippi had taken its toll on my native accent. Obviously, either, he was an astute observer of accents or my local accent had become so refined that it was not discernable or identifiable with any particular region or country.

The gentleman left to muse on my accept input. Amid the whining of the chain saw, with his ear muffs firmly in place, he took time to digest who this stranger might be and where he was from,

Sometime later, he emerged from his lofty perch and approached me again, "Where in Killawalla do you live?" Being rather evasive and not willing to feed him any more information, I told him that I lived in the area. Realizing that he was facing a stubborn obstacle, he relented in his questioning for a while and went back to his task at hand.

Later on, he approached me again and asked, "You must have spent a lot of time away from here?" taking pity on him, I told him that I had spent some time in the States. I could see then that part of his curiosity was being satisfied and he probably began to realize how my accent became so refined and less local. He continued with his tree cutting and, I with my trusty bush saw in hand, continued to cut the smaller branches into more manageable sizes.

I soon found out that he was not finished with his interrogation. At he was finishing his work; he approached me one last time and prefaced his last question with, "I hope you don't mind me asking you, but what about your wife and kids?"

I could have gone into an explanation of my circumstances but decided to continue to play the identity game of "hide and seek." I was still in control and I held the trump card that would send the gentleman home with many more questions and too few answers.

So, I decided to answer his question about my wife and kids by saying, "I left them behind me in the States." As I told him, I could see his face contort with a bewilderment look.

He didn't ask any more questions but, instead decided to finalize his job and depart from home. Secretly, I was glad I confused him

I could speculate that on his way home, he was asking himself some questions, as he tried to unravel the mystery of that unknown person he met while chopping down trees. I'm some of the questions might be: "That's a strange guy I met today. Here he is living in this area and his wife and kids are living in the States. That doesn't make sense. Why would anyone in his right mind leave a wife and kids behind and just move across the other wide of the Atlantic. After all, he built a house here. Why didn't he bring the wife and kids with him? It just doesn't make sense. He must be a strange guy. Maybe, they are divorced and the divorce was nasty and he wanted to move as far away as possible from them. Maybe, he was caught for tax evasion and skipped town or, worse still, he committed some crime and left the country in order not to be caught."

So, if you meet some gentleman asking questions about a strange man he met while cutting trees, simply tell him that he is barking up the wrong tree.