

So now we come around to the questioning. The first thing I'd say to any interviewer is "listen." It's the second thing I'd say too, and the third, and the fourth. "Listen... listen... listen... listen." And if you do, people will talk. They'll always talk... Perhaps they've not ever even listened to themselves. You don't have to agree with them or disagree with them, all of that's irrelevant. Don't push them, don't rush them, don't chase them or harass them with getting on to the next question. Take your time. Or no, let's put it the right way: let them take their time.

And I'll tell you something else you should always have in your mind, and remind yourself constantly about it - they're doing you a favor. This person you're talking to is entrusting you with their memories and their hopes, their realities and their dreams. So remember that, handle them carefully, they're holding out to you fragile things.

I'm thinking of two quotations. One of them's from James Joyce, the other one's from Thomas Hardy. James Joyce's is from *Finnigans Wake*: "Tell me about Anna Livia..." How does it go? "Tell me about Anna Livia, I want to hear all about Anna Livia. We all know Anna Livia, tell me all, tell me now." Anna Livia - the River Liffey running through Dublin, the river of life. Tell me about the river of life. The Thomas Hardy one, I'm not sure which of his books it's in. "This man's silence is wonderful to listen to."

So there we have our two basic texts for interviewers, don't we? Tell me about the river of life, and listen to the silence. I'd say listen and wait are the two essentials, with watch and be aware a close third. **A laugh can be a cry of pain, and a silence can be a shout.** And God knows how many different meanings there are to a smile...

I think the gentlest question is the best one. And the gentlest is "**And what happened then?**"

-STUDS TERKEL, in *A Life in Words: Studs Terkel* by Tony Parker