

# All in a Day's Work

## Tom MacSweeney - RTE Marine Correspondent

Tom MacSweeney is based at the Cork Studios of RTE at Fr. Mathew Street, attached to RTE's News Division. You will find him at the desk every Friday which is the day when they produce and present SEASCAPES, the weekly maritime radio programme on RTE Radio 1.



Photos courtesy Tom MacSweeney

to 'see the other side' and to realise how difficult journalists could be! I returned to RTE as Southern Correspondent for Cork and Kerry. I developed the SEASCAPES maritime radio programme and finally got the chance to become the stations' first Marine Correspondent. In fact, the only full-time Marine Correspondent with any section of the media in Ireland.

### What is your main aim?

I try in particular to convey to the public that we are an island nation and how important that is. 95% of our imports and exports move by sea and without ships, as an island economy, we would not survive. Imagine, there would be no cars, no planes, no trains, no electricity, no power, because ships bring the oil we need – and also no coffee, no tea, no oranges, no bananas, the list could go on and on. I also try to highlight the beauty of the sea, the pleasure of sailing and boating, and the importance to coastal areas of the fishing industry. I think more people are realising that the sea is important to us. I also wonder if everyone realises the importance of the environment, of clean water and of the maritime sphere – but I'll keep trying to bring it all to public attention.

### Do you enjoy your work?

I love the job and meeting people and it is great when, even if you're not working, people say that they listen to SEASCAPES and enjoy the stories. My work takes me all over the country and particularly of course to coastal areas. I travel a lot alone, meeting a cameraman when I get to a story location. My only equipment is the new type of digital recorder – no tapes anymore – a flash card just like a camera records everything.

### Is your job an easy one?

Often people think it is an easy job – doing a report on the news that might last only two minutes. But producing the report would have taken several hours of driving many miles and then once back at the office I would have to edit the pictures and radio pieces myself. The reporter/correspondent now has to do all of this. I would also

have to provide stories for newsreaders to read at the hourly headlines, as well as clips of sound, audio reports and interviews to two all-day radio channels, current affairs programmes and four main television news bulletins on two channels - so it can be hectic. But it is certainly never dull.

### What is best piece of advice you would give to a budding journalist?

The best advice to those who want to get into journalism is that you will never be rich, but you will see a lot of life.

<http://www.rte.ie/radio1/seascapes/>

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## A Day in the Life of Tom MacSweeney

### What is a day in your life like?

I start work on Fridays at about 6.30 a.m., usually doing up a version of the programme script in my studio/office at home before heading into the studios. I meet the Producer, Marcus Connaughton, about midday when we sharpen up on the initial ideas and begin interviews, recordings about 3.00 pm., working on until transmission at 8.30 pm. After that, around 9.00 pm I start work on the SEASCAPES website, the AERTEL teletext service and answering Emails and phone calls which have come in during the programme so that it is usually after midnight on Fridays when I leave the office. It is a busy day.

Other days involve working for television and radio news. My work as Marine Correspondent involves all the station output and whenever there is information needed on a marine matter I get called to prepare television and news reports, and features for Nationwide. Of course SEASCAPES continues without let-up every day.

### What training did you do to get where you are today?

When I started in journalism there wasn't any formal training. I began writing first for the school magazine in Presentation Brothers College in Cork and after leaving school if you wanted to be a journalist you tried around the newspapers, writing articles, seeking a job as a junior reporter which I was

fortunate to get with the then Cork Examiner. I had to learn shorthand, now an art that has died out with the tape recorder and even the mobile phone recorder. From there I joined The Southern Star and got great experience in regional reporting, courts, local Councils, everything that happened in a county area. Then I joined The Irish Press in Dublin and that took me into Northern Ireland, Belfast, and the troubles there in the late 60s and 70s. I then joined RTE in Dublin and later was appointed as the first-ever regional correspondent, as Munster Correspondent. In the 80s I joined the State fertiliser company, NET, as Public Affairs Manager. It has since closed down. It was good experience



Above: The unusual Earthrace vessel on a recent visit to Cork.  
Right: A tanker and freighter in busy Bantry Bay, Co. Cork.

