

CHAPTER 4 – SAVILE – HIS CAREER – PERCEPTIONS OF HIM IN THE BBC

Introduction

4.1 In this chapter I shall sketch Savile's life story and describe what people thought about him before anyone was prepared to talk openly about his sexual misconduct.

Early Life

4.2 Savile was born into a Roman Catholic family in Leeds on 31 October 1926. He was the youngest of seven children. His father was, at one stage, an insurance agent and, at another, a bookmaker's clerk. His mother, at times, was a care worker. In later life Savile used to call his mother 'The Duchess'. He seems to have been very close to her and appeared to take great pleasure in being able to provide for her the material things she had not enjoyed earlier in life. In his autobiography, *As It Happens*, published in 1974, he referred to her as "my only real true love to date"⁶⁴.

4.3 Savile left school at the age of 14, with, so far as I know, no formal qualifications. He had various jobs, first as an office boy, then working in a dried fruits business and later moving into a scrap business. At 18, he was conscripted as a Bevin Boy to work in the coalmines. That was a hard life but Savile was plainly proud of his time as a miner; he often talked about it. He had a mining accident and injured his back, an experience which I think reinforced his determination that mining was not going to be his life's work. I have the impression also that it was the effort he had to make to recover from this injury which was the foundation of his interest in sport and fitness. He

⁶⁴ *As It Happens*, p. 2.

became a keen cyclist and worked for a time as a professional wrestler. Later, he became well known for running marathons.

4.4 In the 1940s, Savile started working as a disc jockey, initially in a small way, playing for parties. He decided that he would like to make his living from doing something he enjoyed – such as working in dance halls and being a disc jockey – rather than something he did not enjoy. Moreover, for him, this kind of work brought in good money. In the 1950s, he got a job at the Mecca Locarno Ballroom, Leeds. He seems to have been good at running it and developed quite a personal following. Pete Murray, the disc jockey, told the Savile investigation about a visit he made to Leeds in the early 1960s when he saw Savile in action at the Locarno. He was deeply impressed by what Savile had achieved there. The place was packed with young people and Savile had them completely under his control, in the best sense of the word. In effect, he had the crowd in the palm of his hand. Unsurprisingly, Mecca appreciated Savile's success and he was transferred to manage other ballrooms in Manchester, Bradford and Ilford. He stayed with Mecca until sometime in the 1960s, by which time he had become a director of the company.

4.5 There are suggestions that, during this stage of Savile's life, he associated with shady and violent characters and was prepared to use violence or authorise its use to achieve his ends. In an interview published in *The Sun* in April 1983, Savile is reported as saying that he authorised others to use violence on his behalf during this period. Alison Bellamy, who published a biography in 2012 called *How's about that then?* doubted the truth of this⁶⁵. However, apart from suggesting that the interviewer had "coloured up" some of his reminiscences, Savile made no attempt to deny the content of *The Sun* article.

⁶⁵ A. Bellamy, *How's about that then?*, Great Northern Books, 2012, pp. 43-44.

Andy Kershaw, a BBC Radio 1 disc jockey from 1985, told us that, when he was the entertainment secretary of Leeds University Student Union between 1980 and 1982, he heard that, in the 1950s, Savile was known as a “*gangland enforcer*” on the Leeds nightclub scene. If the people running nightlife in Leeds in those days wanted something ‘put right’ “*it was Savile they sent round with a baseball bat*”. Mr Kershaw stressed to me that he could not vouch for this but this information is not much out of line with what Savile said about himself.

4.6 From time to time, Savile would attempt to justify his violent past by claiming that he used violence when it was necessary to protect young girls from the unwanted attentions of men. He often presented himself as a protector or saviour of young girls. For example, he would claim that, if there was a young girl alone outside the dance hall, he would authorise one of his bouncers to get her a taxi and pay for it so that she got home safely. With the benefit of hindsight, one does wonder whether that could have been true.

4.7 It was at some time during the 1950s that Savile started to have his hair dyed blonde and later a whole series of strange colours and patterns. He started to dress in what was, for then, an eccentric fashion. He was later to explain that he had decided to create a personality for himself. It worked. In 1958, his success in the dancehalls brought him to the attention of Radio Luxembourg, the commercial radio station, whose pop music shows had big audiences. He presented a show on that station called *The Teen and Twenty Disc Club*, which went out at 10pm on Wednesdays. Savile’s time on Radio Luxembourg gave him exposure and a significant audience; he stayed there until 1967.

4.8 In 1960, Savile had his first chance in television with Tyne Tees Television, presenting a programme called *Young at Heart*.

Savile at the BBC

- 4.9 Following some guest appearances in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Savile's career at the BBC began on 1 January 1964 when he presented the first *Top of the Pops*, broadcast on BBC One from Dickenson Road Studios in Manchester. Some sources say that Alan Freeman co-presented but perhaps it matters not. Savile was chosen for that job by the show's producer, Johnnie Stewart, with the approval of Bill Cotton, then Assistant Head of the Light Entertainment Group, Television (Variety). Savile was to continue as a presenter of *Top of the Pops* until 1984.
- 4.10 Savile joined BBC Radio 1 in 1968, the year after the network went on air. His first show was *Savile's Travels*, a programme which mixed pop music with short recorded interviews with people whom Savile had met on his travels. It ran until 1977. In 1969, he began to present *Speakeasy*. This discussion programme for young people was a joint production between BBC Radio 1 and the BBC's Religious Broadcasting Department. It seems to have run until about 1977. The format was that Savile chaired a discussion with the young audience. Sometimes a distinguished or star guest would feature on the show and join in the discussion. The topics were the moral and ethical questions of the time.
- 4.11 In 1973, Savile began to present a new Saturday early evening television talk and entertainment show on BBC One called *Clunk Click* of which two series were made in 1973 and 1974. This show enjoyed only limited success and was discontinued. However, Mr Cotton, who was then Head of Light Entertainment, had had an idea for a 'wish fulfilment programme'. *Jim'll Fix It*, was launched in 1975 with Savile as its presenter. It was hugely successful. It ran until 1994 and brought Savile enormous fame.

- 4.12 Savile's radio career also developed during this time. From 1973, he presented *The Double Top Ten Show* on BBC Radio 1 on Sunday afternoons – a programme in which two top 10 charts from earlier years were played. In 1978, *The Double Top Ten Show* was discontinued and Savile then presented *Jimmy Savile's Old Record Club*. Savile left BBC Radio 1 in 1987 and moved to the BBC World Service to present *The Vintage Chart Show*. This change was in fact a demotion; we have been told that, by this time, Savile was thought to be too old to appeal to the BBC Radio 1 audience. However, when speaking to Nicky Campbell, who was about to succeed him on BBC Radio 1, Savile presented this move as a promotion. Instead of the 10 million listeners he said his successor would attract on BBC Radio 1 (in fact his own show had only attracted two or three million listeners), he would now have 200 million all over the world! Savile stayed at the World Service for only two years.
- 4.13 Lord Grade, who was Controller of BBC One in the mid-1980s, told the Savile investigation that Savile "*liked to work*". Although the programmes I have mentioned were Savile's mainstays, he worked on many others. He made a series of public information films on road safety, from which came the tagline 'Clunk Click Every Trip', promoting the use of seatbelts. He appeared occasionally on *Juke Box Jury*; he was a contributor to *Songs of Praise*, and presented *The Jimmy Savile Show* (which was transmitted on Boxing Day in 1970 and 1971). He also presented two series of programmes for the BBC in Leeds, *Savile's Yorkshire Travels* in the early 1970s and a discussion programme, *Yorkshire Speakeasy*, in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
- 4.14 Savile revelled in his celebrity status. In the first edition of his autobiography, *As It Happens*, when writing about his invitation

to become the first disc jockey presenter of *Top of the Pops* in 1964, he said:

“And so ended the springtime of my pop career. Here then started the 100 degree summer with no clouds to cover the burning brilliance of total recognition by, eventually, nearly all this country’s 53 million people.”⁶⁶

4.15 If *Top of the Pops* brought Savile “total recognition” it was *Jim’ll Fix It* which brought him almost total public adulation. Broadcast early on Saturday evenings to a family audience, *Jim’ll Fix It* sometimes attracted as many as 16.5 million viewers. In 1977, the National Viewers and Listeners Association, run by campaigner Mary Whitehouse, presented Savile with an award for ‘wholesome family entertainment’. More than any other programme, *Jim’ll Fix It* led to Savile being viewed, as *The Telegraph* wrote after his death, as the “favourite uncle to the nation’s children”.

4.16 In addition to his core work on BBC Television and Radio, Savile made countless guest appearances on a wide variety of programmes such as *The Generation Game*, *Swap Shop*, *Breakfast time*, *Children in Need*, *The Time of your Life*, and *Daytime Live*. In 1976, he appeared on *Read All About It*, with Melvyn Bragg to discuss the second edition of his autobiography. He also featured on news or current affairs programmes, usually in connection with fundraising events such as marathon running or long distance walks. He was featured with members of the Royal Family at the opening of the new wing of Stoke Mandeville Hospital for which he had raised money and was pictured outside Buckingham Palace after receiving his OBE. In short, he was rarely out of the public eye.

⁶⁶ *As It Happens*, p. 74.

4.17 Savile's role as a regular BBC television presenter ended in 1994 with the demise of *Jim'll Fix It*. He co-presented the final *Top of the Pops* programme on 30 July 2006. This ended with Savile turning the lights off in an empty studio.

Other Activities

4.18 Savile was an energetic man. In addition to his career as an entertainer, he was a very successful fundraiser. His high public profile enabled him to open doors; few seem to have refused his requests. In particular, he raised large sums of money for Stoke Mandeville Hospital. He was also well known for his personal good works. He worked *pro bono* as a porter at Leeds General Infirmary. He worked in connection with Broadmoor Hospital although the extent of his involvement there only became publicly known after his death. His activities as a fundraiser and charity worker are outside my Terms of Reference and I say no more about them.

4.19 However, there are some features of his life outside the BBC which are relevant to my enquiries and I will deal with them, albeit briefly.

4.20 Savile never had a professional agent. He was his own business manager. One of the unusual features of dealing with him was that, in the days before mobile phones, it was often difficult to contact him. For many years, he had several homes, one each in London, Leeds, Scarborough, Peterborough and Bournemouth and at least one mobile home at any one time. He also had *pieds-à-terre* at Stoke Mandeville, Broadmoor and Leeds General Hospital. He might be anywhere. People who needed to find him apparently used to telephone either Charles Hullighan, the Head Porter at Leeds General Infirmary, or Janet Cope at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, both of whom seem to have acted as points of contact and sometimes as unofficial

administrators. Ms Cope called herself Savile's 'gofer' and I have the impression that she was not the only one. I understand that he had another unofficial administrative assistant at Leeds General Infirmary. Don Bennett, the Transport Manager of Broadmoor, would, according to some witnesses the Savile investigation has spoken to, sometimes drive Savile about.

4.21 Savile also acted as his own press and publicity officer. He made his own arrangements as to the newspapers to which he would agree to give interviews. For many years, he wrote a weekly column for *The Sunday People*. I was told that he had said that he wrote that weekly column because he thought that the papers would not write damaging material about 'one of their own'.

4.22 Savile was very protective of his reputation and seems often to have used the threat of litigation for that purpose. If he ever did sue in defamation, such cases seem to have been settled out of court as I have not come across any report of court action. Looking back, now that it is known that rumours about Savile's sexual proclivities did circulate in Fleet Street, it seems to me likely that the newspapers were wary of him and took care not to publish anything they could not fully justify.

4.23 Whatever his public relations strategy, his reputation remained high all his life. Bob Langley, a former reporter on *Nationwide*, said that he thought Savile was revered by the British public mainly because of his charity work. On his charity walks, people "*would flock around him as though he was the Pope almost*".

4.24 Savile was honoured for his charity work. In 1972, he was awarded the OBE and was knighted in 1990, the same year in which he received a papal honour. By then, he had apparently

become friendly with members of the Royal Family and the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. It is said that he was a regular visitor to Chequers. She appears to have admired him for his charity work and was instrumental in securing his knighthood.

4.25 Alan Hart, Controller of BBC One in the 1980s, summed Savile's reputation up well when he described Savile as "*a good chap, doing good television, involved in charity and mixing with all the top people*".

4.26 Savile's death, on 29 October 2011, was followed by numerous tributes from politicians, royalty and the BBC. Mark Thompson, then Director-General of the BBC, reportedly said:

"I am very sad to hear of Sir Jimmy Savile's death. From Top of the Pops to Jim'll Fix It, Jimmy's unique style entertained generations of BBC audiences. Like millions of viewers and listeners, we shall miss him greatly".

Savile was reported to have left over £4 million at his death.

What Was Savile Like?

4.27 Many of the people we spoke to about Savile worked for the BBC and therefore came across him in a professional capacity. We also approached a number of Savile's relatives and personal friends to give them the opportunity to give evidence if they wished to do so. Three accepted this invitation.

4.28 One was A5, who is a relative of Savile's and has known him all her life. As is well known, Savile had a large extended family. Savile was very kind to A5 who was very fond of him ("*I loved him to bits*") and is "*heartbroken*" about the allegations which have been made since his death. She finds them impossible to believe and, although she has many times gone back through her memories, she cannot recall any signs that anything might have been amiss. She now believes that there are many

people who are making false allegations against Savile for financial reasons. She also believes that many of Savile's friends would like to speak out on his behalf but dare not do so because they fear that they would be hounded by the press.

4.29 She says that Savile had a strong sense of family loyalty and would pay for a big family get-together every year, around the time of his birthday. Although he was not a generous man, he would give every family member a present of money which would represent their birthday and Christmas presents for the year. He would also give financial support to any family member who was in difficulty. However, some members of the family considered Savile to be "*tight*" with money. By way of example, A5 recalled that, after a family funeral, he gave a member of the family money to buy everyone some fried chicken and asked for the small amount of change, which was no more than a few pence, to be returned to him. He was also very frugal. He never had any of his homes decorated; he regarded that as a waste of money. Also he insisted on re-using teabags, several times. Yet on occasions he could be very generous towards her.

4.30 A5 explained that Savile's philanthropy was deep-rooted. His mother brought her children up to give a little to charity even when they were quite poor. His mother used to run fundraising whist drives for the people of Malta during the war. A5 said that, although Savile was well known for his major charitable works, she was aware that he gave a great deal anonymously. She did not accept the suggestion that his charitable work was designed only to draw publicity. She believed that the reverse was the case; that Savile only sought publicity when he needed it to assist with his charitable projects.

4.31 A5 said that Savile's philosophy of life was that he regarded himself as very lucky. He felt that he did not have any special

talent and attributed his success to being in the right place at the right time. She said that he had many friends although very few in the world of show business. He believed that he was not well-liked in that world. He would not tolerate self-pity and, if any one 'moaned' to him, he would tell them to pull their socks up. He would, however, be genuinely sympathetic to someone in real distress.

4.32 As for Savile's sexuality, A5 believes that he was virtually asexual – "*all talk and no trousers*". She believes that his professed interest in sex was a cover for his true lack of interest. She said that he often had girls flocking around him but he was not interested. He talked and wrote about sex as he did (for example in his autobiography *As It Happens*, in *God'll fix it* (a book by Savile published in 1979) and in an article published in *The Sun* in April 1983 as to which see Chapter 6), for public relations reasons. This kind of writing was not intended to be taken seriously. He did sometimes have girlfriends and A5's mother used to hope that he would marry. She thinks that he did not do so partly because he felt he could not provide proper support for a wife on account of his roving lifestyle.

4.33 I accept that A5 has recounted her experience of Savile accurately and that she is completely sincere in her assessment of his character. I accept that she never had any reason to think that Savile would be guilty of any sexual misbehaviour. It seems to me, however, (and I think she accepted this) that the fact that she had seen no sign or evidence of misconduct did not prove that such misconduct had not occurred.

4.34 Another witness who knew Savile well was Janet Cope, who worked for the NHS at Stoke Mandeville and, having met Savile in that capacity, became a close friend. The friendship lasted

for decades but ended in acrimony. She worked tirelessly for him and only part of her time went in supporting his charitable efforts. She also supported him personally. She would take him breakfast when he was at Stoke Mandeville. She would do his personal laundry; she would drive to London to clean his flat in Park Crescent; she would cook him suppers, his favourite dish being mince. She handled a lot of correspondence. She now says that she did not like him but I think that must be in retrospect. I think she must have liked and admired him greatly at the time. She also understandably enjoyed the opportunities that her association with Savile brought her.

4.35 Ms Cope recognised a number of unpleasant traits in Savile's character. He was controlling; she always had to do as he asked, no matter how inconvenient to herself. She found him threatening although she is sure he would not have used physical violence. She only ever once criticised him to his face; that was for being unkind to a nursing sister who had put up some decorations which Savile did not like. She said he was inconsiderate; he would come round for supper and she would ask him not to light a cigar. His attitude was that if he was good enough to come round, he was good enough to be able to light his cigar. The logic of that escapes me but that is what he would apparently say. Ms Cope is one of several people (others include Ann Mann and Mr Murray) who said that Savile rarely paid for anything: clothes, holidays, meals in restaurants, even his jewellery. Ms Cope described Savile as "*a user*". She meant that he used people for his own ends. For all his success, Ms Cope thinks that Savile was sometimes lonely. He had a few friends, mainly men, and, when he went on a cruise round the world, she thinks he really missed them.

4.36 I had a long discussion with another woman who knew Savile well over many years and counted him as a personal friend.

What she told me about Savile's character chimed quite closely with what other witnesses have said about him. She found Savile to be funny, interesting and clever. He was a supportive friend; on an occasion when someone close to her was ill, he used his influence at Leeds General Infirmary. On the other hand, she found him very controlling: he expected her to fall in with his plans. He enjoyed giving advice to people but had a tendency to lecture. He had a huge ego and loved power and celebrity; as she put it, "*the whole package made him tick*". He never wanted to mix with other celebrities; he always wanted to be the centre of attention. He used to boast that he had more column inches than the Queen. This woman thought that money was a big driver for Savile, but it was the accumulation of money which he liked, not the spending of it. She felt that emotionally, there was "*something missing*" from Savile; he seemed incapable of commitment or ties. Instead, everything about Savile was for himself.

Perceptions of Savile at the BBC

- 4.37 The Savile investigation interviewed a wide variety of people from the BBC who had worked with or knew Savile. Most of these witnesses had worked in fairly junior roles, as floor assistants, researchers or production assistants. A smaller proportion worked in more senior roles, such as floor managers, directors or producers. A few worked in senior management.
- 4.38 Taken as a whole, the picture which emerges is that Savile was not well liked. However, witnesses were being asked to remember him shortly after his exposure as a prolific sex offender. That is almost bound to have influenced their recollections and perceptions of him. Very few people were willing to admit that they had liked him. Some were prepared to speak warmly of his abilities as a presenter; some accepted

that he had charisma. A few were prepared to say that they had enjoyed his company and found him amusing. There were, of course, quite a few who admired him for his charitable work.

4.39 Before recounting the views of specific witnesses, I wish to record what might be described as an official BBC perception of Savile. I have taken this from a report entitled “Children as Viewers and Listeners”, dated 13 September 1973, prepared by the Director of Public Affairs for submission to the General Advisory Council. The draft I have seen had already been approved by the Board of Management and was to be submitted to the Governors for approval. In a section headed “The appeal of disc jockeys”, Savile’s role as presenter of *Speakeasy* was described as follows:

“Radio 1 is seeking constantly to develop and programmes are introduced to vary and, sometimes supersede, the diet of non-stop pop. Speak-EASY (sic), broadcast at 3.00 p.m, on Sunday afternoons, is a good example of a programme which has set out to stimulate interest in current topics of the day among young people with considerable success. Chaired by Jimmy Savile, a popular disc jockey whose somewhat bizarre appearance conceals an acute mind and a deep sincerity, Speak-Easy (sic) has dealt with every kind of subject, from Northern Ireland to cancer, from inflation to football.”

I infer from that that Savile was highly thought of by the BBC at that time.

4.40 Most of the laudatory comments came from men. Derek Chinnery, who became Controller of BBC Radio 1 in 1978, described Savile as an “*amusing fellow*” and “*a unique character*”. Stanley Dorfman, a producer on *Top of the Pops*, found him to be a funny, jokey and likeable man. Canon Colin Semper, who produced *Speakeasy* for a time, came to know Savile well and ghost wrote *God’ll fix it*, which was published in

1979, for him. He thought that Savile could be quite funny and that the words that came flooding out of him could be quite attractive. He described Savile as a clown in the sense, as he wrote in *God'll fix it*, that "a clown is a highly-skilled performer who wears a mask"⁶⁷. Canon Semper did not know what lay behind that mask but he knew that it concealed a "*clutter of stuff*".

- 4.41 However the words used most often to describe Savile were "*weird*" and "*creepy*". It is no exaggeration to say that he was generally seen as a sleazy, unpleasant, self-important and self-obsessed loner. Other words used to describe him included "*strange*", "*cold*", "*peculiar*", "*predatory*" and "*loathsome*".
- 4.42 A24 was a production assistant on Radio 1 and knew Savile. She described him as "*a scary man*", whom she "*really disliked*". She said that she "*did not feel comfortable with him*". She also described the effect Savile had on people. Some seemed to be "*hypnotised*" by him; he was "*like a snake charmer*". She said that people would go into the studio to see him and they would be "*normal people up until the door and then they would walk in and...they'd be...gormless*".
- 4.43 Women were particularly unsettled by Savile, some feeling sexually threatened by him. One witness told me that Savile gave her "*the creeps*". B5, who also worked on *Savile's Travels*, found Savile "*absolutely creepy*". Sue Davies, who worked for six months as a researcher on *Speakeasy* in 1977, found Savile "*a loathsome and odd character*".
- 4.44 I heard similar comments from two researchers who worked on *Jim'll Fix It* in the 1980s. Jenny Ricotti's 'internal radar' told her that she should keep away from him and Jeanette Pease

⁶⁷ *God'll fix it*, preface p. xv.

thought Savile was odd and not someone with whom it was a pleasure to spend any time.

- 4.45 Several women mentioned Savile's inappropriate and sexual manner. Anne Gilchrist, another researcher on *Jim'll Fix It* in 1985, was one of a number of women who told me that, when she first met Savile, he kissed her right up her arm. She, like most of the women I spoke to who felt they had to put up with this, found it deeply unpleasant. Ms Gilchrist had felt unable to complain about it because of Savile's position and his celebrity status. Patricia Houlihan, who was involved in setting up *Jim'll Fix It* in 1975, saw Savile as a sleazy, strange man and did not want to be in the same room as him.
- 4.46 C3, an assistant floor manager who worked with Savile, found him "*as cold as ice*" and a predatory and controlling individual. She found he would always turn a conversation over to himself "*and how attractive he was*". Even as an older man, Savile was constantly asking C3 "*how can you resist me?*" and asking "*why don't you come over here and make an old man very happy?*".
- 4.47 While the men to whom I spoke did not say that they felt sexually threatened by Savile, many found him unpleasant. For example, Pieter Morpurgo, who worked as a floor manager on *Top of the Pops* in the early 1970s, did not like Savile and found him "*creepy*". David Tate, a producer, who worked with Savile on *The Double Top Ten* and *The Vintage Chart Show*, found him "*peculiar*" and Robin Carr, a director on *Top of the Pops*, described Savile as "*weird*", "*cold*" and "*a loner*". Kevin Howlett, who worked in BBC Radio as a studio manager and later as a producer, found Savile, on the two occasions he met him, to be "*eccentric*", "*unusual*" and "*creepy*". Jeff Simpson, who worked as a press officer for BBC Radio 1 between 1986 and 1993, saw Savile as "*a deeply strange man*".

- 4.48 Mr Morpurgo told me that he had the impression that Savile was not *“a particularly liked person”* among the BBC disc jockeys. This impression was supported by several to whom I spoke. David Simmons, who worked as a presenter and producer for BBC Radio 1 during the 1970s, had no time for Savile, regarding him as a self-publicist who felt that he was doing BBC Radio 1 a favour by being a disc jockey on the station. Noel Edmonds, who presented *Top of the Pops* between 1970 and 1978 and worked on Radio 1, described Savile as *“odd...an outsider [and]...a terrible broadcaster”*. Nicky Campbell, who joined BBC Radio 1 in 1987 just as Savile was leaving, acknowledged that he found Savile *“fascinating and enigmatic”*, but did not like him. Andy Kershaw was scathing about Savile. He told me that Savile lacked social skills and did not have social contact with his BBC Radio 1 colleagues. He described Savile as a *“very, very unpleasant, self-obsessed bloke”*, who, through his charitable work, had reinvented himself from a *“gangland enforcer”*, which was his reputation while working in the entertainment industry in Leeds in the 1950s, to *“Saint Jimmy of Stoke Mandeville”*.
- 4.49 Mr Kershaw described meeting Savile, when, as a new disc jockey on BBC Radio 1, he found himself sharing a lift with Savile in Broadcasting House. He put out his hand to greet Savile and said something like, *“Hello, my name’s Andy”*. Savile did not respond: it seemed to Mr Kershaw from the expression on Savile’s face that he was angry that Mr Kershaw had had the audacity to approach him.
- 4.50 Savile was widely seen as boastful and self-aggrandising. Canon Semper said that Savile frequently mentioned that he had raised £40 million for charity. A10, a former Studio Manager, agreed that Savile boasted about the famous people he knew and Helen Gartell, who worked as a freelance director

on *Jim'll Fix It* in 1994, told me that Savile never tired of telling people how members of the Royal Family or a senior politician would call him for advice because they apparently saw him as “an ordinary man of the people”. Ms Pease seemed amazed at the ease with which Savile arranged for Princess Diana to come to BBC Television Centre to sign a ‘Say No’ board when the BBC was running an anti-drugs campaign.

4.51 Roger Ordish, the producer of *Clunk Click* and *Jim'll Fix It*, agreed that Savile had a strong sense of his own star status; his attitude was “*I am the mountain*” – in other words, it was for others to come and see him: he would not go to them. Savile used to exaggerate his importance. Mr Ordish gave as an example an occasion when he and Savile went to Israel (in connection with a fix on *Jim'll Fix It*) at which there was a reception with the Israeli President. Later, Mr Ordish heard Savile falsely boasting that he had been called upon to give advice to the Israeli Government.

4.52 Mr Simpson gave another example of Savile’s self-importance. At a photo call for several disc jockeys in support of *Children in Need* in the mid-1980s, Savile arrived late and immediately began to talk about how much he had done for charity. He boasted that clothing he had donated had been auctioned for £1million. He also said he had built a hospital. It seemed to Mr Simpson that Savile was making it clear that, while he was prepared to take part in the *Children in Need* photo call, he was actually bigger than that event.

4.53 Mr Simpson also described an occasion when he was in a taxi with Savile driving along Pall Mall past the Athenaeum Club. Savile declared that he was a member of the club and had been nominated for membership by two former Prime Ministers and a Papal Legate. Mr Simpson doubted the truth of this but it

seems to me it may well have been true. The Athenaeum Club has declined to confirm or deny the position.

- 4.54 Despite his celebrity, many witnesses described Savile as a loner who avoided social contact save in situations over which he had complete control. He was not interested in getting to know the members of a production team. He rarely went to BBC parties and seldom went to the BBC Club. Ronald Howard, who worked on the development and printing of pictures taken on *Top of the Pops*, said Savile “*didn’t have pals*”. In fact, I think he did, but they were not pals at the BBC; they were from elsewhere.
- 4.55 Mr Ordish found Savile secretive and defensive. He was always reluctant to provide any personal details to journalists. One might say that that was wise but it was certainly unusual for a show business celebrity. Rodney Collins, BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 2’s publicity officer in the early 1970s, said that Savile was remote, difficult and uncooperative. He found Savile was willing to have his photograph taken and happy to speak to admiring members of the public (who posed no threat to him) but unwilling to expose himself to potentially difficult questions from journalists. Mr Collins described a photo call of BBC Radio 1 disc jockeys in 1972, following which there were to be questions from journalists. Savile attended the photo call but disappeared before the journalists had an opportunity to speak to him.
- 4.56 Johnny Beerling, a producer on BBC Radio 1 in the 1960s and 1970s and its Controller from 1985, saw Savile as being motivated by self-interest. He was “*all ready to come in and cash in*”. For example, if BBC Radio 1 raised some money, for instance, at a charity football match which it was going to spend on Sunshine coaches, Savile would be on hand to be pictured presenting the coaches even though he had not helped with the

fundraising. This, of course, is in marked contrast to Savile's reputation as a tireless and selfless fundraiser.

4.57 Money was clearly important to Savile, although he seems to have been quite proud of not spending much. C3, an assistant floor manager, said that Savile often boasted about money. He referred to "*Joan the Wad*", meaning his cash and pension assets. He would say that he had "*this much money*" and that he never needed to buy anything.

4.58 Phil Bishop, a floor manager and later director and producer, who worked on *Top of the Pops* between 1976 and 1979 and on *Jim'll Fix It* between 1975 and 1979, said that Savile had told him about an occasion when he settled some copyright litigation for £100,000. Savile insisted that the money was to be paid in equal shares to local charities in 10 different towns. He explained to Mr Bishop that he had done this so that there would be 10 more towns in the UK where he could stay for a week and not have to put his hand in his pocket.

4.59 It seems to me that Savile had two personae – one for more senior people to whom he would be respectful, even deferential and one for less senior people to whom he could be quite unpleasant. Doreen Davies, who was eventually Head of BBC Radio 1 Programmes, said that Savile used to do a mock genuflection when he saw her and would murmur something about 'a boss'. When Alan Bell, a production assistant and later a producer and director in Light Entertainment, introduced his wife to Savile, at an end of series party, Savile remained in his chair and claimed that he stood up for no one. But when Bill Cotton, Head of Light Entertainment, walked into the room, Savile leapt from his chair.

4.60 One feature that several people mentioned was that Savile never seemed to stop talking. It was often difficult to

understand what he was talking about. Canon Semper said that, with Savile, there was *“this whole miasma of talk”* which made it difficult to pin him down. Canon David Winter, who also produced *Speakeasy* for a time, said that Savile was a performer who continued performing *“as though the act mustn’t stop”*.

- 4.61 Bob Langley spent 24 hours with Savile during his charity walk from John O’Groats to Land’s End in March 1971. They talked for many hours while walking. Mr Langley said that talking to Savile was rather like being part of an Edward Lear nonsense rhyme. He was constantly performing and talked in an endless *“surrealistic stream”*, making many outrageous statements. It was difficult to know what was true or false. They did, however, have some conversations about Savile’s past, which seemed more sensible. Savile told Mr Langley that he had created himself; he had realised early on that he had nothing going for him, that he was not well educated and that he needed to create an *“outrageous personality”*. One can see that this might explain Savile’s image with his unconventional style of dress, strange hair colourings, use of ‘bling’ jewellery and stylised conversation which was frequently punctuated by sayings like *“now then, now then, how’s about that then?”*

Savile the Presenter

- 4.62 Opinion was sharply divided among BBC staff as to Savile’s abilities as a presenter. Some, mainly women and mainly in fairly junior positions, could find nothing good to say about him. They complained of his lack of interest in, and genuine commitment to, what he was doing. Others, usually men in more senior positions, such as producers, were impressed by Savile’s professional skills and the ratings he attracted.

- 4.63 Savile's method of work on BBC Radio 1 record programmes was different from that of most other disc jockeys and a few were critical of him for this. Most disc jockeys would play the records themselves and would talk about the music in the intervals between the records, creating a real time programme. By contrast, Savile would come into the studio and record the links for his turntable programmes, leaving the producer and technical staff to link the words and music together later, in his absence. Mr Simpson said that, when recording *The Old Record Club*, Savile would come into the studio perhaps once a month and would record the links for a number of shows in one visit. Mr Tate noticed this too in respect of the *Double Top Ten Show* and *The Vintage Chart Show*. He said that Savile came into Bush House only once a month to record enough links for four or five half-hour programmes of *The Vintage Chart Show*.
- 4.64 These habits created the impression in the minds of some that Savile was interested only in the money and publicity to be gained from his work. However, Mr Howlett thought that the reason why Savile did not play the records himself may have been because he was "*from the old school*". He was used to having the services of a studio manager who handled the records under the direction of a producer. The disc jockeys who had previously worked on pirate radio were not used to that luxury; they played the records themselves and they continued in that way when they came to the BBC. Mr Beerling told me something similar. Mr Howlett also made the point that Savile's approach made for a "*very stilted way of putting together a radio programme*".
- 4.65 There were those who claimed that Savile had no real interest in music; he did the minimum necessary for a programme. Mr Kershaw was firm in his view that Savile had no real interest in music and that his claim to be "*the godfather of British pop*"

music” was nothing more than a “*great myth or public relations swindle*”. A10, a studio manager who worked on *Speakeasy* and *Savile’s Travels* between 1973 and 1975, agreed with this. She said that, whilst the lives of many of the disc jockeys she knew revolved around music, Savile appeared to her not to have even the slightest interest.

- 4.66 Sue Davies, who worked as a researcher on *Speakeasy* for six months in 1977, was scathing about Savile. She thought that “*everything was a platform for his own ego*”. She said that Savile “*would rip the piss out of [the audience]*” and would ask questions but rarely wait long enough for anybody to reply. A24, who worked as a production assistant on *Speakeasy* between 1973 and 1977 struck a similar note; she felt that Savile did not take the programme seriously. I hasten to say that these were not views shared by either Canon Semper or Canon Winter, both of whom produced *Speakeasy* at different times and both of whom regarded Savile as a talented and skilled presenter.
- 4.67 Several witnesses noted Savile’s lack of involvement in the preparatory work on *Jim’ll Fix It*. This was in contrast to the impression given to an often adoring public, many of whom thought that Savile was personally involved in making dreams come true. The coveted badge itself suggested that Savile had personally ‘fixed it’.
- 4.68 A23, a fixee, told me that, when she appeared on the programme, she was surprised by how little Savile was involved. She said: “*...on the show it looked like he was there all the time.... sitting in [his] chair for the whole of the programme. But he just – he wasn’t there*”. Anne Gilchrist, Jenny Ricotti, Helen Gartell, who all worked on the programme, as well as the producer, Roger Ordish, confirmed that, save on very rare occasions, Savile was not involved in selecting the

letters that would feature on the show. Nor, save on very rare occasions, was he involved in filming the 'fixes'. His involvement was generally limited to the day on which the programme was to be recorded and linked together. He would arrive in the early afternoon when Mr Ordish would tell him, for the first time, about the people and fixes to be featured that day. I also heard some evidence of so-called "dubious fixes", including some where the idea for the fix was established first and a young fixee to request the fix was found later. What is not clear to me, however, is the extent of that practice and the extent to which Savile was involved in it. I deal with this in more detail at paragraphs 10.6 to 10.14.

- 4.69 Robin Smith, a researcher and assistant floor manager on *Jim'll Fix It* between 1987 and 1989 said that, on the day of a recording, Savile would "*waltz in, make his presence known and then he would probably disappear off until we would want him for rehearsal*". He quite often had no idea what was in the programme until his arrival. He would not watch the films of the fixes in advance. Instead he would learn a little about what was coming up from other members of the team who had been present for the filming so that he had enough information to get a smile from those taking part. His approach was to do the minimum.
- 4.70 Jeanette Pease, a researcher for three series in 1986, 1987 and 1988, got the impression that Savile didn't "*particularly want to be [there]*" and had no interest in the programme.
- 4.71 Savile's lack of interest is to be contrasted with the interest, enthusiasm, pride and pleasure shared by members of the production team in creating a programme which was not only popular but which gave enormous pleasure to a great number of people. I have the impression that some members of the team resented Savile's lack of commitment, compared with

their own. Some of them appeared to me to have resented Savile's use of the 'per diems' system. It was the BBC's practice to provide the daily requirements of people taking part in a show. Savile, who would be at the studios for about six hours on the day of recording, would request a box of five or six Romeo and Juliet cigars – many more than he would smoke in a day. This seems to have been Savile's way of ensuring a permanent supply of free cigars. Indeed I was told that, in his flat in Bournemouth, there was a large humidor full of these cigars.

4.72 Jill Henderson, an assistant floor manager, was one of several members of the team who felt uncomfortable about the public impression that Savile was 'a good guy' who was personally involved in making dreams come true. Some, however, recognised that an element of 'make-believe' is inherent in radio and television. C3 said that the impression to the world at large and to the young fixees that everything had been arranged by Savile was "*a bit of a con*" but added that there were a lot of things in television that are not as they seem. As Ms Houlihan said, the giving of the impression that Savile had arranged all the fixes himself was "*the magic of television*".

4.73 I do accept that some element of make-believe is inevitable in television. However, when one considers the enormous popularity of *Jim'll Fix It*, its prominent position in the BBC's Saturday evening schedule and the way in which Savile was able to promote his image as a favourite uncle to the nation's children, the degree of make-believe (particularly when one adds to this the fact that there is evidence of "dubious fixes") seems to verge on the distasteful. It is also clear that Savile used the programme to promote his own image. For example, David Nicolson, who directed the programme, described how Savile insisted that a fix be filmed at Stoke Mandeville Hospital

in 1988. He gave instructions that there should be a lingering camera shot of a plaque on the wall at Stoke Mandeville commemorating his contribution to the building of the hospital.

- 4.74 There were, however, some within the BBC who acknowledged that Savile was both charismatic and professionally able. Bill Cotton, Head of Light Entertainment, apparently admired Savile as a performer and selected him for *Jim'll Fix It*. Pete Murray, who worked for the BBC for many years, said that, as a disc jockey, Savile did not really say anything but, nonetheless, “*they loved him*”. He told me that Savile had a certain “*magic*” as well as “*charisma*” and “*unbelievable charm*”.
- 4.75 Helen Pennant-Rea, who worked as a researcher on *Speakeasy* between 1971 and 1972, found Savile professional and committed. Robin Carr saw Savile as a unique performer on television. Roger Ordish thought that he was bright and intelligent and David Tate admired his skills as a communicator. A12, who also observed Savile’s work in *Speakeasy*, was impressed with his technical skills and, in particular, his ability to receive comments from the producer in his ear piece and immediately to use those comments in his presentation. Peter Riding, who worked in the BBC’s Further Education department (later renamed Continuing Education) and worked with Savile on the health education programmes *Play it Safe* and *Mind How You Go*, thought that, from a production point of view, Savile was “*absolutely terrific*” and “*absolutely professional*”; he handled people well, re-wrote (and improved) the links he was asked to deliver and was a very good presenter. Wilfred De’Ath, who was a young radio producer in the mid-1960s, did not like Savile and found him to be “*intimidating and self-absorbed*”. However, he acknowledged that Savile was “*a brilliant performer*” but added that “*he was good at being Jimmy Savile*”.

- 4.76 Canon Winter, of the Religious Broadcasting department, worked with Savile on *Speakeasy* and spoke highly of him as a presenter, describing him as “*very produceable*” meaning that he was always prepared to be guided by what the producer suggested. Canon Winter thought that Savile was “*quite sharp*” and “*witty*” and that, even in his mid-forties, Savile retained a “*teenage enthusiasm*”. Canon Semper thought that Savile was a strong presenter. He was good at translating topics and issues “*into his lingo*”, communicating well with the young audience.
- 4.77 Canon Semper recalled an occasion which he thought showed Savile’s skill as a presenter. *Speakeasy* focused each week on a current topic usually of a moral or ethical nature. One programme was about travellers (who were very much in the news at the time). A group of travellers was approached and agreed to provide an audience of about 100. In the event, however, only three turned up. Canon Semper was concerned by this but Savile rose to the occasion. He promised that there would be no “*dead air*”. He pretended that there was a large audience in the studio. While the questions always came from the same three people, Savile described each questioner in a different way so as to suggest that there were a lot of them. Canon Semper thought that, on this occasion, a little make-believe was put to good effect.
- 4.78 In the eyes of the public, Savile was almost a saint; as Mr Langley said, he was “*revered*”. Ms Houlihan described his public image as that of a “*superstar*” who was “*beloved*” by the public. Canon Winter thought that Savile was, in the pop scene, “*like the High Priest of the Mecca*”. This image combined with his skill as a presenter brought success to his programmes, in particular in terms of audience ratings.

- 4.79 Will Wyatt, former Managing Director, Network Television and Chief Executive, BBC Broadcast and Deputy to the Director-General, said that Savile was one of a small number of people who were, at any one time, *“really seriously important”* in the BBC. They were, in effect, the faces of the BBC. One witness, who for understandable reasons wishes to remain anonymous, was well placed to describe Savile’s importance to the BBC. She said that Savile was viewed as an enormous asset. She thought that, when *Jim’ll Fix It* was at the height of its popularity, he was viewed as the BBC’s *“biggest asset”*.
- 4.80 It is clear that Savile was not personally well-liked within the BBC but his abilities as a star presenter and his standing as a celebrity, as a fundraiser and as a friend of the rich and powerful, gave him a position of some importance to the BBC, its ratings and its brand.