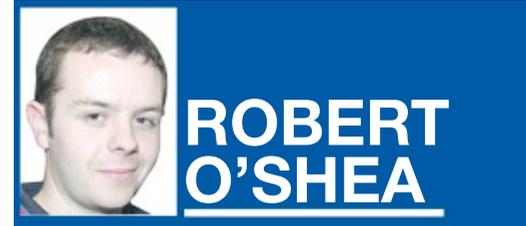
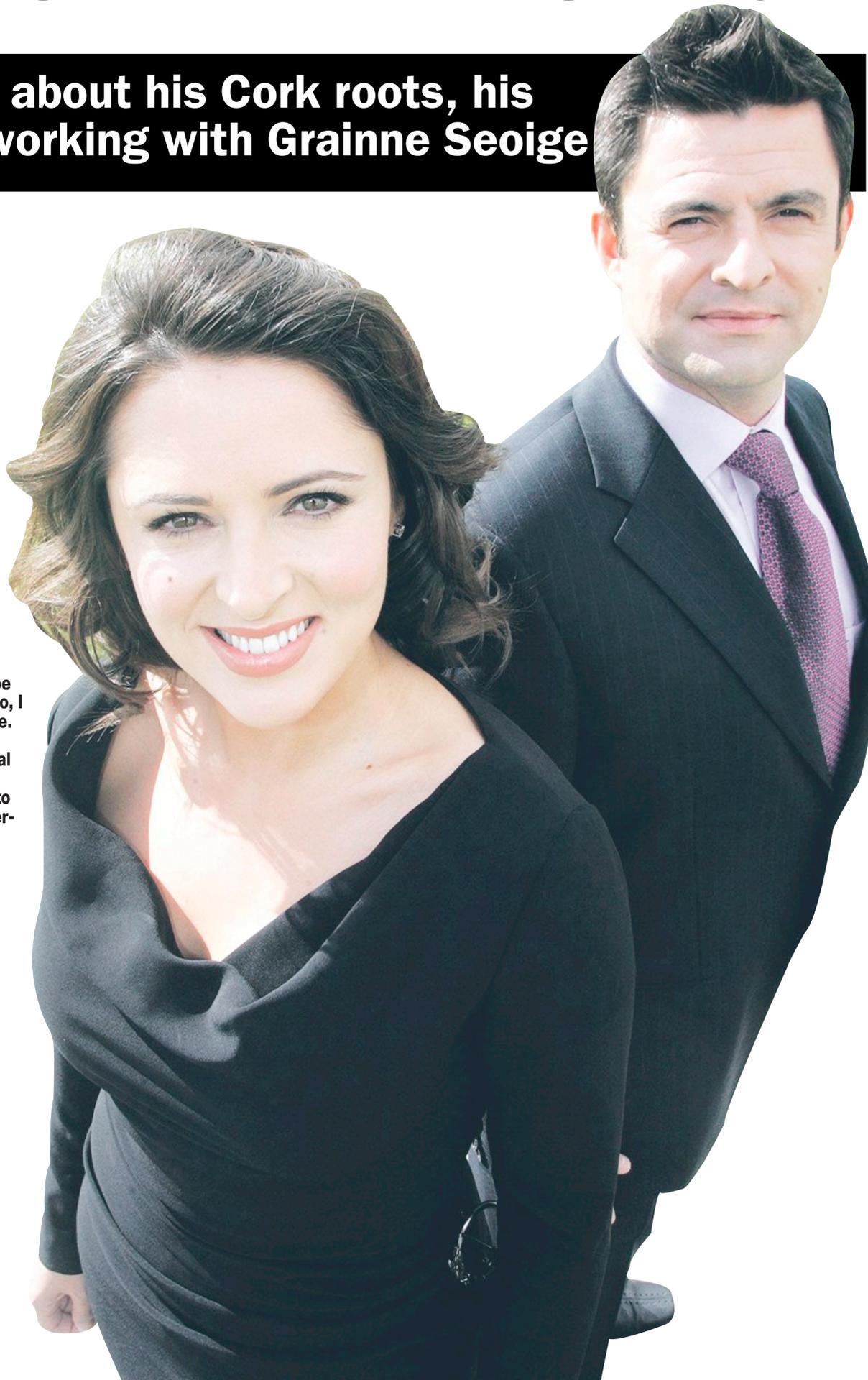


boy who has the TV world

O'Shea about his Cork roots, his
about working with Grainne Seoige

JOE O'SHEA AND GRAINNE SEOIGE: Joe says: "Every show I do, I feel more comfortable. I've made mistakes, small things, technical errors. But it's great having Gráinne next to me — she really understands a TV studio."



● **THOUGH** I occasionally smoke Marlboro cigarettes, I can reveal that the Marlboro Man has never influenced my decision to buy them.

Yes, I have smoked cigarettes because I thought they made me look cool — but never cool in a sort of rugged cowboy way. And, although I did wear a Stetson for a time, that was because of a medical problem.

I smoke cigarettes now simply because, if I don't have 17 Marlboro reds in front of me before I switch on my computer to start to write this column, I'll have a panic attack. One more or one less and the article would be ruined — take three weeks back, when a couple of cigarettes rolled off my desk, which I didn't notice, and I wrote the whole column without the letter 'e'.

Restrictions on tobacco advertising have curtailed the symbolic power of the Marlboro Man, no doubt about it.

That's why it was surprising to see him top the poll of the most influential imaginary people in world history in a book published last week — Joe Camel languishes in 78th.

Big Brother, from George Orwell's novel *1984*, came second, which also seemed an incongruous choice as Big Brother was a system of surveillance rather than a genuine character in the book.

Santa Claus doesn't get a look in until number four, even being pipped out of a podium finish by King Arthur. How can a fictional ruler of England and Wales — whose main claim to fame is that he favoured circular furniture — be considered more important than Santa Claus?

Superman is 39 places behind some broad named Nora Helmer. I don't wish to seem misogynistic, but this is Superman we're talking about, the man who taught us that if we humans are ever to learn how to fly we should do so my sticking our fist out in front of us rather than in a seat-back position while eating from a small packet of nuts and sifting through an in-flight magazine.

Oedipus even comes ahead of Mickey Mouse, for Christ sake. Find me one man or boy who would rather sleep with his mother than go to Disneyland.

Yes, it's a very silly list, but it did get me thinking about who is my most influential person who didn't exist. That's easy: My imaginary pal Pete from my childhood.

Well, I guess he was more an imaginary bully than an imaginary friend but you would be marked as well if people kept sitting on you.

Pete made me do lots of things I would have preferred not to do; most of the things I set fire to were his idea and it is unlikely my estate would have become so renowned if it had not been for ol' Pete.

For a while, I guess, I was bitter because I got in trouble when Pete would do something bold, because no-one else could see him, but years later we were to laugh about this.

Being invisible isn't all it's cracked up to be, Pete told me, and you were more likely to receive a crack in the groin if no one else could see you, he said.

So, I think we should be cautious now that scientists have discovered the secret to invisibility.

A cloaking device has been tested in Duke University and in the next five years there are hopes that total invisibility may become possible for large objects.

"Our device is more an invisibility shed than an invisibility cloak," said Professor Pendry last week.

Invisibility will no doubt be a great boon to the military of the US if they can develop this technology. Iraq, of course, was the first country to develop invisible weaponry.

But invisible sheds are not a new thing as this review of an art exhibit in Surrey, England shows: "An exhibition will include the launch of the 'Invisible Shed' by Michael Huber, in support of charity. Michael has taken this concept and created a pastiche on the contemporary conceptual art world. The 'Invisible Shed' will be placed at the centre of the gallery to be approached by the public in their imagination. In return for a donation to charity, the visitor to the gallery can, in their imagination, remove and retain a portion of the shed and in return receive a certificate to document their acquisition."

But my point is that invisible sheds could have greater consequences for the tobacco industry than the loss of influential advertisers like Joe and Marlboro Man.

Because if sheds are invisible, what will kids hide behind when they smoke?