

26 September 1998, The Guardian, p.19

**The Best Broadcast Transcripts: From BBC Radio 4: A policeman admits to lying in court / Features:**  
Editor

The Exchange, a phone-in hosted by Eddie Mair on Radio 4, discussed telling lies. The final caller to the programme, describing himself as 'Eddie' and saying that he had served as a police officer with the Metropolitan force for 24 years, said that it was 'part of the culture' to lie under oath to achieve convictions. The BBC was anxious that this might have been a hoax call, but was satisfied it was genuine. The broadcast sparked concerned interest from the police authorities and calls from the general public

Eddie Mair: Now to 'Eddie' in Kent. Do you tell the truth? Caller: Usually, but when I'm at work it's part of my job actually to sort of tell lies.

Mair: You're a journalist then? Caller: No, I'm not a journalist, no. I'm a serving police officer in the Metropolitan Police.

Mair: And you tell lies on a regular basis? Caller: In court, yes: 90 per cent of my colleagues are the same, to be honest with you.

If you go to court, you take the oath, you give evidence. . . If you want to get a conviction you have to tell lies. It's part and parcel of the job. . . Mair: Why can't you simply tell the truth? Caller: Well, you'd probably get about one in a hundred convictions.

Mair: How do you decide who to lie about? Caller: You get to know who the local villains are. . . and if you've seen them doing something and there's not sufficient evidence [to] convict them, then you have to make the rest of it up.

Mair: And you do this regularly? Caller: Everybody does, and everybody in court knows it. . . The magistrates know it, the judges know it, the defence counsels know it, and. . . I mean. . . the villains who get up in the box and lie. . . they know that, and so we do the same. . . Mair: Where does that leave us. . . if we can't trust the police? Caller: Well, I think the judicial system needs reviewing, really.

Mair: Can you be sure that the people you lie about are real villains? Caller: Well, no, I can't. . . I can't be absolutely certain. You just make a judgment. You're 99 per cent certain, and that's the best you can do.

Mair: The first time you did it, was it easy to do? Caller: No, it was very difficult.

Mair: And then it gets easier? Caller: Yeah, you know, it's part of the culture. . . If you don't do it, you're sort of ostracised.

BBC Radio 4 (92-95FM), 3.02pm on September 15